

**NEGOTIATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING  
IN MONTENEGRO**

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WORKSHOP 1:  
EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT,  
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## **I. Introduction**

The ECMI project “Montenegro Negotiation and Capacity Building” was launched with the aim to establish a Track II informal negotiation process providing a forum for interethnic dialogue between the Serbian and Montenegrin communities, which includes minority communities from the Sandzak border region. Through a series of workshops, the project aims to help promote dialogue, identify issues of common concern and assist in delivering concrete benefits as well as building confidence between the communities involved. By focusing the debate on the concrete needs of these communities, the project seeks to facilitate thinking about future interethnic relations in a less charged atmosphere, irrespective of the deeper political questions on the future constitutional arrangements of the two republics.

The project engages political party representatives, government officials and civil society groups (NGOs) in dialogue, while placing particular emphasis on establishing a Track II process with broader civil society involvement across all communities. In this way, the process broadens public debate and can function even when official government-to-government contacts prove difficult or impossible. Through engaging international and local experts, the project also seeks to provide the participants with external guidance on policy options in relation to each of the issues under review.

In a preparatory phase during the summer of 2001, field trips missions to Belgrade and Podgorica were carried out in order to conduct discussions with politicians, scholars and minority representatives to enlist their support and help identify issues of particular concern to all communities. Three issues – Education, Freedom of Movement and Regional Economic Development – were eventually identified to be dealt with in three separate workshops. The project was launched with its first workshop on “Education and Curriculum Development”, which took place 16 November 2002 in Podgorica, Montenegro.

## II. Background to the Workshop

### *A. Background to Serbian-Montenegrin Relations*

The future status of Montenegro is one of the remaining territorial issues within the framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After the fall of the Milosevic regime in Yugoslavia in October 2000, the potential for violence in this dispute has drastically diminished. Nevertheless, the question of independence for Montenegro continues to divide Montenegrin society and politics. Furthermore, the issue has been delaying reform processes in Montenegro, and also to some extent in Serbia. The uncertainty of the outcome of this process has been a source of political, social and economic instability in the region and has a broadly negative impact on the normalization of interethnic and political relations in Yugoslavia and its two republics.

After the April 2001 elections in Montenegro a quick resolution of the status issue emerged as unlikely, considering the close result for the pro-independence and the pro-Yugoslav coalitions. During the course of the summer, however, the discussions on the referendum and independence gathered momentum again. While the political climate in Montenegro has been extremely polarized as a result, some movement occurred towards greater cooperation between the two dominant parties of each coalition, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and the Socialist People's Party (SNP), much to the dismay of their smaller coalition partners. At the same time, the political elite, as well as large parts of the population, in Serbia has become weary of the issue of Montenegro, which is widely perceived as a burden on the reform process and a distraction from more pressing economic concerns. Nevertheless, the ruling coalition in Serbia, composed of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), continued its coalition with the SNP at the Yugoslav level, while it authored, together with the Montenegrin pro-Yugoslav coalition, a new platform for relations between Serbia and Montenegro, turning it into a de facto actor in domestic Montenegrin politics.

While there is broad consensus on the need to achieve a peaceful resolution of the issue and all sides clearly express readiness to engage in dialogue and, there is a noticeable unwillingness to discuss the *substance* of bilateral (or trilateral) relations

beyond the issue of the status. This position is partly informed by the wish of each side to resolve the question in its own favour and little recognition of the need or possibility to persuade the other 'side' of one's own views. Although the danger of violence can be largely excluded, there exists a real danger that the current 'conversation of the deaf' might seriously sour relations between Montenegro and Serbia and within Montenegro itself. Groups which might become particularly affected by such a development are national minorities in Montenegro and in the Sandzak region, split between the two republics. A deterioration of the discussions on the future of Yugoslavia can impact on these minorities in two ways: first, minorities, especially Albanians in Montenegro, are being instrumentalized by opponents of independence in arguing that Albanians will seek to secede from Montenegro (or at least seek territorial autonomy within the republic) after independence as the country will not have the military means to prevent such a separation. The second danger emanating for minorities from the debate over the final status is that any deterioration in Serb-Montenegrin relations is likely to impact on the freedom of movement between both republics, which would disproportionately affect Bosniaks/Muslims living in the Sandzak region on both sides of the border.

### *B. Background of the Project*

A series of three workshops, with education being the first, was prepared through two field trips by the regional representative to Belgrade and Podgorica in summer 2001. In August 2001, ECMI's regional representative visited Belgrade for a one-week field trip during which he met with representatives of NGOs and scholars working on Serb-Montenegrin relations, as well as on interethnic relations in the Serb-Montenegrin border region. During a one-week field trip to Montenegro in September, the regional representative met with party representatives, NGO activists, and representatives from international organizations.

The purpose of these field trips was (a) to establish an assessment of the status of Serbian-Montenegrin relations and its impact on minorities and interethnic relations, (b) to identify issue areas which are of particular concern to minorities in the inter-republican relationship, and (c) to identify participants in a project aimed at a

constructive dialogue between representatives of the republics and minority communities, focusing on fields of practical cooperation.

Despite the persistence of the topic of Serbian-Montenegrin relations in the public sphere (media, political debate, etc.), concrete fields of cooperation between both republics have been largely marginalized for broader concerns of status. Whereas some of these topics have been addressed in the discussions of expert teams of three governments from autumn 2001 onwards, even these discussions were based on the definition of the status of both republics and were less driven by the need for inter-republican cooperation. Furthermore, these discussions were limited in the scope of their participants. The process initiated by this project intends a priori to include a broader range of stakeholders in the relations between both republics, especially from minority communities. Most policy makers and analysts consulted during the preparatory phase emphasized the need for such a broader dialogue which would be informed by the need for cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro on the basis of a legacy and by a general recognition of need by most key actors for cooperation.

The discussions conducted during the preparatory phase centred on the need to *re-establish* links and forms of cooperation which have been interrupted in recent years and to *maintain* ties and links between the republics in the future, irrespective of the outcome of the status question. Divorcing discussions on cooperation from the status issue was broadly supported by interlocutors for a number of reasons. First, the uncertainty over the final outcome precludes the assumption that either solution—a union of both republics or two independent republics—will constitute the final status on which policy proposals should be based. Second, the uncertainty over the final status of the relationship between the republics should not prevent discussion on substantive issues, as discussions yielded the broad recognition that this uncertainty has unnecessarily prevented concrete proposals for cooperation and delayed reforms in both republics. Third, a danger emanating from the current process of redefining relations between Serbia and Montenegro lies in the uncertainty it implies and in the seemingly diametric opposition of the proposed solutions. As such, the danger emanating from this fear can only be resolved through cooperation and the identification of fields of bi-lateral relations which should and can be sustained independently of the eventual nature of the relations between the two republics. Fourth, in a number of issue areas, new forms of cooperation need to be found which



neither exist within the framework of the largely exhausted relations nor form part of the constitutional framework proposed by the various actors for future relations.

On the basis of these considerations, a number of issue areas have been identified through the preliminary discussions. Some of these issue areas can be grouped by the fact that they are not addressed by either of the dominant proposals for future relations, but require a degree of inter-republican cooperation. These areas include education and economic cooperation and development. Other issue areas present themselves as the status quo is considered to be undesirable by most key actors and require a departure from the current state of affairs. In particular, the topic identified here is the freedom of movement between the two republics.

While the specific focus of the project rests on relations between Serbia and Montenegro, it is impossible to disengage it from the larger regional context. Most topics relating to Serbian-Montenegrin relations take on a dimension including neighbouring countries and regions. As minorities in particular are affected by the interrelationship of bordering regions and countries, the regional context is a key consideration in the discussions and solutions to be proposed in the framework of the project. On a larger level, the process of European integration constitutes a significant factor to be considered. As both Montenegro and Serbia seek integration into the European Union, this process needs to be considered when examining forms of future cooperation. The process of European integration can both serve as an example for cooperation and be an incentive and reason for cooperation. As such, it constitutes a key component in seeking to identify forms of bilateral cooperation.

Education has been chosen as the topic for the first workshop being of central concern for minorities in the region, as mentioned by minority representatives and NGO activists in Serbia and Montenegro during the study visits. Without discussing the final status of the bilateral relations, the workshop seeks to address education in the border region and beyond, focusing in particular on minority concerns. The different proposals on the future of Yugoslavia have consistently maintained that education will be vested with the republics in the future. As a result, issues of education can be addressed without entering into a debate over the final status of Montenegro, as irrespective of the outcome of the status question, education will remain within the sphere of competence of Montenegro and Serbia. At the same time a number of concerns in the field of education need to be addressed, such as access to educational

institutions in both republics, coordination and cooperation in the border region, and other related areas which require common solutions across the border between the two republics.

### **III. Aim and Format of the Workshop**

On the basis of the study trips preceding the workshops and previous experience with workshops at ECMI, it was decided to hold discussions on the different issue areas established in talks with actors and analysts from both republics in small groups in Montenegro.

The size of the workshops was limited to 20 to 30 participants in order to ensure a fair representation, while not exceeding a number in which constructive discussions can take place. The participants themselves have been identified through either personal meeting in the preparatory phase or on the basis of recommendations from experts working on the issue areas. As all three issue areas under discussion in the three workshops differ significantly in their target audience and geographical scope (border region vs. both republics), the participants for the workshops differ in their expertise. The key constituencies addressed in the workshops are political representatives from both republics (party officials), policy makers in the areas of discussions (ministry representatives), representatives of minorities (minority parties and NGOs), as well as scholars and NGOs who have worked specifically on the areas under discussion or more broadly on Serbian-Montenegrin relations. While every workshop seeks to include representatives from all major political forces, both republics and communities, it is impossible to incorporate all interests due to the diversity inherent in the issues discussed. As discussions and recommendations are to be informed by expert opinion and not primarily by political considerations, the workshops seek to incorporate party representatives who have been more specifically involved in the areas under discussion.

While the focus of the discussions is the relationship between Montenegro and Serbia, the workshops place a greater emphasis on Montenegro in terms of participants and place. This approach is characterized by three considerations: (a) the discrepancies in approaches towards inter-republican relations are significantly larger and more

problematic in Montenegro than in Serbia; (b) due to the general tendency towards centralization, a large number of governmental, international and non-governmental activities have been concentrated in Belgrade; (c) as a result of the large discrepancy in size, the significance of the relationship between both republics has been proportionately larger in Montenegro than in Serbia, suggesting a greater need for an explicit focus on Montenegro.

The workshop on education and the subsequent workshops are based on three components: (a) background papers; (b) identification of the problem; and (c) consensus building on policy recommendations. The background papers, written by domestic and international experts on the topics under discussions distributed to the participants prior to the discussions and introduced by the authors, seek to inform the discussion, provide a conceptual framework and propose policy recommendations which serve as a basis for discussion during the workshop. The first component of the discussions is the identification of the problems. While most participants and other actors and observers have identified the three topics under discussion in the workshops as problem fields need of being addressed, the specific components have often not been identified. Identifying the problem helps both to limit the area of discussion and facilitates determining policy recommendations. As substantive discussions have been largely absent from debates on Serbian-Montenegrin relations in past years, many actors and observers have not been aware of the specific problems associated with the three larger topics. After having identified and grouped the problems drawn from the discussion, the workshops seek to determine concrete policy recommendations for addressing these problems. On the basis of the key assumption that the three issue areas can be substantially addressed irrespective of the future of the Yugoslav state, the workshops seek to point out concrete steps which need to be undertaken in addressing the previously identified problems. These solutions can be distinguished between short and long-term policies, as well as between policies designed specifically to address concerns of minorities and those more largely targeted at the relationship between the two republics. Finally, the discussions are also intended to identify follow-up processes which can ensure the implementation of these policy recommendations. These proposals are directed specifically at the project and ECMI in helping to define follow-up activities.

The identification of problems and the development of policy recommendation is fundamentally a process driven by the participants, not by the organizers. The method adopted for the implementation of the workshops rests on actor-participation and on facilitating a domestic solution rather than aiming at an externally imposed or proposed solution. The role of ECMI as organizer is thus facilitating consensus building and mediating rather than proposing policy recommendations. Such an approach is meant to ensure that solutions to key problems in both republics and their relationship to each other are perceived to be domestic rather than imposed, as consensus-based and domestically-developed policies are more likely to result in success than policy solutions which are perceived to be imposed by others and do not seek to build a consensus. In addition to the outcome-oriented factors supporting this approach, dialogue, which has largely been absent in this conflict beyond inter-government discussions, can only be established in recognition and incorporation of participant contributions.

The above-described method and structure of the workshops are informed by three objectives:

- to contribute to *confidence building* between the Montenegrin majority and the minorities in Montenegro;
- to give minorities in the border region a degree of *ownership* in the negotiation process between both republics;
- to help shift the Serbian/Yugoslav-Montenegrin debate from the question of status to *substantial issues* of bilateral relations which need to be resolved irrespective of the outcome of the larger debate on their relations.

#### **IV. Discussions of the Workshop**

More than one year after the end of the Milosevic regime in Serbia and Yugoslavia and three years since the beginning of the reform process in Montenegro, the educational sector is still in want of large and substantial reforms. During the discussions most participants agreed that educational contents which accommodate the needs of minorities and which grant a greater role to the diversity of the respective societies are still largely lacking. Representatives from governments, as well as minority and NGO participants, detected a general willingness to engage in educational reforms on behalf of the republican authorities. A number of minority representatives noted, however, especially in regard to Montenegro, that minority concerns are not sufficiently considered, both in terms of participation and content.

In the general assessment of needs during the discussions, the participants repeatedly noted two key components: reform within the republics and the establishment of cooperation between the republics. The weight of these two needs was assessed differently by different participants. Most participants noted the primary need for intra-republic reform. This reform can be facilitated and accelerated through inter-republican cooperation.

During the preparatory phase and during the discussions of the workshop, two key areas emerged as being of key concern for the relations between the two republics, having a strong effect on minorities. First, access to education presents a major concern at the level of higher education in terms of access to universities and of recognition of diplomas. As a number of participants from the minorities noted, supported by one of the background papers, this dimension is not limited to the two republics, but is relevant to relations with other neighbouring countries and territories (in particular Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania) as well. The second larger issue area identified in the discussions centres on the content and structure of curricula and textbooks for minorities, especially in the border area.

The participants from both republics noted in the course of the discussions that education constitutes an area of opportunity for both an improvement of interethnic relations, but also for regional cooperation. Education, vested with the republics according to the current and without doubt future arrangement between Serbia and

Montenegro, allows for cooperation on the basis of joint needs and interests, independently of the final status of Yugoslavia and both republics.

Cooperation in the field of education can be a catalyst for constructive dialogue and help diffuse possible fears and concerns of both minorities on both sides of the border and majorities. A participant from Vojvodina noted that the state of minority relations in the Serbian-Montenegrin border region should be considered separately from other minority issues in Serbia, including the field of education, due to a host of differences ranging from traditions, institutions, and needs. At the same time, experience from other areas in Yugoslavia, such as Vojvodina, can serve as an example for educational reform in the border area and Montenegro.

#### *A. Access to Education*

One key area identified prior to and during the discussions (see background paper by Serbo Rastoder) is access to higher education. A significant number of students from Montenegro currently pursue higher education in Serbia. In addition, a smaller number of students from Serbia enrol in Montenegrin universities. A number of participants from Montenegro noted that access to higher education currently runs the risk of becoming an issue in the referendum campaign rather than being discussed its own right.

There was a broad consensus among the participants that access to higher education in both republics should remain unimpeded, irrespective of the final status, and students from both republics should enjoy equal status. This equality in treatment should not only pertain to the status at university but also include other student benefits, such as health benefits and eligibility for scholarships. The maintenance of a 'common space for higher education' is in line with the larger alignment of both republics' higher education systems to the European networks of higher education. The equal access to higher education forms today an integral part of higher education in member states of the European Union, as was noted by participants from Western Europe.

Equal access to higher education does, however, not end at the host institution. Students must be insured that the degrees obtained are valid in their own republic upon their return. A transparent and swift system for the nostrification of diplomas has to be part of the access to higher education. Hurdles in the nostrification process

have been noted by participants from minority organizations. In addition to the recognition of diplomas, courses attended at universities outside the own republic should be transferable. An adjustment to European standards in line with the ‘Bologna Declaration’, which includes the establishment of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the recognition of diplomas, could facilitate both the transfer of students from other universities into a university of Serbia or Montenegro and the transfer of students from one of the two republics to a university in a third country. The participants expressed their hope that both republics would subscribe to and implement these European standards. At the same time a number of participants, especially from Western Europe, warned that the adoption of European norms and standards of higher education is a complex and lengthy process. Regional cooperation could help speed up the process in every country and allow them to learn from the other countries’ and republic’s experience (see background paper by Yannick du Pont).

When it comes to minorities in the Serbian-Montenegrin border region, access to higher education extends to Kosovo, Bosnia, and Albania. As many students belonging to minorities attend universities in Pristina, Sarajevo and elsewhere in the region, a broad consensus emerged from the discussion that a regional network of agreements would be required which establishes equal status for students, as well as common standards for the nostrification of diplomas. Here the recognition of diplomas has frequently been a problem, which needs to be addressed to ensure equal opportunities for minorities. As mentioned during the discussions, a group of students from Montenegro, who studied in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, sent a petition to the Montenegrin authorities regarding the recognition of their diplomas. In this letter, the students noted that students who study in Bosnia but do not study in the Serb Republic (*Republika Srpska*) are excluded from health care and financial aid for their studies and furthermore encounter difficulties in the nostrification of their degrees when they return to Montenegro. Such a regional agreement would benefit all students as well as members of the majority who study in universities outside their own republic. While this problem was specifically identified by participants from minority communities, others noted that such difficulties regarding the transfer of diplomas can also affect members of the majority and reduce mobility of all citizens.

### *B. Curricula and Textbooks*

Curricula and textbooks form a key component of primary and secondary education. Although both have changed since the end of Communism, changes have often been cosmetic and no or little change took place in regard to underlying assumptions about society or teaching (see background paper by Heike Karge).

For Montenegro and the Serbian-Montenegrin border area, the inclusion of minorities is mostly an issue of including minorities into the curriculum and less one of language. A participant from the Albanian community in Montenegro noted, however, a number of problems associated with Albanian language education, such as poor quality of translation of textbooks and translations of textbooks without any culturally sensitive adaptation. The issue of language is largely confined to the Albanian minority in Montenegro, which constitutes 6.5 per cent of the population and 3 per cent of the pupils, whereas in other parts of Yugoslavia, as a participant from Vojvodina noted, language is the key issue of minority education.

Officials from educational ministries noted that a reform of the educational system is a long-lasting process, which is to begin with a reform of the curricula, followed by a reform of the textbooks and finally the training of teachers. Some minority representatives emphasized the need to engage in more immediate reforms of textbooks, notwithstanding more long-term reform initiatives. One participant suggested that it might even be desirable to abolish teaching in some subjects (e.g. history), rather than continue with biased teaching which does not further the acquisition of knowledge and tolerance towards other cultures.

In regard to interethnic relations, the issue of curricula and textbooks is two-fold. First, the content of teaching has to take into account to a greater degree than currently the needs of minorities, in terms of language and culture-specific programmes. At the same time, the overall substance of the materials has to be more inclusive of different groups and raise awareness of the diversity in society. These two very different goals informed a large part of the discussion during the workshop, where a number of participants from minority organizations placed considerable emphasis on minority-specific curricula, whereas other participants, especially from educational NGOs, and experts considered it more important to improve integrative education, which would prevent group-based segregation and the persistence of



stereotypes among majority members. As one participant noted, “it is more important what I learn about others than what I learn about myself.” The key, as identified by a number of participants, has thus to lie in improving the inclusion of non-dominant groups in the larger curriculum, especially in subjects such as history and literature, i.e. to raise intercultural awareness. Especially the field of history teaching has been identified as a key area of reform. The region-wide problems affiliated with the mostly national orientation of history teaching (see background paper by Heike Karge) apply particularly to diverse regions, such as the Montenegrin-Serbian border region, being further complicated by the existence of different national histories of the dominant groups.

The reform of education, especially of curricula and textbooks, requires professionalization. Most participants noted that the authorities have undertaken only limited efforts to date to include the more active participation of experts on primary and secondary education and practitioners, as well as representatives from the minority communities. Participants from Serbia noted that such a reform-process has been initiated in Serbia with the establishment of new authorities at the republican level in early 2001. Similarly such a reform process is in progress in Montenegro with the support of the European Agency for Reconstruction, but according to Montenegrin participants, it lacks adequate consultative mechanisms.

On the regional level, schoolbook commissions, as have worked between Germany and its neighbours, should be initiated in the region to move away from an ethnocentric portrayal of history and culture in schoolbooks. International experts could facilitate this process. Additionally, according to the suggestion of one participant, educational experts from diverse societies could consult on mechanisms to accommodate diverse communities in one society’s educational system, and on the authoring of schoolbooks.

Educational experts among the participants noted that after the development of a more inclusive and modern curriculum, the reform process cannot be regarded as complete. The curriculum and also schoolbooks need to develop on an ongoing basis and to adapt to new methods and approaches. As a result, the participants agreed that minority and expert consultation should receive permanent fora.

Generally speaking, the educational system in Serbia and Montenegro has been extremely centralized in the past decade. As was noted by the government representative from Serbia, a process of decentralization has begun in Serbia; its completion is necessary to accommodate the needs of the communities where educational institutions are located, especially in regard to minorities.

Minority representatives and authors of textbooks from Montenegro remarked that in Montenegro most schoolbooks, especially at the level of secondary education, are published in Serbia. Due to the small size of the Montenegrin market, the development of an independent production of schoolbooks is difficult. As a result, most schoolbooks do not reflect the specificity of Montenegro, both in terms of majority culture, but also in regard to minorities. This deficit, particular concerning Montenegro, can be best overcome through more flexible curricula, which allow for the teaching of issues more specific to the republic, as well as through international funding for new textbooks.

The participants agreed that while some measures require minority-specific measures, numerous reforms address the educational system at large, irrespective of the pupils' national background. As a participant from Serbia noted, with nearly 100,000 people working in the educational sector in Serbia alone, a key to reform is stimulating the participation of professionals involved in the educational sector, rather than implementing reforms top-down, as such reforms run the risk of not taking root and of being only inadequately implemented.

### *C. Other Issues*

A number of participants noted that formal education is often too narrow a framework for addressing educational concerns of minorities. Both as an extension of formal education and due to the long duration of any reform process of the formal educational system ahead, informal education should be explored to overcome some of the existing problems. Some participants from NGOs noted that minority organizations are frequently too strongly focused on formal education.

In particular, raising awareness of minority cultures among the minorities and the general population can be achieved through informal educational tools, such as CD-Roms, evening lectures, and excursions to cultural and historical sights of minorities.

Participants from NGOs offered their experiences from public awareness campaigns and other informal educational tools.

## **V. Recommendations**

### ***Increasing Cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro***

- In light of the absence of cooperation between the Governments of Montenegro and Serbia in the sphere of education, a technical inter-ministerial working group should be established between the ministries of education of both republics.
- While this working group might define a broader agenda, it should specifically include issues of concern for cross-border minorities (e.g. Bosniaks/Muslims), such as minority-specific curricula and textbooks.
- Cooperation between ministries of education of both republics in the sphere of minority education should include formalized input from both (a) minority representatives; (b) other authorities involved in the protection of minorities, especially the Federal and Montenegrin ministries for the protection of national and ethnic minorities.
- The ministries of education of Serbia and Montenegro should preserve the equal status of students at universities in both republics, extending to health care, scholarships, and other entitlements. Such an agreement should be separated from the issue of the final status of Montenegro.
- A key issue for bilateral cooperation between the two republics should be the adoption of European standards, including the establishment of ECTS and the participation in the Bologna process. This process can later be embedded in a regional effort, including institutions of higher education from neighbouring countries and territories.

### ***Preventing Discrimination of Students***

- Pending a comprehensive reform of the educational systems, expert committees—with minority participation—should seek to eliminate gross examples of hate-speech and anti-minority rhetoric from textbooks and curricula.
- Practitioners and minority group representatives should be included formally and/or informally in the reform process, as well as in the constant evaluation and development of curricula and textbooks.
- After the completion of the reform process, a permanent forum for consultation of minorities and other external experts should be created.

### ***Addressing Curricula and Schoolbooks***

- Curricula reform has to address needs and concerns of minorities without establishing a separate curriculum for minorities. Instead emphasis has to be placed on promoting tolerance and learning diversity in culturally sensitive subjects such as history, literature and language.
- Schoolbook commissions between countries of the region, based on the model of Germany and Austria with their neighbours, should be established to engage in a dialogue on contentious issues in the countries' historical topics presented in schools. Such commissions shall eventually lead to the writing of history books which no longer promote a mono-national interpretation of the past.
- Domestic textbook production in Montenegro and Serbia should be facilitated through the abolition of textbook monopolies and international funding of alternative textbook production.

### ***Modernizing Education***

- Both republics have engaged in a process of reforming the educational system in recent years. This process should be pursued further. Due to the similarities

in the educational system in both republics, an exchange of past reform initiatives would help focus and invigorate the reform process.

- Education, which has in the past been highly concentrated at the level of ministries of education, has to be further decentralized in both republics, especially in Montenegro. Decentralization would not only help to establish a stronger link between students and their educational needs, but also enable minorities to have a stronger input into education in areas where they constitute a significant proportion of the population.
- The introduction of modern teaching methods is a key issue in improving interethnic relations in both republics. As separate minority curricula are not only controversial, but also do not address the issue of changing majority perception of minorities, all pupils and students need to be educated with the help of modern teaching methods and contents in fields such as tolerance, peace, and human rights.
- Modern, non-formal educational tools should be investigated by international donors to support minority communities in providing education to its members outside the educational system.

### ***A Regional Approach to Education***

- As the nostrification of diplomas from neighbouring countries and regions constitutes a major hurdle for minorities' access to the public service and presents itself as a case of subtle discrimination, transparent, standardized procedures for the nostrification of diplomas should be established. Such procedures shall include recourse to petition for students in case nostrification is denied or unreasonably delayed.
- The adoption of European standards is a key reform project for the higher education systems in Serbia and Montenegro. Its significance lies not only in raising the republican levels of higher education, but also in providing tools, such as ECTS for inter-republican and regional cooperation. Thus decision-makers and personnel working in education have to be familiarized with these

European standards and provided with tools of how they can be implemented in their respective countries and institutions.

## **VI. Follow-up Activities**

The participants noted during the discussions the absence of a constructive dialogue between Serbian, Montenegrin, and minority representatives on issues of education. As such, a number of participants noted the need to further such a dialogue both on the level of informal contacts and exchanges, and on the level of more formal types of educational training and cooperation.

### *Follow-up Workshops*

During the concluding discussions, the participants noted the need for further and more specific workshops which would discuss aspects of the topics covered by the workshop. Such workshops, based on detailed studies of particular problems associated with the educational system (i.e. textbooks), could define an agenda for reform.

### *Facilitating Inter-republican Cooperation*

One participant proposed the facilitation of inter-republican cooperation in the sphere of education through organizing meetings and establishing an informal working group between the ministries of education of the two republics. This proposal was welcomed by most participants. Such a group would initially include ministry representatives. In areas of cooperation which pertain to minority issues, such a group should eventually also include representatives from minority communities and other officials involved in minority issues.

### *Lobbying for Diploma Recognition*

The delays and hurdles for diploma recognition should be placed on the public agenda, and especially international agencies active in the region should address the issue in bi- and multi-lateral communication with governments in the region. Especially in areas where international organizations have a strong political role, such as Kosovo and Bosnia, international pressure on facilitating diploma nostrification might be pursued.

### *Training on Curricula and Textbooks*

A suggestion made by some participants from Western Europe and from Montenegro was to establish training sessions for authors of textbooks and curricula with Western educational institutions and centres. Such training could not only help in the transfer of modern curricula development and textbook authoring, but also in including minorities in the development of teaching materials. In addition, a similar training could provide practitioners in the educational system with examples of managing diversity in divided societies, such as Belgium or Switzerland.

## VII. Annexes

### Annex A: Programme of the Workshop

- 9.00-9.15**      **Opening Words and Welcome**  
Graham Holliday, ECMI  
Florian Bieber, ECMI
- 9.15-10.00**    **Presentation of the Background Papers**  
Heike Karge, Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook  
Research  
Serbo Rastoder, University of Montenegro
- 10.00-11.00**   **Session 1: *Access to Education in Serbia and Montenegro***
- 11.00-11.15**   **Coffee Break**
- 11.15-12.45**   **Session 2: *Minority-specific curricula in the border region***
- 13.00-14.30**   **Lunch**
- 14.30-16.00**   **Session 3: *Cross-regional educational programmes***
- 16.00-16.30**   **Coffee Break**
- 16.30-18.00**   **Closing Session of the Roundtable: Conclusions**  
- Summary of the Sessions and Recommendations  
- Planning follow-up events
- 19.00-**         **Closing Dinner**



## ANNEX B: List of Participants

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1	Brajovic, Sasa	Open Society Foundation, Montenegro, Podgorica
2	Camaj, Marko	University of Montenegro, Niksic
3	Djukanovic, Bojka	University of Montenegro, Niksic
4	Draga, Nail	Art klub, Ulcinj
5	Du Pont, Yannick	Academic Training Association, Belgrade
6	Franovic, Miroslav	HKD "Napredak", Tivat
7	Karge, Heike	Project for the Coordination of Textbook Research, Development and Textbook Comparison in South East Europe, Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig
8	Kerovic, Atvija	Almanah, Podgorica
9	Krcic, Sefket	Matica Bosnjaka, Novi Pazar
10	Lalicic, Lado	UN HC for Human Rights, Podgorica
11	Madzgalj, Zeljko	Manifesto, Bijelo Polje
12	Perovic, Dzermal	LSCG and Center for Interethnic Relations and Minority Rights, Ulcinj
13	Popov, Zelimir	Ministry of Education, Serbia, Belgrade
14	Popovic, Dusanka	Ministry of Education, Montenegro, Podgorica
15	Popovic, Milan	University of Montenegro, Podgorica
16	Radonjic, Slobodan	SNP and University of Montenegro, Niksic
17	Rastoder, Rifat	Parliament of Montenegro, Podgorica
18	Rastoder, Serbo	University of Montenegro, Niksic
19	Spadijer, Marko	Matica crnogorska, Podgorica
20	Strujic, Ruzdija	Bonum, Pljevlja
21	Zigmanov, Tomislav	Open Society Foundation, Novi Sad

### ECMI Staff

1	Holliday, Graham	Balkan Projects Coordinator
2	Bieber, Florian	Regional Representative
3	Stojanovic, Ana	Local Project Assistant

## **VIII. Background Papers**

### **A. Heike Karge<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Minorities in South East European Educational Systems: Perspectives from the Viewpoint of Textbook Research**

##### **1. Development of the Educational Sector in South East Europe**

In the whole of South East Europe, curriculum and textbook development has been on the rise over the last decade. The different South East European states have thereby undergone specific, but at the same time comparable processes. With regard to the textbook development today, differences exist especially in the field of textbook regulation, where more state-regulated textbook markets as for example in Albania or Macedonia could be compared to more liberal markets in Slovenia or Rumania. Accordingly, there are also great differences in the number of textbooks: monistic textbook systems with only one approved textbook for each grade exist for example in Albania or in Montenegro, while alternative, or rather parallel textbooks are in use today in Croatia or Romania.

As in the field of textbook development, most of the countries in the region have shared a common starting point also in curriculum development, and accordingly will have common problems in the future. One of the most obvious problems, which has been solved very quickly by most of the states, was to remove ideological issues like “socialism” or “defence and protection” from the curriculum and from school practice. But these changes have often been more a kind of “cosmetic treatment” of the old educational system than a substantial reform. So, other curriculum and textbook problems seemed to be more resistant to changes and constitute some of the major challenges up to the present. A lack of coherent visions for the educational reform, along with a lack of clear didactical concepts, characterized the reform

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<sup>1</sup> Heike Karge, M.A. is working on the Project for the Coordination of Textbook Research, Development and Textbook Comparison in South-East Europe, Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig.

process in most of the countries throughout the last decade. This can first of all be linked to the politization of educational reforms and decisions – going beyond the 1990s –, but also to internal instability, because of direct or indirect impacts of the wars.

Besides these more general problems, one of the main current problems in all of South East Europe is the school education of minorities, their portrayal in textbooks of the “society of the majority” as well as their place in the curriculum. This topic is of utmost importance for the entire region, and today’s educational systems in South East Europe pay their due to this finding in one way or another.

With the end of the socialist state system, the portrayals of historical periods, spaces, and ethnic majorities and minorities in the school textbooks of South East Europe were adapted to and redefined by the respective national frameworks of the new states. Today, blatant stereotypes are no longer the problem in the teaching materials of most countries, precisely in the field of so-called “national subjects” like history, geography, music or arts, but other problems come now to the fore concerning the separation and interconnection of the society of the majority and the minority in the educational sector. Two problem areas can thereby be distinguished:

1. On the one hand, the image of minorities in the teaching materials and curricula of the society of the majority; and
2. On the other hand, the specific interests of minority societies in the protection of their respective cultural, religious, or linguistic identity and autonomy.

Regarding the first question, up to now an ethnocentric matrix prevails in the textbooks as well as in the curriculum of the most countries in the region. In history teaching, a major deficit is therefore to be found in the marginalization of themes pertaining to minorities. Even the introduction of new courses or subjects such as “The history and tradition of minorities” like in the Romanian case, or “Education for tolerance and ethnic diversity” in Montenegro, does not always guarantee an integrative approach, especially if other subjects like history, literature or geography deal with minority issues more or less as a kind of “appendix” to the “real story”. This may be valid for states with parallel textbooks in use as well as for countries with a monistic textbook system. The (non-)existence of parallel textbooks is therefore less the issue at stake than the question under which perspectives – be they in favour of

civil or national cohesion – educational aims are defined and implemented through curricula and textbooks.

Safeguarding the rights and traditions of minority groups in education is one of the major challenges throughout South East Europe. The introduction of minority-relevant issues in the curriculum, which are, with respect to the revitalization of concepts of civic society of course relevant also for the majority group, is often not easy to achieve. A major problem lies in the fact that the curricula are already overloaded with contents and facts. The same applies to textbooks, especially because for most of the teachers the textbook “is” the curriculum, either because they do not have access to curricula or because the curriculum prescribes in detail the textbook contents. What lies behind this over-abundance is the idea of completeness, a strong emphasis on learning a wide range of facts and contents.

But how to include then additional issues relevant to minorities in the curriculum, a legitimate claim of minority groups? The challenges of the modern world, the necessity to mirror ongoing developments and changes, are problems educational systems have to face worldwide, and different models of solution have already been explored. Today, many countries try to find an answer to this challenge by choosing problem-oriented rather than fact-oriented contents, by laying emphasis in the curriculum on learning skills, and by reducing the number of topics to be dealt with. This is a way which requires not only new didactical concepts for the development of curricula and learning materials, but also intensive pre- and in-service teacher training. Correspondingly, a new perspective on the teaching process, the methods and the contents is needed. Especially with regard to the contents of the “national subjects” a new perspective could mean, without neglecting the need and desire for identification through history, the shift from the ethnocentric matrix to a more open, integrative approach. As the experiences from many South East European countries show today, a new quantitative balance between national, regional and European themes in curricula and textbooks is one of the first steps to realize this change of perspective.

Corresponding models of educational change have been found in the introduction of different models of curricula, either in a common curriculum, a core curriculum, or separated curricula for certain minority groups. This is of course already part of the second question: how to safeguard via legislation the interests and rights of minorities

in the educational process. The protection of the rights of minorities is part of the democratic culture of a society and should not be questioned. Nevertheless, one has to think carefully about the way in which this can be achieved. Core curricula or even separated curricula have much potential to express and develop cultural and other traditions of a minority group, and to consider at regional level the respective specific features.

However, the educational autonomy of minorities, which is guaranteed by constitution, partially encourages an increase in aggressively stereotypical portrayals of others in school textbooks. These portrayals often lead to a deepening or revival of old national stereotypes.

This is valid especially for the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where education does not fall within the competence of the state, but of the cantonal authorities. Problems have been rising to the surface there – because of the ongoing tensions between different ethnic groups, which practically dominate educational policy on cantonal level.

But problems also arise in Rumania, a country which has chosen another way to deal with its educational scheme for minorities. The Rumanian educational law states there that history has to be taught in the minority schools according to curricula and textbooks identical to those of the “majority group” of the Rumanians. Therefore, at the request of the minorities, a new discipline was created in the curriculum of 1995, called “The history and traditions of the minorities”. This subject, which is taught only at the schools of the minorities, has, according to the curriculum, the main goal of ensuring the development of the specific national identity of the minority group. This is important, of course, but as this subject is taught only at the schools of the minorities, the risk is high to build up new communication barriers inside the society.

The education of Roma children poses a particular problem in many South East European states. As refugees, as internally displaced persons or as part of the local population, they face problems of strong social prejudices and discrimination. Even if on state level or via the active commitment of the NGOs sector, special attendance is guaranteed to that problem (which is actually done in many countries), Roma children remain today mostly on the outskirts of the regular educational system. This is mainly

due to language barriers, poverty, social segregation (especially for refugees who live in collective settlements) and a high rate of school drop-outs among Roma children.

On the other hand, a lack of rights of the minorities in education can also lead to problems which are often seen by the respective minority as a disregard of its specific cultural traditions. This is valid today especially for the so-called “new minorities”, ethnic groups, which have emerged as minorities due to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Nearly all new states that were created after Yugoslavia’s breakdown have to cope with this problem. The situation is particularly difficult for example in Serbia, where “new minorities”, like refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina or from Kosovo claim the need for a greater recognition by the state of their cultural and linguistic heritage in education.

Two lines of argumentation emerge from these different examples. The first one is to define carefully the specific needs of minority groups in one’s own country before trying to find or copy overall legislative solutions. Minority groups face some similar, but also different problems: certain “old-established minorities” already have stable structures which allow for a broad use of their autonomy rights other minorities are “newcomers” and still need an elite that could effectively articulate their community interests.

The second question is how to find a balance between measures which meet the specific needs and interests of minorities and ones which generate an overall social, integrative process. An intensive communication process between the different actors of the educational sector is one of the main preconditions to develop the fields of education in which a consensus can be reached, and also in which the legitimate claim for difference can be fulfilled.

## **2. Possibilities of Cooperation**

In Montenegro’s educational policy, a number of crucial issues which need discussion have been identified during the last years, such as changes in curricula, teacher training, the development of a new legislation, decentralization, and the integration of refugee children and internally displaced persons into the educational system. At the same time the modernization of textbooks is urgently needed. Realizing changes in these areas is strongly interconnected with articulating the interests of minorities in

education. Therefore, establishing stable communication lines on regional, state and supraregional level is of high priority.

Reforming the educational system is not a short-term process, but will require rather medium- and long-term decisions. Most Montenegrins regard their education system today as “old-fashioned”, especially as Montenegro has been more or less isolated during the last years from other parts of Europe. Therefore effective mechanisms have to be found which may support in a first step also short-term activities of educational actors.

From the point of view of textbook development and textbook research in South East Europe, I would like to give as a brief outline some suggestions about mechanisms and experiences gained in other countries, which can already be profitably applied.

The Stability Pact for South East Europe provides today effective instruments for encouraging supraregional cooperation in the field of education. Online libraries like the South East European Educational Cooperation Network ([www.see-educoop.net](http://www.see-educoop.net)) or the South East European Textbook Network ([www.see-textbook.net](http://www.see-textbook.net)) offer relevant reports, analyses and other information from the educational sector in South East Europe in a range of languages. The use of these information resources could be of great value not only for educational institutions, but also for textbook authors, researchers, teachers, and pupils.

Within the framework of the Stability Pact, the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research has launched a project for the “Coordination of Textbook Research, Development, and Comparison in South East Europe”. The project, which is conducted in close cooperation with the activities of the Council of Europe, aims at the renewal of history teaching in South East Europe and stands in the tradition of the revision of school textbooks and curricula after World War II.

The running project aims at developing practical steps in order to encourage and strengthen the dialogue between politicians and other actors dealing with educational matters in the region, and to make contacts with other European partners easier and more accessible, as well as to improve coordination by enabling the exchange of information and establishing practical connections on all levels of the educational systems.

As to the contents, the project aims mainly at the analysis and further development of themes pertaining to European and South East European history, including the question of minority education. A first stocktaking in the field of minority representation in textbooks in South East Europe was published in 2001 by the Georg Eckert Institute. It will be followed in June 2002 by a workshop on history education in the balance between majority and minority expectations.

Furthermore, the Georg Eckert Institute has established a scholarship programme which, from September 2001 onwards, addresses potential textbook authors and curriculum planners from Serbia and Montenegro and will concentrate on the development and implementation of new history textbooks.

In cooperation with historians and educationalists from Montenegro and Serbia, the Georg Eckert Institute intends to support with its expertise the development of new materials for history teaching, the processing of recommendations and materials for revised curricula and textbooks, as well as the preparation of textbooks and teaching materials which should meet international standards on scientific and didactic levels. The scholarship programme will give authors of new history textbooks the opportunity to use the Georg Eckert Institute's resources and to gain an overview of current developments in didactics, as well as to examine textbooks from other European countries.



## **B. Yannick du Pont<sup>1</sup>**

### **The Difficult Road to Bologna**

The borders between European Union member states are fading. Moreover, as of 1 January 2002, a common currency (Euro) will be introduced. The EU common market is thus entering a new phase, which has important consequences for the mobility of its labour force: for EU citizens it is ever easier to study and work in another member state. It is important to complement this development in the field of higher education. The main challenge in this process is the development of a common framework in higher education (H.E.), whilst respecting the diversity of the national systems of the participating countries.

This process of defining common H.E. standards started in 1998, when the education ministers of Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom gathered in Paris to discuss an ambitious European Higher Education Reform plan. One year later, on 19 June 1999, this initiative led to the so-called Bologna Declaration, which was supported by 32 European ministers of education. In May 2001 a follow-up to Bologna was organized in Prague, where the progress was discussed. It was agreed that the common H.E. framework and implementation of the reforms in the member states should be completed by the end of 2010. In this year, the so-called “European Higher Education Area” should be a fact. Three main objectives have guided the so-called Bologna process.

#### **1. Increasing Mobility and Exchange between and within Participating States**

In order to achieve this aim, it is important that universities recognize each other's credits and diplomas. To this purpose, (A) a common credit system, (B) a common

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<sup>1</sup> Yannick du Pont, holds an M.A. degree in International Relations/Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. He is chairman of the non-profit ‘Academic Training Association’ (ATA), which has been helping several universities in SEE in the reform of their curricula and system of education since 1994. The best-known ATA projects are the large-scale Summer Universities in Tuzla and Pristina, which traditionally last 4 weeks and serve over 550 participants. For more information see [www.academictraining.org](http://www.academictraining.org)

degree system, and (C) a common framework for a quality assurance system need to be developed.

*a) The Common Credit System: European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)*

As with the Euro, ECTS credits earned can be used in all the other countries that are using this system. It thus becomes possible to follow subjects in different universities in different countries (or for example to follow an MA programme in a different country from that where one finished his/her BA). ECTS facilitates both international and internal mobility (between universities within a country).

One academic year equals 60 ECTS credits. Each subject in any year has its own number of credits awarded, depending on the size/workload of that subject. All subjects in one year add up to 60.

*b) A Common Degree System (Bachelor/Master/PhD)*

Presently, the various countries in Europe differ in the way they structure their studies. A common degree system needs to be agreed upon.

For example if you finish your faculty in Yugoslavia, which should take officially about 4 years, you hold a Bachelor. In Britain a Bachelor takes 3 years to earn. In Dutch universities, we do generally not have Bachelor degrees, but students proceed directly to the so-called, 4 year, 'drs' title, which we can call a Master-degree when travelling abroad. Needless to say, this causes much confusion.

The general development of 'Bologna' is the European-wide introduction of a Bachelor-Master-PhD system in which a BA programme lasts 3 years (equals 180 ECTS credits), to obtain a Masters-degree, one needs to study another 2 years (120 ECTS credits), and for a PhD, a final 3 years (180 ECTS credits) are required. This system is certainly (not yet) accepted all over Europe and exceptions to these general rules occur<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For example Medicine Studies generally do not feature a BA degree-level: one has to study for straight five or more years to obtain an MA.

### *c) A Proper Quality Assurance System Needs to be Developed*

The quality of study programmes needs to be made measurable as ‘quality is the underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area<sup>3</sup>’. First and foremost, a good quality assurance system is essential to guarantee the quality of education within a university, and serves as an important tool to help universities to bring/keep their programmes up-to-date and of high quality. Internationally, it is of crucial importance if one wants to have his diplomas recognized abroad.

For example: if I want to have my MA diploma from the University of Amsterdam accepted in Belgrade or Podgorica, I need to be able to prove there that my diploma is worth something, that the quality of the programme in Amsterdam is sufficiently high to be accepted here.

Also, if a university wishes to attract foreign students, it will have to objectively prove to them that the quality of their study programmes is high (enough). It is thus extremely important to increase the confidence of the outside world in your programmes. In a sense it is like *selling* the product *education* on an increasingly liberalized higher education *market*. In order to get this confidence in your programmes, a proper and transparent system for Quality Assurance<sup>4</sup> and Accreditation<sup>5</sup> is the key element.

## **2. Improving Employability**

It is important to optimize the relationship between higher education and professional life, in order for students to have a better chance for employment (on both the national and the wider European labour market) after they finish their studies. On the side of the employers, this assures that they will hire personnel that are up for the job. To put it simple: one has to make sure that the contents and skills obtained in a study programme are what the labour-market demands.

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<sup>3</sup> Salamanca Convention, see [www.Salamanca2001.org](http://www.Salamanca2001.org)

<sup>4</sup> In March 2000, the European Quality Assurance Network (ENQA) was launched. This ENQA is not a strict agency enforcing standards, but rather an agency based on decentralization, working with a centrally agreed framework.

<sup>5</sup> Accreditation is the public confirmation by an external body that certain standards of quality are met.

Especially the Bachelor is generally considered to be a more professional degree, which prepares students for a job on the labour-market.

### **3. Increasing Competitiveness**

If Europe wants to compete with the strong education market of the United States and Canada in particular, it needs to work on establishing a coherent and competitive higher education system. In other words: higher education as an export product. Possibly, Serbia could attract students from the South East European region and play an important role in the regional H.E. market.

### **4. Applying Bologna to Serbia and Montenegro**

Today, University studies in Serbia and Montenegro, as in many other countries in the region, are long, highly structured (inflexible), mono-disciplinary, and have no credit system in place. Knowledge obtained during one's studies is often not compatible with the rapidly changing demands of the labour market. No proper quality assurance system is in place. This calls for significant changes if Bologna standards are to be met. Needless to say, this will be a difficult and painful process.

However, there are very obvious advantages for meeting these standards, for example:

- Increasing academic cooperation with and academic support from (West) European universities;
- Recognition of Serbian and Montenegrin diplomas in other European countries;
- Increase in regional cooperation. If all universities in the region will adapt the Bologna system, regional student and staff mobility will increase, which will greatly facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the South East European universities.

Equally important, the alternative of not implementing Bologna is very risky as this would result in isolation.

Neither Serbia and Montenegro, nor any of the other countries in the region, have sufficient resources for a proper functioning of its Higher Education System, let alone

for a long and costly reform process. It is therefore crucial that the reform is implemented as soon and swiftly as possible, in cooperation with other countries in the region. These, especially the former Yugoslav countries, historically share the same H.E. system and are thus facing the same challenges. Cooperation will enable them to learn from each other's processes and will cut down the required resources.

**Main Documents consulted for this paper:**

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<http://147.83.2.29/salamanca2001/documents/trends/trends.PDF>.

Wit, Hans de. "The long and winding road to a European Higher Education Area", in *International Higher Education*, the Boston College Center for International Higher Education, 25, 2001, Autumn, available at:

[http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News25/text002.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/News25/text002.htm)

The Sorbonne, Bologna and Salamanca Declarations, available at:

<http://www.Salamanca2001.org>.

**Recommended web-links:**

Salamanca Conference : <http://www.Salamanca2001.org>

European University Association (EUA): <http://www.unige.ch/eua/>

The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB): <http://www.esib.org>

EC Directorate-General for Education and Culture:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm)

Academic Training Association (ATA): <http://www.academictraining.org>

## C. Serbo Rastoder<sup>1</sup>

### **Education and Minorities in Montenegro: Problems and Perspectives**

Education is one of the fundamental issues reflecting the perspective of every society. Therefore, it is, important, within the context of my understanding of this subject area and the goals of this workshop, to take note of several aspects, especially bearing in mind that in this case primary emphasis is placed on the correlation between current political processes and the role of minorities in the border regions of Serbia and Montenegro in them. Consequently, the following issues will be discussed in this paper:

1. The issue of access to educational institutions;
2. The issue of reform of the educational system;
3. Perspectives.

#### **1. The Issue of Access to Educational Institutions**

The question of access to educational institutions as it relates to the needs of minorities in Montenegro as well as to those in the border regions of Montenegro and Serbia, as was specified in the preparatory materials for this workshop, is defined by the following parameters:

- Educational policy currently falls under the jurisdiction of the individual republics and is likely to remain so under any other political arrangements between Serbia and Montenegro;
- A significant number of students from Montenegro has traditionally attended university in Serbia and vice versa;
- It is in the interest of minorities in Montenegro and Serbia, considering their inherent objective needs, to enjoy unhindered access to universities not only in

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Serbo Rastoder, Ph.D., is the editor of *Almanah*, a journal for the study, presentation and preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of Muslims-Bosniaks in Montenegro

Serbia and Montenegro, but throughout the territory of the former Yugoslavia, the Balkans and even Europe;

- Today it can be established with a high degree of certainty that a large portion of minority students attend university outside of Montenegro and Serbia;
- Access to educational institutions for all, but especially for minority populations, is a cultural, social and political issue;
- Access to educational institutions will be one of the main issues in the future referendum campaign in Montenegro;
- Prior to the final resolution of the relations between Serbia and Montenegro, it will be difficult to settle this issue based on an agreement which would favour unhindered access to education in the sense of guaranteeing current levels of access.

In accordance with existing constitutional regulations, the republics are sovereign in the areas of education and educational policy. In this context, the issue of future educational policy can be viewed from the perspective of future constitutional and legal policy, which is not only relevant to minority populations, and from the perspective of the compatibility and content of existing school systems, in which minority students are especially interested. Changes in the national and legal status of Montenegro, at least in the early stages, would probably cause decreased access to universities in Serbia, just as, with the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, access to universities in the former republics decreased. Accurate information on the number of students from Montenegro attending university in Serbia is not available. According to statistics available from the student standards section of Montenegro's Ministry of Education for June 2001, there were 1,820 students from Montenegro at Serbian universities receiving student loans. Based on this information, it is reasonable to assume that the actual number of students from Montenegro is several times greater (unofficial estimates amount to 6,000). In other words, of a total of 10,500 students from Montenegro who have in the past five or six years received student loans, 3,351 attend university in Serbia (i.e. the ones who currently receive financial assistance—1,820—plus those who temporarily forfeited the right to financial aid by not completing their year of study on time, and who may receive aid once again upon satisfying the requirements). We do not have information regarding

the national or religious background of this student population, nor about the number of minority students currently studying at universities in Montenegro or Serbia. It is certain that this number is lower today than prior to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, i.e. it is well known that a significant number of college-age minorities have left Montenegro in the last decade in order to avoid armed conflict. However, thanks to Mr Hilm Hadzic, the principal of “30th September” High School in Rozaje, we have fairly accurate information for the last five years about where this school’s graduates attended college, as can be seen in the table below.

<b>School year</b>	<b>Monte-negro</b>	<b>Serbia</b>	<b>Kosovo</b>	<b>Bosnia</b>	<b>Not enrolled</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
1996/7	10	4	8	11	22	6
1997/8	15	10	10	12	12	12
1998/9	16	13	5	10	9	9
1999/0	8	14	12	19	7	20
2000/1	15	35	3	14	7	21
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>68</b>

Countries of Study of Graduates of the “30<sup>th</sup> September” High School, Rozaje 1996-2001

The table clearly shows that, in the last five years, the greatest number of graduates from Rozaje enrolled in university in Serbia (76), followed by Bosnia (66), Montenegro (64) and finally Kosovo (3). Unfortunately, we do not have similar information for other border towns in Montenegro, which are currently home to a large number of minorities. The information we received from Mr Ramo Kolasinac, principal of the high school in Plav, which has a bilingual programme in Serbian and Albanian (2 out of 9 groups have classes in Albanian), reveal that in the school year 1999/2000, 29 out of 32 graduates passed entrance exams, while in the school year 2001/02, 24 out of 27 graduates continued their studies at university level. This exceptionally high level of college enrolment speaks for the high quality of education in this school district. The majority of Plav’s graduates enrolled in Montenegro, followed by Sarajevo (in the past school year, there were 9), while graduates of Albanian background mostly attend university in Pristina (in the past school year 8 out of 10). A certain number of students also attends university in Tirana and Shkoder.



It is important to note that this region saw many migrations of its population (in the school year 1981/82, the school had 1045 students, in 1996/97 311, and in the school year 2001/02 it has 497 students). The highest number of students goes to college in the United States and countries of Western Europe. For example for the year 2001/02 there are 71 students from Plav and Gusinje in the United States, which probably represents the highest number of enrolments if we compare it to the number of students from these two towns in the north of Montenegro (populated primarily by Muslim-Bosniaks) attending university at all other schools on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. At the same time there are currently 59 people from this area who have graduated from college in the United States and primarily live in New York. Today no one in Montenegro expects their eventual return, the precious transfer of knowledge, or possibly, for our standard of living, the exceptional economic potential of these immigrants.

There are no accurate statistics either about the number of students from Serbia attending university in Montenegro. We only have the information that last year there were 394 students from Serbia accommodated in university housing in Montenegro, which means that their total number would most likely also be several times higher than that. On the other hand, a large number of students from *Republika Srpska* study at the University of Montenegro, and they do not have the status of foreign students, while students from Montenegro and from Serbia (from Sandzak), who attend university in Sarajevo, have the status of foreign residents and must study under considerably more difficult conditions. According to the statistics of the aforementioned student standard section of Montenegro's Ministry of Education for June 2001, there were 445 students from *Republika Srpska* living in university housing, which would again indicate that their total number is several times higher. It should also be noted that their number is higher than the number of students from *Republika Srpska* housed in university housing in Montenegro. This example illustrates that borders do not condition access to education, rather than political will and the capacity for agreement.

Today a significant number of Muslims-Bosniaks from Montenegro and Serbia attend university in Sarajevo and other towns in Bosnia, while Albanians traditionally showed preference for the University of Pristina and increasingly for the universities in Shkoder and Tirana. As a result, to meet the needs of minority populations in

Montenegro, it is necessary to introduce regulations ensuring uninhibited access not only to universities in Serbia, but also to those in neighbouring countries, and there is a manifest need for broader international regulation in this area, involving all countries in the region, Europe, and even the United States.

Montenegro's current government policy for its students attending university in Bosnia and Herzegovina is hardly reflective of a multiethnic state which tends equally to all of its citizens. Recently, via Montenegro's Mission in Sarajevo, a group of 132 Montenegrin students attending the University of Sarajevo petitioned to the President of the Republic of Montenegro, the Prime Minister of Montenegro, the Minister of Education, the Minister of International Affairs, and the Dean of the University of Montenegro to address the needs of Montenegrin students studying in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of whom there are approximately 400<sup>2</sup>. In their petition, the students demand that:

1. The Government of Montenegro, through the Ministry of Education and the University of Montenegro, ensure equal status regarding all issues relevant to students for those studying in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as is already granted to students studying in Montenegro and Republika Srpska;
2. Montenegrin students in Bosnia-Herzegovina enjoy equal access to financial aid, and other compensations currently offered by the Government of Montenegro to students studying in Montenegro proper;
3. The Government of Montenegro, via the Ministry of Education and the University of Montenegro, begin cooperating with the governments, the Ministries of Education and the universities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the goal of mutual recognition of diplomas and academic titles;
4. University and junior college degrees earned in Bosnia and Herzegovina—in Sarajevo be recognized as equal to those earned in *Republika Srpska*—in Banja Luka, Foca or Trebinje;
5. The nostrification and recognition of diplomas from universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina be handled by the appropriate ministry and the university in

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<sup>2</sup> Complete statistics are unavailable.

Montenegro rather than, as is currently the case, by the federal government and its ministries, which Montenegro essentially does not legally recognize;

6. Students attending university in Bosnia and Herzegovina can participate in student exchange programmes sponsored by the University of Montenegro and other institutions which are currently open only to students attending university in Montenegro proper;

7. Health insurance be provided for all students from Montenegro, whether they attend university in Montenegro, *Republika Srpska* or the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Students in the Federation currently do not enjoy the same level of insurance as those studying in *Republika Srpska*.

The petition further indicates that, as foreign students, they are not eligible for financial aid or student exchange programmes sponsored by the universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As these students are predominantly Bosniaks and as they do not enjoy equal status with students of Montenegrin and Serbian origins studying in *Republika Srpska*, they consider the current policy to be discriminatory. This is especially evident with the nostrification of diplomas. While the nostrification of diplomas from *Republika Srpska* is treated as little more than a formality, the nostrification of diplomas from the Federation, often earned while studying using the same textbooks and curriculum as in Montenegro, requires passing a number of exams which the students had already passed and often resubmitting graduation thesis papers. The students interpret this practice as pressure and discrimination applied with the goal of discouraging their return to their native state. The above example clearly illustrates that even within one country, (there exist varying degrees of access to education, dependent on the ethnic background of the students. The need for access to universities outside of Montenegro for minorities is, therefore, multidirectional, just as there exists a need for improved access to universities within the republics in which they live, especially with regard to the Albanian population. From a legal standpoint, formal equality exists; however, a more subtle factual analysis, I believe, would demonstrate that for this population, the percentage of access and attendance of university in Montenegro is not even close to the percentage this group represents of the population as a whole. While we lack access to verifiable information, I believe that the situation is the same in Serbia. There are a number of reasons for this, and they should be sought in the sphere of the social, ethnic, and political atmosphere of

today's society in Serbia and Montenegro. Today, university enrolment policy functions to a great extent as part of a social policy. This is reflected by the acceptance to university of a large number of students as a way of deferring the problem of unemployment and, on the surface, by more or less taking care of a significant portion of the younger population. When the issue of transition has not touched the University in any significant way, access to universities depends in large part on the political elite and the atmosphere created by them. As conflict seems to form an integral part of the political identity and purpose of our political elite, it is understandably in their interest to make every issue potentially conflict-laden as they bring it into focus of their primary political interests. It is, therefore, completely reasonable to expect that a major issue in the upcoming referendum campaign will be the issue of access to education for students from Montenegro wishing to study in Serbia. The "integrationist" block will, predictably, use this as a significant argument in proving the need for maintaining a federal union of Montenegro and Serbia, while the pro-independence side will probably attempt to marginalize its significance. Within this schism, the issue of access to universities in Serbia, from the perspective of minorities in Montenegro, can appear as nothing but another hypocritical Balkan simulation of a system of Russian babushka dolls, where the larger always covers the smaller. The preceding example clearly shows that what is needed for minorities in Montenegro is complete, rather than directed and conditioned, openness of Montenegro. Access assumes openness, and it is thus completely illogical that a closed and ethnically xenophobic political elite, which nurtures the inherited system of a type of political paranoia with regard to its broader environment and its minority populations, will be able to convince the minorities in Montenegro that their efforts to ensure open access to education is motivated by a genuine concern for the equality of its citizens and a desire for an open society. It is for this reason that I am sceptical that the issue of access to education between Montenegro and Serbia can be solved before resolving the issue of statehood. Any guarantees which would result from bilateral agreements would be effective in terms of avoiding conflict and uncertainty, but at the same time, they would significantly weaken the argument of the integrationist block in Montenegro, which is certainly not in the political interest of the official political elite in Serbia today. On the other hand, the Montenegrin Government often uses its official lack of statehood as an excuse, arguing that it lacks the authority to independently resolve this issue with neighbouring countries, despite the evident

benefit for all, and especially for minority populations. An important aspect of this issue, for Montenegro and by extension for its minorities, is the concentration and exchange of knowledge, both for the existing teaching process at university and more crucially for future transitional processes which must be undertaken. The policy of student and professor exchange and the concentration of knowledge is crucial here, especially for Montenegro, which clearly lacks competent experts in important fields. Despite the fact that a significant number of professors from universities in Serbia lead or participate in many projects and teach at the University of Montenegro, there exists an objective need for increasing access to graduate studies at universities both in Serbia and in the region as a whole. With respect to access, graduate and specialized studies are of particular importance. For the minorities in Montenegro, free access to educational institutions in the region, and even farther, would be beneficial.

## **2. The Issue of Reform of the Educational System in Montenegro**

During the past three years, and somewhat more intensively from mid-1999, Montenegro began the process of educational reform. To this end, there were a number of seminars held on topics of educational reform in countries in transition and Western European countries, as well as on the issues of reform management, strategic planning, improving the curriculum, and teacher training. The reform process has, up to this point, been focused primarily on elementary and secondary education, and only recently have there been indications that we will begin preparing new regulations on higher education. In the area of reform of pre-university level education, some initial steps are evident but these are still far from satisfactory.

With the help of foreign experts, a structure of reform has been established (the National Council for Education, and commissions for certain levels of education) and the most important document in the area of reform (*The Book for Changes*) has been prepared as the final element of the reform strategy. *The Book for Changes* outlines all of the strategic directions in the framework of necessary legislative changes in the area of education, and the overall implementation of the reform strategy. The *Needs Assessment* has been completed and represents an important strategic document, and there have been significant advances made on raising the level of public awareness of

the need for educational reform. In this sense, there were dozens of seminars and expert discussions held in Montenegro, and a significant number of our experts spent time abroad. Journalists from certain media organizations also made educational visits to media establishments in Western Europe with the goal of improving media presentation and increasing transparency. As an interim step, a number of revisions of the curriculum have already been made. Despite all this, one still has the impression that reform is not a top government priority and that the overall management of the process has not reached the required level of organization. Due to the current political situation, political issues still have priority over the broader dynamic of the reform process in Montenegro, regardless of the fact that educational reform is a long-term process. Building capacities for reform and a stable motivational force are essential prerequisites for the further dynamic progress of educational reform. In addition to the aforementioned reform processes, several reform-related projects were introduced to the educational system of Montenegro, such as *Step by step*, *Active learning* or the project on *Critical reading and thinking*, which were developed in many school systems in Montenegro, at the pre-school and elementary level. Considering the fact that educational reform is a complex process which involves the whole of social and educational structure, there have been noted efforts to extend the process to university-level education, especially to that segment which significantly participates in the education of future teachers. This is currently also the weakest link in the reform process in Montenegro, as the project itself does not include universities but respects their autonomy. *The Book for Changes*, which represents the key strategic document and the basis of educational reform, includes the basic principles of reform, the means of its implementation, the levels and goals of organizational changes and the means of financing the education of pre-school children through adults, and in that sense there is no need to further elaborate on this topic here.

The greatest failing of the current model of education, from the standpoint of minorities, lies not so much with the issue of access, at least when the territory of Montenegro proper is in question, although that, too, is an important issue. Rather, it is the content of the educational process, its centralized administration and the rigid system of the very model of education. A number of public and expert analyses of the curriculum and textbooks used in Montenegro revealed that the current content, especially for the subjects of history, geography and literature, as well as certain areas

of culture, promotes xenophobia, ethnic and religious intolerance, death as an ideal of life, necrophilia as the national destiny, etc. The obligation to teach a set curriculum without leaving any room for choice has completely marginalized the types of knowledge necessary for ethnic self-affirmation, for learning about and nurturing not only minority, but to a large extent, even Montenegrin identity. The curriculum is clearly dominated by an ideology of a closed and ethnocentric society, further supplemented with meaningless content reflecting the experiences of the past decade. As an example of how provocative this content can be, I cite an example of a math problem from a textbook published in Serbia, which may or may not still be in use and which was used in Montenegro. It reads: *Sulyo sold Selim an uncooked pig weighing 14 kg and 800 grams. Selim's guests ate the pig roasted—exactly 10 kg of roast pork. What percentage of the pig is lost through roasting?*<sup>3</sup> This is an illustrative example which indicates that even subjects that are seemingly free of cultural or ethnic content can project an insulting image to a significant portion of the school population. The content of textbooks in Albanian presents a special problem about which there has been much debate in recent years in Montenegro. The problems have for the most part been identified, but there has been little done in terms of reform in this area.

The rigid and centralized system of education has significantly decreased the influence of local communities on their schools. The hiring policy has been raised to a level of “political suitability” in a more rigid form than in a single party system. Such practices have resulted in the relative disinterest of local communities in their schools, which has, especially for minorities, further marginalized the possibility for affecting the educational process.

The inflexible nature of the curriculum has promoted ethnocentricity as a one-sided principle of national self-affirmation, which in a multiethnic and multiconfessional society represents an objective hurdle to improve understanding. I believe that in Montenegro these failings have been identified on the political plane and that what lies ahead is a painful process of complete democratization of schools, the introduction of a more humane content and the true implementation of values of a multiethnic, civil and tolerant society. That is, the establishment of a school system

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<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Stojanovic, *Matematskop 3, Selected problems for ninth grade*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, (Belgrade 1995), problem no. 630, p. 92.

which is, in its value system, compatible with our proclaimed political ideals seems to be likely. The differences in society regarding the national status of Montenegro significantly delay all more radical efforts of reform. More specifically, a segment of the political elite in Montenegro considers minorities a potential threat to the territorial integrity of Montenegro. This is the fundamental political line along which attempts are being made to homogenize the Orthodox population in Montenegro, which entirely forms the integrationist block, and which the current powers are skilfully using to defer a more radical reform. They fear that any radical move would further strengthen the opposition in terms of threatening fundamental “national interests,” due to the fact that the political story of Montenegro is focused on a collective identity rather than the individual. The minorities’ loyalty to Montenegro is interpreted by one segment of the political scene as a weakness of the rival faction (i.e. the independence block), which is in itself an anti-civilizational occurrence, and the question naturally arises whether anyone would be happier if minorities in Montenegro behaved the way minorities did in the former Yugoslavia. However, from the standpoint of the specific topic of this workshop, this question strongly suggests quality and a speedy reform in Montenegro and raises fundamental issues about the prospects of our future society and the dynamics of accepting the contemporary standards of European society.

### **3. Perspectives**

Only an open, democratic and civil society can harmonize the different needs of its citizens and justify the purpose of its historical duration. This has been clearly demonstrated by our experience to date. Everything which was created by force and which was not founded on democratic legitimacy disintegrated at the first significant challenge. Today when we face a new set of historical challenges, it is imperative that we keep this in mind. With respect to the interests of minority peoples in Montenegro, it is certain that Montenegro makes sense, be it as an independent country or as a member of the FRY, only as a democratic and open community of all of its citizens. The exceptional sense of connection of the minority population to Montenegro, which is according to all sociological research higher than among the majority Orthodox population, is not a simple reflex of the so-called increased democratic tradition and patriotism of this portion of the population, but rather an expression of optimism that



Montenegro truly can be a democratic and open society of equal citizens. One should not view the orientation of this portion of Montenegro's population only in terms of the current political and social dilemma facing the people of Montenegro, but through the prism of the past decade's experience. On the other hand, focusing on the issue of education at all levels of access in all directions, I believe that it would suffice to begin with carefully considered examples and tolerant dialogue. In this respect, a preliminary agreement between Montenegro and Serbia could serve as an example, which could then be followed by countries in the region and which would be an example of the maturity of their political and cultural elite.

I believe that this presentation will be inspirational in this respect and that our discussion will show that we have the will to direct at least some of our positive energy towards achieving solutions which will signify even a small step towards humanizing the overall relations in our society as a whole, because the educational system of every society is a mirror of its value system. Fortunately, I think that this system is being constituted today for the overall good of humanity and that the determined standards will thus, sooner or later, be implemented in this region as well.