

Deadline Set For Harmonized Primary and Secondary School Legislation

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Robert Beecroft, and the Council of Europe's (CoE) Special Representative in BiH, Sonja Moser-Starrach, in a letter today stated that failing to harmonize Canton and Entity Education Laws with the BiH Framework Law must be addressed if BiH is to progress further towards European integration.

In the letter sent to the RS Minister of Education, Gojko Savanović, the Ministers of Education of all FBiH Cantons, Sefik Mršić, Stipo Ivanković, Zlata Žigić, Sreto Tomašević, Osman Somun, Nikola Lovrinović, Jago Musa, Jozo Marić, Emir Turkušić and Marin Ivić, the RSNA Speaker, Dragan Kalinic and the speakers of the Cantonal Assemblies, the High Representative, the OSCE Head of Mission and CoE Special Representative underlined that almost two years after BiH's accession to the Council of Europe, only the Brcko District has met its legal obligation to harmonize their Laws on primary and secondary education with the BiH Law on Primary and Secondary Education.

Harmonization with the BiH Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education will promulgate children's right to education as a fundamental human right. This legislation ensures equal access to and equal standards in education throughout BiH for all children wherever they go to school, and guarantees children their right to cultural and linguistic diversity.

The letter states: "this issue is not just about Education and domestic legal obligations, but also about Bosnia and

Herzegovina meeting its international legal obligations. Adopting and putting in place new, fully harmonized, education legislation at all levels of government by 24 April 2004 – two years after Bosnia and Herzegovina became the 44th member of the Council of Europe, is a post-accession requirement of the Council of Europe.” Furthermore, fulfilment of the Council of Europe’s post-accession criteria is raised by the European Commission’s feasibility study, which sets out priority areas which will need to be addressed before negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement can start.

“Europe will not allow us to move forward until we fulfil previous requirements” said the High Representative, “the European Commission will present an interim report on BiH progress next week; Education Ministers have been failing for two years on this issue, despite the Law being passed by their representatives at the BiH Level.” The High Representative added that “If we fail to make progress in the next month there will be real consequences.”

“Harmonization with State-level legislation is a requirement under BiH’s own laws,” said Ambassador Beecroft. “This matter comes down to the respect these institutions have for the rule of law in BiH.”