

The Council of Ministers Puts BiH's Future at Risk

The failure by the Council of Ministers to forward the draft Higher Education Framework Law to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly is alarming and jeopardizes BiH's chance to improve its education system.

Last year, BiH authorities signed the Bologna Declaration and ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. By doing so, they committed themselves to modernize higher education in BiH, in line with European standards and in line with the needs of BiH students.

The World Bank, recognizing the importance of higher education reform to the future prosperity and economic viability of BiH, is prepared to make available a loan that includes 12 million USD for education, plus 30 million USD budget support. The one condition: the modern State-level framework law on Higher Education must be adopted no later than 31 March 2004.

The law fully meets international standards. It is carefully balanced to respect the interests and concerns of the citizens and constituent peoples of BiH. For the past year, a team of experts, including Education Ministry representatives of both Entities and university professors, have labored on the draft law which would bring much needed reform to BiH's higher education sector.

Given the urgency and importance of this law and what is at stake, the Council of Ministers must move the draft law into Parliamentary procedure without delay. Failure to do so demonstrates lack of seriousness and dedication towards the fulfillment of commitments undertaken by BiH authorities for the purpose of bringing the country closer to Euro-Atlantic structures.

It is a matter of the greatest concern that the Council of Ministers are not willing to honor the obligations BiH has made to its European neighbors and, more importantly, the citizens of BiH. They have risked an opportunity for BiH to belong to the European structures of higher education. Further, they have risked an opportunity for BiH citizens, in particular students, to benefit from the 42 million Dollar World Bank assistance for much needed reforms.