

# **OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference**

## **BiH Higher Education Law**

The Office of the High Representative urges the BiH Parliament to adopt the State-level Framework Law on Higher Education by 7 May in the interests of all the citizens of BiH, the High Representative said:

The USD 42 million in World Bank assistance available for Bosnia and Herzegovina (USD 30 million in budget support and USD 12 million in direct assistance for higher education reform in line with European standards) will be allocated directly to universities through funding mechanisms, which have been selected in order to promote decentralization and the empowerment of local institutions. However, it is conditional on the State-level Framework Law on Higher Education being passed by 7 May.

Investing in the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina's young people is a fundamental responsibility of the country's parliamentarians. The BiH authorities took the first step when they signed the Bologna Declaration and ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (starting the process whereby BiH qualifications will be recognized throughout Europe). We expect BiH parliamentarians to live up to the commitments they have already made and to act in a way that will add to the well being of future generations.

## **PDHR Hays on Municipal Government**

PDHR Donald Hays has just delivered a speech at the Council of Europe's conference on Local Government being held here in

Sarajevo. This is the third speech that Ambassador Hays has made in the last three days on the subject of municipal government in BiH.

In his remarks today, Ambassador Hays touched on the capacity of municipal governments to put citizens back at the apex of the political pyramid. Currently, the top spot tends to be occupied by a handful of party leaders; below them come the parties themselves and well below them come the governments. The place routinely accorded to citizens in the present political scheme of things is at the very bottom of the pyramid.

“The municipalities are more and more coming to reflect – in the face of chronic shortages of funds and resources – the daily struggle of citizens to make the system work,” Ambassador Hays said in his remarks this morning. “The municipal tier of government lends itself to dynamic leadership. Whereas a politician under 35 may not be seen as sufficiently experienced for State or Entity positions, he or she can really make a difference in the municipality. Mayors can get things done, and young, energetic mayors do not lack credibility on account of their relative youth.

I’ve brought as long the full text of Ambassador Hays’ speech.