

Politicisation of Education Reform Damages BiH's EU Prospects

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH Robert Beecroft and the Council of Europe's (CoE) Special Representative in BiH, Sonja Moser-Starrach today restated that turning administrative and technical reforms in Primary and Secondary schools in the FBiH into political and ethnic issues, will damage BiH's prospects for a European future.

The High Representative, the Head of the OSCE Mission in BiH and the CoE Special Representative are concerned by reports of a Declaration signed by Cantonal Education Ministers Stipo Ivankovic (Canton 2), Nikola Lovrinovic (Canton 6), Jago Musa (Canton 7), Jozo Maric (Canton 8) and Marin Ivic (Canton 10) which suggests that these Ministers will not support reforms in Primary and Secondary School education.

"The meaning of this Declaration remains unclear, but were this to result in BiH failing to meet it's legal, post accession, commitments to the Council of Europe – the fulfilment of which are also a requirement for the start of negotiations with the EC on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement – then this would be a most serious and grave development" said the High Representative today. He added "This is a matter that could destroy BiH's hopes for a European future. The HDZ in Croatia are leading that Country towards Europe. The question we must ask is: are obstructionists in HDZ BiH blocking BiH's chance at that same goal?"

All Cantonal Ministers of Education have endorsed the 'Education Reform Strategy', which pledges to end

discrimination in education, cut waste and duplication of effort and resources and eliminate basic inefficiencies in the education system and to fully harmonise Cantonal Education Laws with the BiH Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education. Yet, there has been little or no progress in implementing these reforms.

“Administrative unification is a technical and legal process, not a substantive one,” the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Robert Beecroft, said today. “It means that existing two schools under one roof are to register as a single legal entity, with one school director and one school board, as is already the case in the overwhelming majority of schools in BiH. It in no way affects the curriculum taught, or the language spoken in the school”.

The High Representative had already met with the Ministers reported to have signed the Declaration; Stipo Ivankovic, Nikola Lovrinovic, Jago Musa, Jozo Maric and Marin Ivic, on 24 February when he said that that Cantonal Education Ministries and their Ministers must fully support education reform within their own Cantons. The High Representative said then that should children’s education continue to suffer, the Ministers and their Ministries would be held responsible.