

“Politicisation of Federation Schools Must End”

The High Representative met with all the cantonal education ministers today in the OHR to call on them to end the politicisation of education which has done so much damage to the children of BiH, and to implement education reform.

At a meeting in the OHR with with Ministers Stipo Ivankovic (Canton 2), Nikola Lovrinovic (Canton 6), Jago Musa (Canton 7), Jozo Maric (Canton 8) and Marin Ivic (Canton 10), the High Representative called on the ministers to keep their promises and end delays in implementing agreed reforms. He underlined that the education authorities in the Federation of BiH must honour the commitments on education reform they made in November 2002 and do everything that is required in order to implement post-accession requirements in education stipulated by the Council of Europe.

The High Representative underlined two particular issues of concern: the development and adoption of the Cantonal Primary and Secondary Education Laws – which must be in line with the BiH Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH, and the administrative and legal unification of the remaining “two schools under one roof”.

All Cantonal Ministers of Education have endorsed the ‘Education Reform Strategy’, which pledges to end discrimination in education, cut waste and duplication of effort and resources and eliminate basic inefficiencies in the education system. Yet, as the High Representative told the ministers, there has been little or no progress in implementing these reforms, despite the fact that they are among the post-accession requirements placed on BiH by the Council of Europe.

The High Representative said he expects the relevant Cantonal and Municipal authorities to pass decisions to complete the administrative unification of “two schools under one roof” by 15 March. He added that he expects to see “the Cantonal Education Ministries and their Ministers fully supporting the administrative unification of all cases of ‘two schools under one roof’ within their own Cantons.”

“Administrative unification is a technical and legal process,” the High Representative said. “It means that existing two schools under one roof are registered as a single legal entity with one school director and one school board – it does not affect the curriculum taught or the languages spoken in the school.” The High Representative underlined that the Cantonal Ministers of Education must “make it clear that administrative unification will have no effect on the language or curriculum.”

The five Ministers attending were among those who developed and issued these reforms and it is they who must ensure compliance by the responsible Cantonal and Municipal authorities. “It is your job to make sure the commitments you’ve signed up to are implemented and to prevent, not to exacerbate, the politicisation of education in this country,” the High Representative told the five Education Ministers. “If children’s education continues to suffer, you and your Ministries will be held responsible.”