

**ECMI CIVIL SOCIETY PROJECT IN  
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:  
NATIONAL MINORITIES  
AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM  
IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

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ECMI WORKSHOP

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## CONTENTS

I.	Background to the Project .....	1
II.	Introduction and Goals .....	2
III.	Framework .....	3
IV.	Review of the Educational Reform Process.....	6
V.	Roundtable Discussion: The Status of National Minorities and Educational Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina.....	10
	A. <i>The Roma Community in BiH</i> .....	10
	B. <i>The Czech Community in BiH</i> .....	11
	C. <i>The Hungarian Community in BiH</i> .....	13
	D. <i>The Ukrainian Community in BiH</i> .....	13
	E. <i>The Albanian Community in BiH</i> .....	15
	F. <i>The Slovene Community in BiH</i> .....	16
	G. <i>The Macedonian Community in BiH</i> .....	17
	H. <i>General Comments</i> .....	18
V.	Actions and Recommendations.....	19
VI.	Conclusions.....	20
VII.	Annexes .....	22
	A. Programme of the Workshop .....	22
	B. List of Participants .....	23
	C. Participant Comments - 1 .....	25
	D. Participant Comments - 2 .....	26



## **I. Background to the Project**

The ECMI Civil Society Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) aims to assist local actors in assuming responsibility for democratic governance in BiH. Local actors are being involved in a process of reviewing existing policy on practical issues of concern to all communities in BiH, and of developing specific policy recommendations and grassroots initiatives to further the development of civil society and post-conflict reconstruction within the framework set out by the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA).

The project targets civil society representatives, policy and decision makers in BiH at all levels of government, and researchers from all national communities. Representatives from the international implementing agencies and donors are invited to attend the events. A general constitutive meeting was held in June 2001 to begin the process of identifying key issues and themes. A workshop on media issues and national minorities was held in November 2001. A series of workshops and related events have been held on the specific issue of the implementation of Annex 8 of the DPA, on the theme of the role of national monuments and cultural heritage in a multiethnic country. This meeting represents the first workshop on education and educational reform – topics that have gained high visibility and priority in BiH in autumn 2002.

## **II. Introduction and Goals**

Educational reform efforts have been recommended, developed and implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) by various small and large organizations for several years. One significant initiative was the Shared Modernization Strategy implemented by the European Commission in 2001 and 2002, which sought to integrate local actors and experts in the reform and modernization process. In the summer of 2002, a broader, widely supported, coordinated and dedicated reform effort was initiated by the OSCE, which raised the profile of the issue of education as a key element of peace building, economic growth and post-war reconstruction.

However, throughout the various related efforts over the past several years, there have not been attempts at integrating national minorities into the process. ECMI, therefore, organized the workshop presented here to provide a forum for representatives of national minority groups from throughout BiH to include their ideas, concerns and opinions on education and educational reform. Only by ensuring that all of BiH's citizens are actively involved in the reform process can a truly reflective educational system be developed.

Associations representing the following national minorities in BiH took part in the workshop:

- Albanians
- Czechs
- Hungarians
- Macedonians
- Roma
- Slovenes
- Ukrainians

Representatives of BiH's Jewish and Italian communities were invited but unable to attend. They will remain informed of the progress.

The goals of the meeting included the following:

- Learn about the current OSCE strategy for integrating national minorities in the educational reform process
- Identify relevant laws and norms on the issue of the rights of national minorities
- Collect data on the status quo, and discuss the position of national minorities in education before the war
- Discuss the current status of national minorities in education in terms of access and content
- Discuss the value of integrating national minorities into the educational curriculum for all students
- Brainstorm methods of ensuring appropriate access and content
- Compile a list of recommendations for the authorities (both domestic and international) who are currently developing a reform strategy and implementing changes in the BiH educational system
- Strengthen the role of BiH's national minority groups in society in general through their active participation in this process

### **III. Framework**

The ECMI representative opened the discussion with a brief review of some norms, concepts, and ideas aimed at generating ideas and recommendations throughout the workshop discussion. Numerous conventions, norms, and frameworks address issues concerning education and national minorities, including the 1950 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (signed by BiH on February 24, 2000) and the OSCE 1990 Copenhagen Document (though not a binding treaty). The 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child also provides a general description of the link between education and culture, as it states: “[The child] shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral

and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society.”<sup>1</sup> Education, whether formal or informal, public or private, plays a vital role in the development of a person’s identity. “Next to the family, [education] is the single most important agency for cultural reproduction, socialization and identity formation.”<sup>2</sup>

This issue is not unique to BiH. A 1997 report prepared by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities explored several issues of national minority linguistic and educational rights.<sup>3</sup> One of the questions asked of the OSCE participating states in the development of this report was: “To what extent are the culture, history, religion and belief of national minorities taught in the *general* curriculum?”<sup>4</sup> The results were disappointing: “Fewer than one-third of the states responded affirmatively that they teach about minority cultures in the general curriculum.”<sup>5</sup>

In the report’s conclusions and recommendations, the authors suggested several ways of remedying this weakness:

1. States must be more aware of international standards
2. States would be well-served to guarantee implementation of these conventions by adopting legislation and related monitoring mechanisms to ensure enforcement
3. There is a need for close communications between government bodies and national minority communities (cf. p. 37)

The inclusion of national minorities and a broad spectrum of outlooks and experience in education should aim to be not just fair, but enriching for all students. An OECD report published in September 2001 suggests that “education systems should not just

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<sup>1</sup> Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959, principle 7.

<sup>2</sup> C.H. Williams. “The Cultural Rights of Minorities: Recognition and Implementation”, in *Minorities in Politics: Cultural and Language Rights*, J. Plichtova (ed.), 1992. Cited in Kristin Henrard, “Education and Multiculturalism.” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, vol. 7, 2000, pp. 393-410.

<sup>3</sup> Report on the Linguistic Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the OSCE Area, March 1999. See <http://www.osce.bih/hcnm>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24 (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.



be ‘fair’ to minorities – they should promote a spirit of equality and tolerance among ethnic and cultural groups.”<sup>6</sup> This suggests that there are many benefits of *mainstreaming* national minority content into the general curriculum.

The benefits of inclusion and of mainstreaming national minority issues into education could be an important part of the post-conflict reconstruction effort in BiH. Integrating national minority content into the curriculum could help to provide content that can bridge the ‘national group’ of subjects.<sup>7</sup> Inclusive approaches can offer a *multiple perspective* approach to learning that facilitates students’ analytical skills and outlooks. A two-way process of learning, with the majority learning about the minority, and the minority learning about the majority ensures diverse perspectives for all students. An emphasis on inclusion by its very nature teaches and promotes coexistence, tolerance and reconciliation.

This kind of educational reform will benefit not only national minorities, but all students. The Education for Peace initiative in BiH is an example of an educational approach that seeks to bridge divides and develop a culture of peace, tolerance, inclusion and understanding through the involvement of the entire school community. As educational reform expands and broadens, these issues and options could provide examples of effective practices.

The ECMI representative urged the participants to address both access and content during the course of the discussion. The following questions were provided as examples of information that is needed to ensure a complete understanding of the situation and the potential for change, though many other questions were raised throughout the workshop.

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<sup>6</sup> Thematic Review of National Policies for Education – Bosnia and Herzegovina. OECD Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Report, 27 September 2001, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> In BiH, the term ‘national subjects’ is used to refer to subjects including language, history, culture, literature, and music.

#### *Access*

- Is access to education at any level an issue for national minorities in BiH?
- How many children belonging to the various national minority groups live in BiH? In any one community or school district?
- Is legislation mandating minimum numbers of national minority students for special language or other courses appropriate for BiH?

#### *Content*

- How effectively are national minority cultural, historical and social contributions included in the general curriculum?
- How can national minority issues be mainstreamed into the curriculum, rather than isolated into a one-hour course module?
- How can extra-curricular course and study options complement compulsory education?
- Is the portrayal of national minorities in educational content accurate and appropriate?

### **IV. Review of the Educational Reform Process**

Jo-Anne Bishop, Education Coordinator at the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSCE MBiH), gave a short presentation describing the current education reform process. She opened by noting that she was pleased to see so many different national minority groups participating in the workshop, for while some national minorities have been involved in the educational reform working groups, the level of participation has not been high enough. She suggested that this forum could serve as the initial link between the associations and the reform process, and invited everyone to provide their contact information so that they could be added to the OSCE educational reform database and play a bigger role in the process.

While reform efforts have been underway in BiH for several years, the OSCE received a mandate to coordinate educational reform in BiH on July 4, 2002. Ms Bishop said that it is important to note that the OSCE plays a coordination and process role, and is therefore supporting the substantive work of local authorities and educational experts. Educational reform is not a new process in BiH, but until recently it had been only loosely coordinated. The new coordinated effort aims to bring

together the various different initiatives in order to maximize resources and speed up reform.

She explained that a single strategy of education reform was recently adopted in Mostar by the relevant authorities. The education reform effort is structured around six working groups:

1. Education Access and Non-Discrimination
2. Quality and Modernization of Primary and General Secondary Education
3. Quality and Modernization of Vocational Education
4. Quality and Modernization of Higher Education
5. Education Financing and Management
6. Reform of Education Legislation

While all of the working groups are interrelated and interdependent in many ways, the Access and Non-Discrimination working group is of particular relevance to the national minority representatives gathered for the workshop, as it concerns access for all and non-discrimination. This working group is addressing four key issues:

1. Returnee access to education
2. National minorities (with a focus on Roma)
3. Non-interruption of education (with a focus on girls in rural areas)
4. Special needs and inclusive educational access

A detailed educational reform plan, together with several pledges developed by the individuals involved in the reform process, was delivered to the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) on 21 November 2002.<sup>8</sup> Ms Bishop reviewed the plan's strategic objectives and detailed the pledges related to the Access and Non-Discrimination Working Group:

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<sup>8</sup> The PIC is the main oversight body for directing the High Representative in the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement.

*We will ensure that all children have access to quality education, in integrated multicultural schools, that is free from political, religious, cultural and other bias and discrimination and which respects the rights of all children.*

*We will accomplish this by:*

- *Providing returnee children with ready access to education, in integrated multicultural schools in their area of return, that is free from political, religious and cultural bias and discrimination.*
- *Ensuring that all children who are members of national minorities (particularly Roma children) are appropriately included in the education system throughout the country.*
- *Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to complete primary education.*
- *Including children with special needs at all levels of the education system.*

*Specific goals and timelines that will support achievement of the objectives stated in these pledges include:*

- *Implement the March 5th 2002 Interim Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children (February 2003).*
- *Develop long-term solutions for the education of all constituent peoples and persons belonging to national minorities (August 2003).*
- *Ensuring that all children who are members of national minorities (particularly Roma children) are appropriately included in the education system throughout the country.*
- *Ensure that the national minorities, and especially Roma, are enabled to define their own needs and support them in assessing what is necessary for successful education (March 2003).*
- *Establish a flexible, BiH-wide implementation plan to include all children belonging to national minorities (in particular Roma children) within the educational system, addressing the problems of access, financing of textbooks and transportation (August 2003).*
- *Ensuring that all children have the opportunity to complete primary education. Undertake data collection on primary school enrolment and completion rates, so*

*as to determine the reasons why a significant number of children of primary school age are not enrolling in or completing primary school in Bosnia and Herzegovina (August 2003).*

- *Develop a flexible implementation plan to ensure primary school completion for all children and to remedy basic education gaps for young people, addressing such issues such as the location of schools and transportation, financing, community needs and alternative (non-formal) education channels (December 2003).*
- *Including children with special needs at all levels of the education system. Assess the number of children with special needs and the difficulties they face in order to determine the challenges that impede their inclusion into the general classroom (December 2003).*
- *Develop a plan to educate the community (including school boards, teachers, parents and students) with respect to the inclusion of children with special needs at all levels of the education system (August 2005).*

The overarching goal of these efforts is to ensure that all national minority children, particularly Roma children, are appropriately educated throughout BiH. The best way to achieve this is to work with the minorities in order to define their needs, and, consequently, help them implement the reforms that will meet those needs. Ms Bishop explained that there has been an emphasis on Roma issues in part because of several reports and initiatives in which the specific challenges and problems concerning Roma and educational access have been addressed. For example, in 2002 Save the Children UK published a report entitled “Denied a Future”, in which issues of access, literacy and community participation in terms of Roma and education were detailed. However, the OSCE welcomes the participation of all national minorities and national minority associations in the process.

In closing, Ms Bishop noted that the next challenge will be implementing and achieving the strategic objectives, fulfilling the pledges, and operationalizing reforms throughout the country. Implementation success will depend heavily on the involvement of local actors at all levels, and she invited all of the workshop participants to become involved in this effort.

## **V. Roundtable Discussion: The Status of National Minority Access to and Participation in the BiH Education System**

After the overview of the educational reform process, the participants were invited to share their experiences, concerns and opinions regarding educational reform. The discussion of challenges often dovetailed with suggestions and recommendations. The following summarizes participants' comments and suggestions.

### **A. *The Roma Community in BiH***

Throughout the discussion, several of the Roma representatives in attendance (including Bajro Beganovic and Orhan Besic as the primary speakers) expressed their concerns regarding Roma access to education. It became clear that several of the Roma representatives felt that the specific issue of educational reform could not be addressed sufficiently without addressing the more basic issues of social marginalization, discrimination, unemployment and poverty that threaten their community in BiH. Roma children often cannot go to school for the simple reason that they do not have clean clothes or a home to bathe in, and would be discriminated against by classmates and teachers for their appearance.

It was noted that some initiatives have directly helped the Roma community. For example, the NGO "Education Builds BiH" has provided textbooks for Roma children. The NGO "Be My Friend" has also been very supportive. Vesna Efendic from the Office of the High Representative (OHR) has worked on the Return and Reconstruction Task Force and noted that these issues have been and are being addressed in the Access and Discrimination Working Group. Ms Bishop noted that the OSCE, OHR, Save the Children UK, World Vision and other organizations have all been involved in general Roma support and capacity-building efforts and are now addressing issues specific to education as well.

One of the Roma representatives pointed out that while a wide variety of organizations should be involved in these issues, there is the potential danger of too many groups and efforts to begin working in parallel, resulting in a poor use of funds and resources. Coordination will therefore be of crucial importance.

## ***B. The Czech Community in BiH***

Vladimir Blaha from the Republika Srpska Association of Czech Citizens noted that he has been involved in educational issues for much of his life, as a teacher for five years and as an education inspector for 17 years, as well as through his own studies of philosophy, pedagogy and psychology. This experience has given him a first-hand look at how the system works. In introducing his association, he noted that the Banja Luka region has approximately 1,000 Czechs, and that 600 have association membership cards, and 200 are active association members.

Mr Blaha emphasized the importance of language, paraphrasing the Nobel Prize-winning author Ivo Andric: “Language is energy for life, and not only for the culture of a community, but for the whole existence of a community.” However, in spite of widespread acknowledgement that language is important, linguistic promotion and protection has been limited in practice. While there are several conventions on regional minority languages and language rights that could help address this issue, it seems that people and the authorities are not aware of these norms, or simply do not implement them.

BiH presents a unique case, as the three constituent peoples – Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs – are constitutionally recognized as such and attract a significant amount of attention in their efforts to protect their identities. Their high-visibility fight for their own linguistic rights often has the result of leaving BiH’s ‘real’ national minorities excluded from participation in the debate. Further, Mr Blaha noted that he was a member of the commission discussing constitutional reforms in the Republika Srpska (RS), and said that national minority languages were excluded from the major discussions on language issues.

Integrating national minorities into this and other policy discussions is important. Mr Blaha noted that in the RS there is an association of national minorities that brings various different organizations together into one forum. While these joint efforts are driven by good intentions, there have been few tangible results from their work, which affects the continued participation and enthusiasm of association members. He gave the example of a large meeting, the “First Assembly of National Minorities” in

Sarajevo in December 2001, organized through the Link Diversity initiative. National minority representatives came up with nine conclusions, but there was little follow-up or concrete action after the assembly. This trend of talk but little action is discouraging, and has led some to feel that the more the national minorities ask for, the less they get.

He also noted that primary education laws tend to set minimums for the numbers of national minority children in one classroom for the mandatory provision of mother-tongue classes. These laws are acceptable if a national minority is compact and co-located in one community. However, many national minority communities in BiH cannot meet this minimum. As an example he presented the Czech experience in BiH. In 1895, in a population of approximately 13,500 in Banja Luka, there were approximately 2,300 Czechs. Today, it is difficult for the Czech community in Banja Luka to gather the necessary minimum number of children in one classroom.

In the absence of formal support the Czech community has done as much as it can to promote education among the BiH Czech community. In Banja Luka Czech language classes are offered, and currently 10 children between the ages of three and 10 are enrolled, as well as 30 adults. Initiatives like this should be supported both morally and financially, so that they can complement formal educational initiatives.

Mr Blaha stated that in addition to inclusion in the educational reform process, national minorities need to be represented in the larger policy and legislative debates. A provision for inclusion in the House of Peoples or other decision-making bodies is important to ensure full rights and protections. In closing, Mr Blaha noted that the Czech citizens' association and other national minority associations in the RS have been looking for ways to address these issues. He is pleased to learn of the educational initiatives underway (he said that he was hearing about the OSCE's educational initiatives for the first time), and hopeful that national minority issues will be broadly and completely addressed. He also stressed the importance of exchanging ideas and information.



### ***C. The Hungarian Community in BiH***

Laslo Huber from the Association of Hungarians in Sarajevo stated that he agreed with much of what Mr Blaha said. He particularly supported the view that past initiatives to integrate national minorities into these and other reform efforts have had difficulties doing so. He noted that there have been several meetings and discussions in which the main topic has been the need for a *state-level* law on national minorities that complies with EU standards. Three proposed laws were drafted that unfortunately never even reached the assembly level. Among their propositions were points relevant to educational rights, linguistic rights and national minorities. He stated his intention to pass these drafts on to the Access and Non-Discrimination working group so that the issues relevant to education could be used and referenced.

Despite the difficulties and challenges, the Hungarian community has done as much as possible without formal financial aid or support, offering Hungarian language classes for children and adults, organizing a library of Hungarian books and references works, and teaching about Hungarian cultural history. Mr Huber suggested that recognizing the national holidays of minority communities is not only a good way to celebrate within a community, but a potential way of integrating the study of national minorities into the general curriculum, by reminding students of these commemorative days and explaining the history and tradition of the day. While the Hungarian community will continue to do as much as possible within their own means, there is a need for complementary financial and moral support to ensure that the role of Hungarians and other national minorities in BiH is not overlooked or forgotten.

### ***D. The Ukrainian Community in BiH***

Ivan Brejak from the Ukrainian association “Taras Shevchenko” began by noting that the Ukrainians are the second-largest national minority in BiH after the Roma, and the largest in the RS. He explained that Ukrainians first came to BiH in the 1890s, after the Austro-Hungarian empire gained influence in BiH. They are organized in two main associations: “World Culture” in Prnjavor, and “Taras Shevchenko” in Banja Luka. While these organizations have their own approaches to financing and programming, they share the goal of ensuring that the Ukrainian communities are not assimilated in such a way that would erase their unique identity in BiH.

Both organizations offer a variety of educational courses, publish books and other publications, organize choirs and folk groups, and support other cultural and educational activities. Summer schools and special seasonal events are also offered to the community as a whole.

In Prnjavor, more than 50 children attend a regular primary school that has a Ukrainian language teacher paid by the public education system. The teacher instructs the children in the Ukrainian language and provides Ukrainian religious education. Currently, only Ukrainian children attend these language classes. While this has been a successful initiative, the problem is that other regional schools are not engaged in similar projects, and the existing efforts are provided just for the national minority students, and not the whole student population.

Banja Luka, meanwhile, has more than 15 primary schools, but the Ukrainian community cannot gather enough Ukrainian pupils in one classroom to benefit from similar projects. They have contacted the relevant education ministry to try to resolve this issue.

These efforts have been supported in part by the Ukrainian government, which provides support by sending Ukrainian teachers. The two Ukrainian associations noted also receive financial help from a Toronto-based Canadian-Ukrainian organization, "Duga". The leaders of the Ukrainian community in BiH would like to begin a programme allowing future teachers to go to Ukraine to study, and then return to BiH to teach. They have not had support for this innovative method of teacher training, but are continuing to seek their own sources of financing these educational activities, as they do not want to wait for the authorities to find funding.

Mr Brelak concluded by noting that he and other representatives of the Ukrainian community will be very interested in being included in this and other initiatives, particularly since the Ukrainians form a large national minority in BiH.

Jaroslava Mahic from "World Culture" in Prnjavor supported Mr Brelak's comments, adding some of her own regarding the Ukrainian community in BiH. She noted that Prnjavor has the largest concentration of Ukrainians in BiH: before the war 1,250

families lived in that region. Two hundred families left during the war, leaving over 1000 families still in the region today.

The "World Culture" association has been active since 1993, and is proud of its accomplishments. The RS government and Council of Ministers have supported its activities, though. Ms Mahic emphasized, that there is a need for consistent and enforced legislation to ensure that national minorities can achieve their shared goals of full participation in BiH's political and social life and to ensure the rights of all national minorities. Only with just laws can real and sustainable progress be made. She proposed that all national minority groups come together to form a union or league that could act as an umbrella. Such a framework organization could more effectively represent their interests to the authorities, and would provide them with a stronger voice. Only through organization will the national minorities be able to achieve concrete results.

Ms Mahic also noted that she supports the efforts to ensure special needs education for the blind, paraplegic, and others in need of special educational support. She closed her comments by stating that this was the first time that her association had been represented at a meeting on this topic.

#### ***E. The Albanian Community in BiH***

Maharrem Zejnullahu from the Albanian Community of BiH agreed that it would be beneficial if all the national minority associations cooperated in one state-level organization. In his opinion, the national minority groups are losing time by working separately, and could be more successful working together. However, he cautioned that such efforts have been tried before, but were not effectively organized or managed.

In terms of educational reform, Mr. Zejnullahu noted that this was the first he had heard about the recent and ongoing educational reform efforts. He provided a good overview of several basic issues. He said that in BiH, national minorities are generally not discriminated against, have civil rights, including the right to organize and the right to vote, and have access to services. However, the participation of national minority representatives in politics through political parties is generally tokenism,

rather than real representation. Elected representatives of national minorities are not allowed or encouraged by their parties to address important national minority issues, but are expected to go along with the general party platform.

The basis for progress in all of the issues being discussed – from education to political participation – is a law on ethnic national minorities in BiH. Citizens cannot determine their rights without the law as a guide. He noted that in the past two weeks the Croatian *Sabor* (parliament) had passed a law on national minorities, which addresses financing, election and representation issues, and empowers national minorities in a way that current legislation does not.

Representatives of national minorities in BiH want to enjoy all of their basic rights, and not simply be relegated to the category of “other”. Full inclusion and integration is their goal, as BiH is their country. He said that they want their children to understand and learn about all of the different cultures in BiH. Therefore, in addition to special extra-curricular language classes, courses including content relevant to national minorities should be *mainstreamed* into the general curriculum.

In general, Mr Zejnullahu noted that the Albanian community in BiH had access to schools in the Albanian language in the 1970s, and had more cooperation with media outlets than they have today. If this was possible and successful in the 1970s, it should be possible now. As for education, he noted that the Albanian community would like to have some extra-curricular Albanian language lessons, with support from the government for organization. Together with cultural programmes, linguistic support is important for the Albanian community. The Albanian community can organize much of this on its own, but the good will of the state and the law is needed to ensure that such programmes are sustainable.

#### ***F. The Slovene Community in BiH***

Marija Dolincek-Divcic spoke on behalf of the Slovene Association “Cankar”. “Cankar” has been working on a variety of educational efforts for 10 years. She expressed the view that national minorities do not need regular dedicated educational programmes (such as mother-tongue education), but sufficient extra-curricular activities. “Cankar” supports educational programmes for both children and adults, in

the Slovene language, culture, art and history. Additionally, each summer a summer school for children is organized to ensure they maintain a link with their heritage. The association also publishes a magazine that is edited by students in the Slovene classes. To date, 38 issues have been published, and the magazine won first prize in a competition last year.

"Cankar" has kept its expenses low by working with volunteers. Ms Dolincek-Divcic acknowledged that professional teachers would be an additional expense. The Slovene community in BiH is supported with funding from the Slovene government. However, the help and support of the BiH community is needed as well. She added that non-Slovene citizens of BiH also participate in their programmes, as their activities are open to everyone interested in Slovene language or history. In closing, Ms Dolincek-Divcic noted that regardless of their successes to date, the Slovene community of BiH, together with the other national minority communities, is ~~also~~ interested in the development of a law on national minorities and would like to be involved in the educational reform process.

Aleksandar Novak from "Slovene Assembly" reminded the group that Slovenia itself has national minorities, including Hungarians, Italians and Roma. The Slovene parliament is constitutionally obligated to include representatives from minority groups, and to ensure that national minorities are represented at all levels.

He invited all of the other association representatives to submit articles for publication in one of the magazines published by the Slovene community magazines, and invited the group to learn more about their activities.

### ***G. The Macedonian Community in BiH***

Stevan Jankovsky from the Association of Macedonians started out by regretting that he could not speak as optimistically as the Slovene speakers who preceded him. However, he explained that the Macedonian Association in BiH is currently dealing with very basic issues, such as funding, space and organizations. Therefore, they have not been in the position to even begin to talk about initiatives such as language courses or other activities to protect and promote their history and heritage. They have

tried to reach out to potential donors in Sarajevo, but have not found individuals or organizations interested in supporting their efforts.

The Macedonians could move forward and achieve progress similar to that of some of the other groups, but need support and understanding for their initiatives to become sustainable. Financial and moral support is needed from the state of Macedonia, as well as from authorities in BiH. Mr Jankovsky is hopeful that participating in forums such as this will help his organization to network and raise its profile, but also remains realistic about the challenges ahead.

#### ***H. General Comments***

Jovan Divjak from “Education Builds BiH” noted that he had learned a lot from the workshop, and made some suggestions to support the group's efforts. First, he agreed that there is a need for a law on national minorities, and that the media and community at large must become involved in this to pressure the authorities to draft and pass such a law. Second, he suggested that the media should be more attentive to issues concerning national minorities in general.

In terms of specific suggestions for educational reform, Mr Divjak said that he is optimistic that reform will progress, but remains somewhat skeptical, particularly of the potential for an umbrella law on education in BiH. He noted that there are still people who are not willing to support such a law. He also reminded the group of ongoing problems within cantons and even within schools, in which two different curricula are taught simultaneously to different ethnic groups.

However, in spite of these challenges, children should have additional extra-curricular courses to ensure that they can learn about their specific heritage; the BiH authorities and others (for instance, the government of Macedonia) should support these efforts. Finally, he agreed that a coalition of all of the national minority associations at the state level could improve their lobbying efforts on the issue of education as well as on other policy debates.

## **V. Actions and Recommendations**

At the close of the workshop, all of the comments and ideas were brought together to determine concrete actions and recommendations. They can be loosely organized into short-, medium- and long-term goals, to facilitate implementation.

### *Short-term Actions*

- ECMI will provide the OSCE with a complete list of workshop participants and contact information to ensure inclusion of all participants in future reform initiatives (Note: Completed November 29).
- The OSCE will forward information regarding the reform process and the Working Group on Access and Non-Discrimination to the national minority associations.
- All representatives are invited to send their ideas and recommendations regarding educational reform to ECMI, or directly to the OSCE, for inclusion in the appropriate Working Group. (See attached comments provided in the appendix.)
- The national minority associations should compile a list of holidays celebrated by national minority communities to be distributed to teachers for integration into the general curricula and for use in lesson plans.

### *Medium-Term Actions and Recommendations*

- The associations of national minorities in BiH should form a state-level coalition to ensure that they can more effectively lobby the authorities on behalf of all of BiH's national minorities.
- Interested representatives of national minority associations should be included in discussions on the development of educational legislation related to the access and inclusion of national minorities.
- Interested representatives of national minority associations should be included in curriculum reform and development to ensure adequate and appropriate content. (For example, a list of national minority authors, such as Bosnian-Ukrainian author Alexander Hemon, could be part of a literature reading list.)

- Past proposals and draft legislation (in whole or relevant excerpts) concerning national minorities and education will be reviewed and given to the Access and Non-Discrimination Working Group for their use and reference.
- The media should be involved in raising the profile of BiH's national minorities, by highlighting educational best practices and cultural activities.
- Innovative means of teacher training should be developed to ensure both that all teachers can effectively teach about national minorities in BiH, and that teachers specializing in minority languages are appropriately skilled (for example, by sending teachers to Ukraine for training).

#### *Long-term Policy Goals*

- A state-level law on national minorities in line with EU standards must be developed and adopted.
- BiH compliance with all relevant treaties and conventions should be monitored and ensured.

## **VI. Conclusions**

The workshop revealed that there is real interest in this topic, as participants were pleased to be invited to take part in the reform initiative. It also demonstrated that there is a real need for all of BiH's citizens to participate in this and all reform processes. The emphasis on BiH's three constituent peoples has often unfortunately led to the neglect and exclusion of national minorities, as they are often relegated to the category of "others".

There is considerable work to be done on this issue. The workshop, for instance, did not address the topic of higher education, though higher education institutes for the study of national minorities would be a unique way to preserve, promote and recognize the contribution of BiH's national minorities. As the educational reform dialogue progresses, this and many other issues may broaden the conversation.



In closing the workshop, the ECMI representative thanked everyone for their time and input. The workshop report will be disseminated to all participants, and to interested persons unable to attend, to serve as a springboard for future action and progress.

## VII. Annexes

### A. Programme of the Workshop

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Introduction
9:15 – 9:35	Presentation of Basic Concepts and Ideas to Frame the Issue
9:35 – 9:50	Update and Review of Reform Agenda - OSCE Questions and Answers
9:50 – 11:00	Roundtable Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define the current situation</li><li>• Identify key issues, challenges, strengths and weaknesses</li></ul>
11:00 – 11:15	Break
11:15 – 12:15	Roundtable Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Options for improvements</li><li>• Potential ideas, actions, and projects</li><li>• Identification of best practices</li><li>• Brainstorming</li></ul>
12:15 – 12:45	Development of Formal Concrete Recommendations and Actions
12:45 - 13:00	Conclusion Future Plans and Actions

## B. List of Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Abazi, Alija	“Braca Romi”- Roma Association
Adanel, Suada	Albanian Community in BiH
Andulajevic, Marzenka	“ Beseda” – Republika Srpska Association of Czechs
Beganovic, Bajro	“Braća Romi”- Roma Association
Besic, Orhan	Municipal Council member
Bishop, Jo Anne	OSCE
Blaha, Vladimir	“ Beseda” – Republika Srpska Association of Czechs
Brelak, Ivan	Ukrainian Association “Taras Shevchenko”
Curic, Slavka	Association of Citizens of Macedonian Origin
Dolincek-Divcic, Marija	Slovene Cultural Society “Cankar”
Divjak, Jovan	“Education Builds BiH” Association
Efendic, Vesna	Office of the High Representative (OHR )
Huber, Laslo	Association of Hungarians, Sarajevo
Ibrahimovic, Vaska	Association of Macedonians
Inic, Branka	Office of the Ombudsman of the Federation of BiH
Jahic, Nedzad	Committee on Secondary Education, Travnik
Jankovski, Stevan	Association of Macedonians
Jasarevic, Samir	Citizen Participant
Kittredge, MJ	Consultant Public Health / Roma Specialist
Kampschorr, Beth	Balkan Times
Mahic, Jaroslava	Ukrainian Association “World Culture” BiH
Markovic, Jovan	Citizen Participant
Miteva, Sandra	Association of Citizens of Macedonian Origin
Music, Salko	Member of Roma community parliament
Nemet, Mihajlo	Association of Hungarians, Sarajevo
Novak, Aleksandar	Association of Citizens of Slovene Origin “Slovene Assembly”
Orsolice, Marko	IMIC – International Multi-Religious and Intercultural Center

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Sukalo, Milorad	Association of Citizens of Macedonian Origin
Taneski, Andon	Association of Macedonians
Zejnullahu, Maharrem	Albanian Community of BiH

### **ECMI Staff**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Perry, Valery	ECMI BiH Consultant
Pusara, Djordje	Assistant
Imamovic, Damir/ Zisko, Damir	Translators

***C. Suggestions submitted to the workshop participants by Vladimir Blaha on behalf of the Coordination Board of Czechs, Ukrainians, Italians, Slovenians and Macedonians in the RS***

1. Propose the inclusion of a representative of ‘others’ in the RS Peoples’ Council and the Federation House of Peoples (work with the OSCE on this issue)
2. Impose the law on national minorities (work with the OHR)
3. Suggest that entity governments include a line item for national minorities' initiatives in their 2003 budgets
4. Persuade all international organizations holding meetings on national minority issues to invite representatives of all organized national minorities (work with ECMI)
5. Seek possible donors from the international community for specific projects on national minorities
6. Demand feedback from institutions that receive suggestions (with the support of ECMI)
7. Continue to provide suggestions on national minority inclusion in education and educational reform (work with ECMI)

***D. Suggestions submitted to the workshop participants by Rinaldo Kastanja, Italian Association of the Republika Srpska***

Reforming the school system is necessary in both the Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH. Because changes are taking place we may say that education is in transition. I have been a high school teacher for more than 20 years. My experience thus involves both models that have long since been abandoned and newer trends in high school education.

Today's high school network is a leftover from the previous system and has not been changed much, with some minor exceptions, which means that the system is too large and irrational. One of socialism's major concerns was to provide schooling for all children that completed primary schools, which meant that all children were urged to enrol in secondary schools. This created too many schools and increased expenses.

I think that a comprehensive rationalization of the entire network should be undertaken. This would also reduce the too large number of careers for which we now train our children. We should strive to educate pupils for the types of jobs that have a future and are attractive in the European Union and beyond – such as computer technology, the service industry, trade, medicine, transportation, healthy food and water production, and work related to Bosnia and Herzegovina's natural resources. We should look closely at those who are now on waiting lists at the employment bureaus to make sure we do not produce more of those people.

By harmonizing secondary school standards in BiH with those of the EU and the United States, our high school diplomas would be valid in those countries. It may be good to take the best from both systems, or to even copy the entire EU or US model. In those models, school ownership is strictly divided (into private or state schools), methods of financing are unambiguous and private schools should provide high standards of secondary education.

It is also necessary to create standardized tests on the basis of which students would receive diplomas and schools would be evaluated. For example, if students repeatedly failed annual tests, the school could be denied a license. Western countries probably have such means of control, and those norms and laws should be used in BiH as well.

Each state school should operate with at least the minimum of equipment regulated by the standards. Students in vocational education should be given more practical and technical education and less general studies.

Some of the schools that have been created or are being maintained today because of political reasons and do not have the resources to remain open should be closed immediately. In places where there are too many schools, closing one would improve conditions in the others, for example in using gymnasiums and other resources. The personnel surplus that these moves would create could be solved with social programmes, early retirement plans or retraining. The retraining could be taken care of by changing curricula at the university, which is the cheapest option that existing teachers could take to keep their jobs until the end of their careers. Their problem should be solved by additional education at the state's expense. Looking at the reform from a financial perspective, reducing the school network and retraining teachers (thus reducing both personnel and expenses) could save money, and those savings could be reinvested into improving the remaining schools.

It must be pointed out that young people's interest in the teaching professions has diminished. We can therefore expect a shortage of educators in the long run (following the initial surplus because of the rationalization). Education workers are thoroughly discouraged by a new retirement law that calculates a pension as an average of the payments received during one's working life, which in the education field is a penurious amount at best. Thus one receives a pittance of a pension after retiring from poorly paid work. It is well known that even a doorman in a company that pays high salaries (municipality services, the electricity industry, the tobacco industry) will have a much larger pension than a teacher or a professor whose work was more important to society, and this, one must admit, is a depressing fact.

Where do the rights and concerns of national minorities fit into this story? The question can be asked from two perspectives – those of students and those of education workers. It is well known that the term 'national minority' has been replaced by the term 'others' in the BiH Constitution. 'Others' have the same rights as the constituent peoples. Let us take a look at language. The official language in the Republika Srpska is Serbian, and in the Federation the official languages are Bosnian

or Croatian, depending on the canton. The 'others' learn the language that is dominant in their particular surrounding. It is worth stressing that we have three official languages in one country. 'Others' have been assimilated into an official language, but only the language of their specific territory, which in my opinion is not in accordance with their human rights. We have a similar situation with religious education in primary schools. That problem would be solved and all children included if the subject of 'religious instruction' were replaced by 'history of religion' or 'religious study' in the curriculum. Perhaps the language problem could be solved in the same way, or could be solved by introducing English as a required language to study. It is the same story with the subject of history. Because we have three different interpretations of history from authors from the three constituent peoples, the study of the past century could perhaps be done from foreign textbooks to avoid the constant arguments among the local authors.

Regarding the organization of national minorities, 'weak' is too weak of a word to describe it. State schools should allow national minorities the free use of school premises, but only for non-commercial purposes. That could be a minor achievement for a state of BiH that cares about its national minorities, its 'others'.

According to the current laws on education in BiH (at the entity and cantonal level), in classes where most of the pupils are members of a minority group the official language should be that of that particular minority, but this is practically impossible to implement. It is possible, however, to organize some kind of education with a condensed curriculum during vacations, seeing as how the buildings are available (especially where room and board are available, such as in dormitories or camps where the students can eat and sleep).

Regarding members of minorities who work in education, they are surely the first ones to be made redundant during times of personnel surpluses or when their work is no longer needed, irrespective of the quality of their work. The only important thing is to be of a required nationality or even a member of a certain political party. The officials will never admit that this is true, but it is enough to look at the lists of the employees or lists of the unemployed. Unfortunately, there is a lack of valid data... It is also rare to see a member of 'others' in management positions in education. Indeed,



officials will tell you how they did not apply for open job offers, but they will not tell you that the distribution of power in local government is set in such a way that a particular educational institution belongs to a particular political party, making applying for jobs a mere formality. On the other hand, if you are chosen by a political party, your chances of employment and advancement grow regardless of the quality of your work.

The situation is not at all satisfying, but we should hope that BiH society as a whole will undergo changes that will improve the quality of life in all areas, especially regarding integration into the modern world and the modern family of nations by accepting their standards, in all areas of life and work.