

PDHR Donald Hays Calls for Serious Legislation to Address Shortcomings in RS University System

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays has called on RS legislators and educators to take serious steps to ensure that legislation on higher education in the RS complies with European standards and addresses the chronic shortcomings in the present RS university system.

In Banja Luka on Tuesday Ambassador Hays called on the authorities to make substantial amendments to the RS draft University Law before submitting it for parliamentary approval. The Council of Europe made significant comments on a first version of the law, which ignored fundamental principles of academic freedom and failed to address the issues of political influence and allocation of funding by government to university faculties.

In other countries, universities are autonomous from government, and public funds are allocated to faculties by the universities themselves according to academic criteria – not according to the whims of politicians.

The second draft law is no better than the first. OHR calls on the RS authorities to incorporate the Council of Europe comments prior to further consideration of the law. Ambassador Hays has also called on the authorities to take into account suggestions on the text of the University Law which will be made by students and university rectors during the next six months. This initiative was agreed at an education roundtable held in Banja Luka on Tuesday, at which Ambassador Hays participated.

Following agreement by the OSCE Permanent Council last week, the OSCE will become the lead international agency on education issues in BiH. Along with other organisations, the OHR will remain closely involved in this work.