

CIPS Project Too Important to Fail

Speaking today about the new BiH identity cards, now being distributed under the CIPS project, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, called on BiH politicians to show leadership and responsibility, and not score political points at the expense of citizens and at the expense of this country's future. The High Representative emphasised that the CIPS Project is too important to be allowed to fail.

Noting that the entire International Community has leant its support to the CIPS project, the High Representative pointed out that the new, European-standard identity card is the same for citizens throughout BiH and is backed up by a single database and one of the most powerful computer systems in the Balkans.

This new card is crucial because;

- it cannot be forged, unlike existing ID cards, and will therefore help in the fight against organised crime;
- it will prevent people from using fake ID cards to defraud the pension system, veteran's benefits and other social services;
- it will help crack down on illegal property ownership, which still prevents many refugees from returning to their homes;
- it will play a role in tackling tax and customs fraud, and introducing VAT;
- it will demonstrate to EU and other countries that BiH can control its borders and account for its citizens – a precondition for introducing visa-free travel, particularly after 11 September 2001.

The High Representative said that he did not believe that any

responsible politician in BiH wants this project to fail, but he added that recent statements and actions by a number of politicians have had the effect of creating uncertainty and confusion about the new ID card. He said this had undermined public confidence in the project.

Principle Deputy High Representative Donald Hays and OHR experts who have assisted in the CIPS project today gave a presentation to the Council of Ministers' Commission on CIPS headed by Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications Safet Halilovic. It was made clear that the total price of the ID card was fixed at 14.5 KM last June. The price includes 10 KM paid to the contractors for the production of the card itself, 3.5 KM for administrative costs, and 1 KM for bank handling charges. The new ID card is significantly cheaper than ID cards issued previously in BiH and is cheaper than similar cards issued across the region.

The highly secure polycarbonate cards and the specialised equipment that produces the digitally coded, forgery resistant cards account for more than 50% of the whole project, or about 8.5 million euro. The computer system that links all the cards in a BiH-wide database accounts for 35% of the total project, or about 5.8 million euro.

The ID card is self-financing, because there is no money in the State Budget to pay for it. The project will cover its costs in the next 12 to 18 months, after which revenue from issuing BiH ID cards will go into the State Budget, for the government to invest in social programmes and other activities.

Charts and graphs explaining the breakdown of the costs and regional comparisons are available at https://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/pol/spu/lprojects/default.asp?content_id=5844