

Higher Education Coordination Board Established

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Dr. Matei Hoffmann, welcomes the establishment of the national Higher Education Coordination Board by the Entity Ministers of Education and members of the academic community of Bosnia and Herzegovina yesterday.

For more than two years, the Council of Europe and UNESCO in cooperation with the OHR have pushed for the establishment of such a body, which will act as a permanent and professional institution with advisory capacity in all matters regarding higher education policy.

At yesterday's meeting at the OHR, it was agreed that the Higher Education Coordination Board would initially focus on ensuring the introduction and application of European quality standards in the field of higher education, the mutual recognition of diplomas within Bosnia and Herzegovina and later within Europe, which will allow for the mobility of students and professors, as well as the development of open and long distance learning.

At a preparatory working session earlier this week, the nine academics who will sit on the Board have been nominated by their respective Ministers of Education. The Board includes Prof. Dr. Nedžad Mulabegovic and Prof. Dr. Ejub Hot of the University of Sarajevo, Prof. Dr. Sadik Latifagic, University of Tuzla, Prof. Dr. Marko Tadic, Prof. Dr. Zeljko Suman, Prof. Dr. Vojo Visekruna of the University of Mostar, Prof. Dr. Borisa Starovic of the University of Foca-Srbinje and Prof. Dr. Drago Brankovic and Prof. Dr. Zlatko Bundalo of the University of Banja Luka. The Ministers agreed that the Board should function as autonomously as possible, and that its work would be managed by the members in a professional manner.

The European Commission and the World Bank will work together on parallel programmes to build upon these initiatives for sustainable reform of higher education. Their programmes of technical assistance will be implemented through the Higher Education Coordination Board and the substructures to be created. Funding will be conditioned by regulations aiming to ensure efficiency of expenditure, and rational development of quality higher education provision throughout BiH. A donation for \$4 million USD has already been pledged to the development of Higher Education provided that the necessary interim coordination steps are successfully accomplished.

The creation of the Higher Education Coordination Board sends a strong, positive signal that cooperation among members of the academic community is essential for the future of academic life in BiH. Such cooperation will assist in the primary objective of eliminating any aspects of segregation in BiH's higher education system – a condition to be fulfilled for accession to the Council of Europe and the full integration of BiH in the European academic community.