



## Bosnia and Herzegovina

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### Education for All 2015 National Review

*This report was prepared by the relevant national authorities in view of the World Education Forum (Incheon, Republic of Korea, 19-22 May 2015). It was submitted in response to UNESCO's invitation to its Member States to assess progress made since 2000 towards achieving Education for All (EFA).*

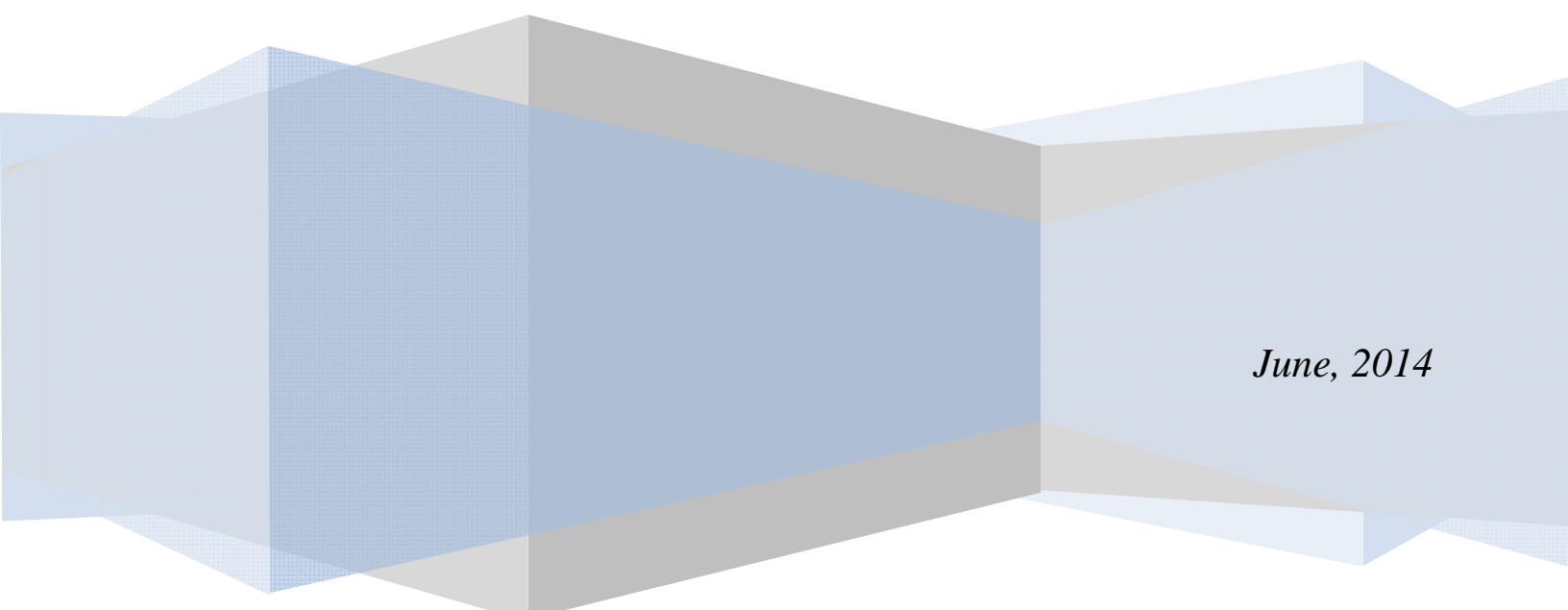
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*Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

**EDUCATION FOR ALL  
2015 COUNTRY REPORT**

*June, 2014*



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a decentralized state composed of two entities: Federation of BiH, Republic of Srpska and Brcko District of BiH as a separate administrative unit. The BiH Constitution defines competences and responsibilities for each level of government.

Taking into account the constitutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina, education is under full and undivided responsibility of the Republic of Srpska, ten cantons in the Federation of BiH and Brcko District of BiH.

Each of these twelve administrative units has its own ministry of education, education legislation, education budgets, creates its education policy and has all other rights and obligations arising from the mandate of a competent education authority, responsible for the organization and functioning of education within its area of competence. There is the Federal Ministry of Education and Science at the level of the Federation of BiH that has a coordinating role over the cantonal ministries of education.

Considering this system organization, a high degree of coordination is required at the state level. Since 2003 the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH has been responsible for coordination of activities, harmonization of plans of the entity authorities and defining strategy at the international level, among other things, in education. In line with its coordinating role, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has not established a system to finance educational activities.

Coordinating bodies for the education sector in BiH are: the Ministers of Education Conference in BiH, which allows for the coordination of all 14 ministries in BiH, and the Council for General Education in BiH. The BiH Rectors' Conference has also been established and it determines and represents the common interests of the universities in BiH, cooperates with institutions in the field of education in BiH and acts as an advisory body to implement the higher education reform.

As regards the financing of education in BiH, it is largely funded by public funds of the entity and cantonal budgets, the Brcko District budget and the municipal budgets, depending on the jurisdiction. This means that, in terms of location, there are thirteen separate education budgets in BiH: two at the entity level, one in the Brcko District of BiH and ten cantonal budgets.

Nine Pedagogical Institutes (PI) are operational within this education organization (one in the Republic of Srpska, two in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and one in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Bihac, Gorazde and the Brcko District of BiH) and the Adult Education Institute in RS.

Education inspections function at each ministry of education and have the mandate to monitor the implementation of laws and regulations, adopted at the level of the ministry - administrative supervision is priority task. Municipal levels of government are responsible for specific issues in education, especially primary education, as defined by the laws of the relevant education authorities, while respecting the principle of local self-government.

The education legislation in BiH governs the principles of preschool, primary, secondary and higher education and upbringing and adult education.

Four framework laws are adopted at the state level: Framework Law on Higher Education in BiH, Framework Law on Preschool Upbringing and Education in BiH, Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training in BiH and Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH. The Law on Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education was adopted in 2007 and it established the Agency.

All laws in RS, cantons and Brcko District of BiH, as well as other regulations in the field of education, need to be harmonized with the provisions of the BiH framework laws.

Also, the following policy documents are adopted at the state level as a result of the education reform: Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in BiH with the Implementation Plan 2008 - 2015; Strategy for Entrepreneurial Learning in Education Systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012 - 2015 with the Implementation Action Plan; Recommendations for the Implementation of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina; National Action Plan for the Recognition of Qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Implementation of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Users' Manual Diploma Supplement Model for Bosnia and Herzegovina; Diploma Supplement Model for Bosnia and Herzegovina; Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Strategic Directions of Development of Preschool Upbringing and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Adult Education Principles and Standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The following agencies have been established at the state level:

- Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance,
- Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education and
- Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education.

## II MAIN CHALLENGES FOR EFA IN 2000 WITH OBJECTIVES FOR 2015

### *2.1. General situation and objectives followed by reforms*

The aim of reforms is to improve education in the context of overall socio-economic development and its integration into the European education area. These integrations in education are implemented through the provision of legal, institutional and other standards in education, in line with the European principles.

The absence of a census of more than 20 years has limited the possibilities of planning policies and their precise development, and it was based only on estimates in this long period. Monitoring of population trends, poverty and social indicators in the absence of census data was complex and difficult. All this was reflected in the policies and plans in the education sector. The latest census in BiH was conducted in October 2013. The census data are currently being processed and should be officially available in 2014.

*Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in BiH with the Implementation Plan 2008 – 2015*<sup>1</sup> provides the main directions for the development of education in BiH by 2015. This document defines the priorities in the development of education related to raising the level of education of the population and the competence of the workforce, improving the effectiveness of education and training, prevention of social exclusion among children and youth and expanding opportunities for adult education and training, as well as the quality assurance and revitalization of research in education.

In addition to creating an institutional framework for the implementation of reforms, the basic characteristics of current and forthcoming reforms are reflected in the modernization and development of teaching and learning at all levels of the education system, equality of access and equity in education, developing links between education and the labour market, encouraging continued professional development for teachers, managers and other employees in education and upbringing institutions, ensuring quality, international cooperation, etc.

In terms of the objectives and purpose of education at every level, it is necessary to mention that there are clearly defined short-term (2008), medium-term (2008-2010) and long-term (2011-2015) objectives<sup>2</sup> in *the Strategic Directions for Development of Education in BiH with the Implementation Plan 2008-2015*.

Short-term objectives of **preschool upbringing and education** have been set to carry out the Framework Law implementation process. Mid-term objectives are to increase enrollment in preschool institutions to 20 % of the population and the number of children enrolled in preparation programs for starting school to 40 % of the population. As a long-term objective, it is necessary to

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<sup>1</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, No. 63/08.

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in BiH with the Implementation Plan 2008 - 2015, Official Gazette of BiH, No. 63/08.

increase the number of students enrolled in preschool institutions to 50 % of the population and the number of students enrolled in preparation programs for starting school to 100 %, and achieve that all principles of preschools institutions have completed a minimum level of competency/qualification to manage educational establishments.

When it comes to **primary education**, short-term objectives are focused on the implementation of the evaluation of the nine-year compulsory education and framework curriculum application. Also, the focus is on the plan of action preparation to reduce the disruption and abandonment of primary education and the introduction of external evaluation in all primary schools.

Mid-term objectives provide for the implementation of the nine-year education in all parts of the country, the development of curricula for all grades/subjects of the nine-year primary education and the adoption of education standards and norms, as well as the reduction in the rate of premature school dropout. Long-term objectives will focus on increasing enrollment and completion of primary education to 100 %, and ensure that all students in the lower grades of primary school learn a foreign language no later than the third grade, and a second foreign language in the higher grades no later than the seventh grade. One of the objectives is to ensure that all primary school principles have a minimum level of competence for managing the upbringing and education institution.

Short-term objectives of **secondary education** are also the application and adoption of the enrollment plan for high schools, three-year and four-year vocational and technical schools. After 2009, the enrollment has been every year conducted based on the education development policies and data of the Labour and Employment Agency of BiH, and the plans of higher education institutions for student enrollment.

Mid-term objectives focus on increasing enrollment in secondary education to 85 %, increasing the enrollment share in general secondary education (high schools) and increasing the share of the four-year vocational education.

Long-term objectives are to increase enrollment in secondary education to 90 %, increase the enrollment share in high schools and four-year vocational schools to 80 %, ensure options for the transition from three-to four-year high school and to ensure that all secondary school principles have completed the minimum level of qualification for the management of the upbringing and education institution. The introduction of external graduation at the end of the four-year secondary education is also a long-term objective.

However, the enrollment rate in secondary schools in 2011/2012 was already 91.8%.<sup>3</sup>

Drafting a plan for the reform of general-education secondary schools is set as a short-term objective for general-education secondary schools, and the development of a new framework curriculum with elective courses as a long-term objective.

The adoption of the Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training in BiH<sup>4</sup> is implemented as a short-term objective for the development of vocational education. The Law provided for the establishment of tripartite advisory councils at the entity and cantonal levels and the level of Brcko District of BiH, composed of representatives of employers, trade unions and relevant education authorities, in order to build better links between the education sector and the labour market.

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<sup>3</sup> Millennium Development Goals in BiH, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, No. 63/08.

Medium-term objectives for vocational education are: concluding state-level agreements between the main stakeholders on the procedures for establishing occupational standards and development of competence-based curricula and qualifications.

Long-term objectives are characterized by the development of the quality assurance framework in vocational education and training, the development of the qualifications framework for lifelong learning, which reflects the principles of the European qualifications framework, streamlining the network of vocational schools and the achievement of coherence between vocational education and training and the labour market.

The implementation of the Framework Law on Higher Education in BiH is defined in short-term objectives of **higher education**. It also includes a study on the reasons for the large number of dropouts and low completion rates of higher education, as well as designing a mandatory diploma supplement.

Further, it includes the establishment of a master course in accordance with the Bologna principles and the development of an institutional network for research and development in all higher education institutions.

Medium-term objectives include the establishment of the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance and the Center for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, functional integration of the university, full implementation of the Lisbon Convention and the establishment of doctoral studies.

Long-term objectives of higher education are based on the completion of the process of accession of BiH to the European Higher Education and Research Area, which implies an effective enrollment and completion rates, as well as sufficient funds for research and international educational and scientific cooperation and exchange. A long-term objective is to increase the student enrollment to 32 % by 2015. However, the enrollment rate in secondary education in 2011 was already 38%.<sup>5</sup>

The activities conducted in the framework of the Bologna process for higher education reform are supervised and conducted by an authority called the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG). The Group is responsible for the preparation of all documents for biennial Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area, consisting of representatives – experts of each of the member countries of the Bologna Process. The Group serves the Bologna Secretariat and the host country of the Secretariat rotates every two years.

Bosnia and Herzegovina co-chaired BFUG from 1 July to 31 December 2012.

## ***2.2. Equal opportunities in education in order to achieve education for all***

Considering that education in BiH is implemented in accordance with the ratified international conventions, it can be concluded that this has created a legal basis for access to education for all and on the same grounds.

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<sup>5</sup> Millennium Development Goals in BiH, 2013.



In accordance with the legislation adopted in BiH, the educational institutions at all levels of education, within the environment they affect, have a responsibility to contribute to creating a culture that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens as enshrined in the Constitution and other documents on human rights signed by BiH.

In order to enable the same conditions related to education quality in all educational institutions of the same level, the relevant education authorities in BiH, in cooperation with educational institutes in BiH, have provided in recent years the same access to all children, the access directed towards compliance with human rights and fundamental freedoms, i.e. equal rights and equal opportunities in education without discrimination on any ground.

In accordance with the financial capacities of their budgets and respecting the rules governing non-discrimination, the relevant education authorities undertake a number of activities to support equal opportunities in education for every individual. The activities on the introduction of compulsory and free preschool education in the year before starting school, funding free transport for students of primary schools (2-5 km depending on the provisions of the relevant education authorities), procurement of textbooks and school supplies for children in economically and socially marginalized groups are undertaken in this regard. In addition, based on criteria defined in Regulations, most successful students are awarded scholarships (through public competitions), the accommodation in student centers is co-funded for full-time students, and other incentives of a financial nature are also provided in order to facilitate the general living conditions of families, students (one-time assistance), and co-financing of MA theses and PhD dissertations.

Inclusive education in primary and secondary schools is stipulated as a legal obligation, which includes the possibility of access for all categories of children with special needs, with respect for objective abilities of the participants in education. School development teams, composed of representatives of parents, students, local community, teachers and other school staff, which will work on drafting the school development plan that contributes to the progress in the area of inclusive culture, policies and practices, are trained in order to encourage the changes at schools that contribute to quality and inclusive education for all children.

For children with special needs, the legislation regulates a wide range of rights in terms of discrimination in relation to other students, so such children are provided with the education according to their individual needs adapted to their abilities and skills. Expert mobile teams are established and the public call for the enrollment in the first grade of secondary school provides for the right of direct enrollment of students with special needs in secondary schools. A number of additional activities are implemented to include children from economically and socially disadvantaged groups in the education system (especially children with disabilities, Roma children, children from remote and isolated areas, children from socially and economically disadvantaged families). In practice, schools include children with disabilities and Roma children and children from socially disadvantaged families are provided with textbooks and school supplies in accordance with the budget available and in partnership with donors. School activities are also organized in relation to education of children to accept diversity, as well as for the prevention of all forms of violence involving children.

### **III PROGRESS TOWARDS “EDUCATION FOR ALL” OBJECTIVES**

The Education Reform Strategy, laws and various policy documents promote the principles of equal access, availability, acceptance, and effectiveness of official recognition, non-discrimination and lack of segregation in education. It is important for BiH to continuously measure its progress in relation to the EU standards because the gap expansion in terms of education, skills and education of the workforce will affect the long-term progress in the country, since it largely depends on the good results achieved in the education sector.

#### ***3.1. Spread of education and upbringing in early childhood***

The development of preschool education in BiH has systematically begun in 2003 by adopting the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Strategic Direction for Development of Preschool Upbringing and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is adopted in 2005 and the Framework Law on Preschool Upbringing and Education of BiH in 2007 which, among other things, provides for mandatory attendance at preschool programs for children in the year before starting school. The strategic objective of coverage of all children with preschool education in the year before starting school is transformed into a mandatory standard in the Framework Law.

Many laws, regulations and other documents on strengthening preschool education are adopted in BiH. Their content is based on the best standards, achievements and good practices of EU countries and many international conventions and declarations.

However, the reality in the field of preschool education in BiH is different. After nine years of the implementation of the national strategy, it can be said that the progress in the development of preschool education and coverage of children with preschool education and upbringing is visible but not significant.

According to the MDG Report 2013 for BiH, the coverage of children with preschool education ranged from 4.3% in 2000/2001, 6.4% in 2007, 9.9% in 2009 and 13.1% in 2011/2012. The Millennium Development Goal for 2015 is 25%, which is quite uncertain due to the trend observed in this period.

According to the official statistics for the school year 2012/2013, there were 243 preschool institutions with 18,817 children in BiH. Compared to the previous school year, the number of preschool institutions is higher by 8.9%, the number of children of preschool institutions increased by 8.8%, while the number of employees increased by 4.3%.<sup>6</sup>

Today, it is estimated that all institutional forms and preschool programs together comprise a total of 14% of preschool population. BiH is the second country in the Central and Eastern Europe in the

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<sup>6</sup> BiH Statistics Agency, Press Release No. 2/13

number of children not enrolled in preschool institutions. The awareness of the importance of preschool education for the overall socio-economic growth is small. The access to preschool institutions and quality preschool programs is directly conditioned by the financial power of parents. This means further deepening of inequalities and endangering the right to early education, and thus strengthening the poverty and the absence of mechanisms of social inclusion for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

The specific concern for the development of preschool education is mainly responsibility of municipalities and other local government units, of which economic power the status of the youngest population depends.

The duration of compulsory preschool programs (in the year before starting school) is usually 150 hours. Compulsory preschool education programs are implemented in existing kindergartens and other facilities where conditions are adjusted to preschool children, especially in elementary school buildings, which are more commonly used for coverage of children in the peripheral areas of the territory under the responsibility of the educational authority.

As to the situation in the entities and cantons in terms of legislation, it is necessary to point out that only four relevant education authorities have their own early childhood development strategies: RS 2010 – 2014; the General Education Development Strategy 2015 of the Una - Sana Canton has a section on preschool education; the Posavina Canton has the Education Development Strategy 2009 - 2015; the West Herzegovina Canton has a 2009 – 2015 strategy.

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a *Strategic Plan for Improving Early Childhood Development in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013 - 2017* in October 2012, as the second policy document in this area along with *the Policy for Early Childhood Development in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. These documents are the result of joint work of the Federal Ministries of Education, Health and Social Policy. In March 2011 the RS Government adopted a Decision on accepting the early childhood development 2011-2016.

By implementing Article 22 of the Framework Law on Preschool Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2009 all 12 responsible ministers of education in BiH concluded the Agreement on the Common Core of Comprehensive Development Programs for work in preschool institutions.<sup>7</sup>

The Common Core of Comprehensive Development Programs for work in preschool institutions is a document of special importance, not only because it establishes a common content of preschool programs in BiH, but primarily due to the fact that it contains general and specific objectives of preschool education that are unanimously accepted, the principles on which this education is based, and outcomes expected from the implementation of the Common Core. We will mention here only some of these outcomes: achieving satisfactory standard of knowledge, skills and abilities of all children in BiH; ensuring stable quality of educational standards in all preschool institutions in BiH; ensuring freedom of movement and equal access to preschool education and upbringing in the entire country.

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<sup>7</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, No. 16/09.

In accordance with the law establishing the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education, the Agency has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Common Core and proposing its further development, as well as establishing standards of knowledge and evaluation of the results achieved in preschool education.

Within this mandate, the Agency, with the support of UNICEF BiH and Save the Children Norway, implemented a project entitled *Quality Standards of Preschool Education in BiH*. The project has yielded two important results - Recommendations for the improvement of existing and development of new comprehensive education programs with preschool children and Standards.

The Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education has implemented several projects and research in the field of preschool education in recent years, with the support of UNICEF BiH. Given the fact that these projects included a wider circle of stakeholders in preschool education, it can be said that they on a large scale affirmed the goals of modern preschool education, its function and big importance.

Investing in the development of public preschool education - in facilities, increasing capacity, etc. - is directly conditioned by the level of development of municipalities, their economic power, so that the situation in preschool education significantly varies between different environments - both in terms of enrollment capacity of preschool institutions, quality of education, absorption capacity of the coverage of children with disabilities and children from marginalized communities, and in terms of salaries and other benefits of employed professionals in preschool institutions. Poor municipalities allocate fewer funds to co-finance preschool institutions, which automatically increases the price paid by parents, which is why the number of children is reduced in kindergartens in some areas. Thus the cycle of poverty closes and strengthens, not to mention the damage done in the long run to the society, families and individuals, and the damage to the overall socio-economic development.

### ***3.2. Universal primary education***

The right to primary education is enshrined in the Constitution and legislation. Its purpose is to contribute to the creation of a society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights and the improvement of living standards through optimum, intellectual, physical moral and social development of individuals. Every child has equal access and equal opportunity to participate in appropriate education.

The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH clearly provides that primary education is free and compulsory for all children.

The legislation at all levels of government provides many opportunities for most of the possible situations that can happen to children in primary education, from the change in psychophysical characteristics to the social factors influencing the implementation of education of each child.

According to the *Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Implementation Plan 2008 - 2015*, "Ensuring the conditions that all children in Bosnia and

Herzegovina are included in the education system, and the implementation of the documents approved for the educational needs of children - returnees, Roma and members of other ethnic minorities" is precisely established in one of the general objectives, while "increased enrollment and completion of compulsory education to 100%" is established in one of the long-term objectives.

However, the enforcement of legal obligations and strategic commitments related to the provision of basic rights to education results in a number of difficulties which are primarily manifested in the lack of financial resources for the implementation of all legal provisions: difficult social and economic situation, unemployment and education structure of parents, irrational network of primary schools, difficulties related to the registration of children (especially when it comes to Roma children and children from socially marginalized families), traffic-separated areas, poor infrastructure and lack of support for children with disabilities are some of the most important reasons why children leave education before finishing primary school or remain excluded from education.

Bearing in mind that all measures are taken to include all children of school age in primary education, the cooperation between schools and local communities is encouraged in this regard in order to discover any cases of non-inclusion of children in education and take timely action. It is worth emphasizing that the legal preconditions are created, which in extreme cases include criminal liability of parents who do not allow their children access to education.

Also, the relevant ministries have provided free transportation for all students who live at a distance greater than 4 km and provide textbooks for socially disadvantaged students in order to ensure the right to basic education. Further, the health care is also provided for all students who cannot exercise this right otherwise. The program is carried out on the principle of inclusiveness and access to every child regardless of economic, social, health and other conditions.

According to the official statistics, 304,881 students were enrolled in 1881 primary schools at the beginning of the school year 2012/2013 in BiH, which is less for 11,776 students, or 3.7%, as compared to the previous school year.

24,227 teachers, of which 17,050 women or 70.4%<sup>8</sup>, were involved in the teaching process at the beginning of the school year 2012/2013.

The enrolment in primary education is satisfactory for the general population with 97.6%, but was still lower in the Roma population and accounts for only 69.3%. It is worrying that 46.2% of Roma children ceased attending primary school at some point.<sup>9</sup> The completion rate of primary education in BiH is 92%. This rate is lower among children living in rural areas (89%) compared to children in urban areas (97%).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> BiH Statistics Agency, Press Release No. 2/13.

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF Study on Non-enrolment and School Dropout (YERP), 2011.

<sup>10</sup> MISC4 Survey findings – note: this percentage includes children who repeat a grade and eventually reach the last grade.

### ***3.3. Meeting the learning needs of young people and adults***

Youth and adult education can be formal, non-formal and informal or self-directed learning. The legal provisions, which give the right to adults to continue their education, define this area as part of a unified education system.

The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH provides that “Education of adults shall be organized in specific subjects and for the purpose of their professional and personal advancement”. “Education of adults shall include professional training, supplementary training, re-training and other activities ensuring lifelong learning. Education of adults shall be governed in more detail in the laws of the entities, cantons, and the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with the principles and standards defined in this Law”.

The Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training in BiH provides that "Schools may organize adult training within their registered activities, with the consent of the competent education authorities. The responsible minister shall adopt curriculum for adult education and training.” Also, the same law provides that “Adult students shall be charged for the training. The amount of fee shall be determined by the school board with the consent of the relevant ministry of education.”

*Adult Education Principles and Standards in BiH* were developed in the framework of the European Union project entitled *Capacity Building for Human Resource Development in BiH (IPA 2009)*. The Council of Ministers has adopted this document. *Strategic Platform for Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning in BiH 2014-2020* was also developed under the same project.

This document presents the strategic basis for the planning and operation of educational and other competent authorities at all levels of government in BiH, on the basis of which they initiate, implement and coordinate their activities in the field of adult education in line with the EU priorities, standards and trends in this area.

Literacy and primary and secondary adult education are continuously provided in practice allowing people without completed primary and secondary education to be included in the educational process, so some schools in BiH are designated for these activities and can be contacted by such persons, and implement all necessary procedures for the acquisition of primary and secondary education in the fastest and best way possible. Apart from certain schools in BiH that provide adult education, the centers providing adult education services have also been established in order to facilitate acquiring supplementary training, retraining, specific skills and knowledge (IT, foreign languages, etc.).

The Republic of Srpska adopted the Law on Adult Education<sup>11</sup> regulating the organization and structure of adult education as part of a unified educational system of the Republic of Srpska, which provides adult education, development and training. Also, there is the Institute of Adult Education of RS that operates in accordance with this Law.

Adult education in FBiH is provided in training centers and VET schools.

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<sup>11</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, No. 59/09.

Upon completion of formal education programs in BiH, valid certificates are publicly issued to the program participants: certificate of graduation, graduation exam or final exam proving acquired level of education or occupation, and a training or education certificate.

Preparations for participation of BiH in the EU Erasmus + program, tailored towards enhancing knowledge and skills, employability of citizens, as well as improving education, training and work in the field of youth and sports, are underway. It is planned that BiH, under this program, takes part in the Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), for which a contact person is designated. Thus BiH will participate in the promotion of the principles set out in the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2020, which are related, among other things, to the establishment of electronic platforms in the field of adult education.

### ***3.4.Improving the level of adult literacy***

The right to literacy is contained in legislation and policy documents with the aim to eradicate illiteracy.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013 estimates the literacy rate for men and women aged 15-24 years and this information shows that the majority of women (99.3%) and men (99.9%) aged 15-24 years in BiH are literate.

88% of the women who said that their highest level of education is primary school were able to successfully read a statement shown to them, while the percentage was higher among men, 98%. However, the percentage of illiterate women in rural areas is high. In addition, **the literacy of Roma women aged 15-24 is only 68.9%.**

The programs allowing adults to complete primary school and thereby reducing illiteracy are implemented in BiH. As part of the project "Support for Adult Learning", the relevant education authorities in BiH have signed memoranda of understanding by 2016 with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), with a focus on the area of the subsequent acquisition of basic adult education. Although the awareness is raised of present illiteracy issue and programs of subsequent acquisition of basic adult education are promoted, there is still a certain lack of interest of certain population in literacy such as: members of the third age, housewives in rural areas, nomadic and Katun (temporary nomadic settlements in mountains) population and Roma population.

According to the Statistics Agency data, the level of education of overall working-age population in BiH is low compared to the EU standards. The 2012 data indicate that there are 42.6% (32% men and 52.5% women) people with low qualifications (primary education or lower), 48.6% (58.3% men and 39.5% women) people with secondary qualifications (high school), while 8.8% (9.7% men and 8% of women) people with high qualifications (college, university degree, master degree or doctorate.)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> BiH Statistics Agency Labour Force Survey 2012.

### ***3.5. Gender equality and equity in education***

The education legislation in BiH includes the principle of non-discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, and establishes an obligation for inclusive education. The Education Reform Strategy, laws and various policy documents promote the principles of equal access, availability, acceptance, and effectiveness of official recognition, non-discrimination and lack of segregation in education. The analysis of teaching textbooks and practices, in order to establish the compliance of textbooks and teaching practices with the principles of gender equality has shown that the stereotypical representation of gender roles is present in teaching textbooks and practices.<sup>13</sup>

The level of participation of boys and girls in primary and secondary education is almost the same, while the number of female students outnumbers their counterparts when it comes to enrollment and graduation at higher education institutions.

116,567 students enrolled in the winter term in the school year 2012/2013 (old program and the Bologna program: first cycle and integrated first and second cycles), of which 102,443 students enrolled in all years of study, and 14,124 were senior students. 18,365 students graduated in 2012, which is 2.3% higher than in 2011. Female students account for 60.4% of the total number of graduates.<sup>14</sup>

The number of female students at the post graduate level is 56.63%, while 41.9% of all PhDs were females.

As for ethnic minorities, almost 80% of Roma females do not complete even primary school, and only 4.5% of them complete high school, compared to 9.2% of Roma males. Only 47% of Roma girls were enrolled in primary school. The fact that the literacy rate among Roma women is consistently below the rate of literacy of Roma men is particularly worrisome because the well-being of a family, especially children, is closely associated with the level of education of the mother. The literacy of young Roma women aged between 15 and 24 in BiH was 68.9% compared to the rate of 90.4%, which corresponds to their peers. While the rate of primary school attendance of Roma is approximately equal, with 70.9% for boys and 67.8% for girls, this rate increased to 18% for girls, compared to 26.6% for boys, for secondary education. The most vulnerable groups from the perspective of education and poverty are minority groups (especially Roma girls), children with disabilities and displaced persons.

The woman education in BiH, in comparison with the EU standards, is extremely low in general. These are, from a gender perspective, alarming indicators. Groups with poor education lack some of the basic skills, vocational skills and a foundation for lifelong learning. Although significant achievements in higher education are obvious, it seems that BiH is still far from reaching the EU standards and the improvements that were made recent years have yet to be reflected in the area of

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<sup>13</sup> Report of the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH.

<sup>14</sup> BiH Statistics Agency, Press Release No. 2/13.



labour and employment, especially among young people, who are better educated compared to the preceding generations.

### ***3.6. Education quality***

The Framework Law on Higher Education in BiH establishes the basic principles and standards for acquiring higher education qualifications in BiH, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols, the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the Recognition and Quality Assessment of Private Institutions of Higher Education, the Recommendation on Access to Higher Education and Recommendation on the Research Mission of Universities and other relevant principles of internationally recognized legal instruments to which BiH is a Contracting Party, and in accordance with the Convention of the Council of Europe/UNESCO on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region.

There are three institutions in BiH involved in quality improvement at all levels of education: Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education, Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance and Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education.

From the perspective of the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education, the quality is provided by developing the Learning Outcome-based Common Core Curriculum (CCC). The Learning Outcome-based CCCs were developed for the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages and for foreign language, and the Draft Learning Outcome-based CCC for sciences.

The quality is also ensured by establishing standards of student achievement, developing occupational standards and by external evaluation. The Agency also provides support for teachers' professional development/training. The Agency is also involved in all other processes with partners who have a focus on improving the quality of education.

10 key competencies are defined in 2010 as a framework for lifelong learning in BiH. The student achievement standards for the 3rd and 6th grades of nine-year primary school are defined in 2010/2011 for the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages, mathematics and natural sciences with an analysis of the environmental factors influencing the achievement. The primary school standards are disseminated to the teachers in primary education in 2012, in order to implement them in teaching practice. The Educational Evaluation is carried out in 2011-2012 by setting benchmarks for evaluating the nine-year primary education reform through the evaluation of student achievement with recommendations. The Quality Standards for teachers, educators and principles in preschool education are developed in 2011 and disseminated in 2012.

The Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education has developed instruments for evaluation and self-evaluation of primary schools and the Code of Ethics; it is working on the improvement of continued professional development of teachers, educators and professional associates based on an analysis of the current situation in this area.

The following measures have been taken to improve the education quality in vocational education: developing occupational standards (occupational groups: agriculture and food processing, catering and tourism, mechanical engineering and metal processing, forestry and wood processing) and aligning curriculum with occupational standards; training of teachers for the implementation of modular curriculum (all agricultural schools in BiH, vocational schools in the Una-Sana Canton ...).

In 2011 BiH adopted the Bases of Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is fully compliant with the European Qualifications Framework. Similar to the European Qualifications Framework, the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (KOBiH) has eight referent education levels and aims to facilitate recognition and mobility, qualification comparison, the establishment of a lifelong learning concept and ensuring the quality of education and qualifications, access to education for all and to provide horizontal and vertical movement through the education system. The education levels are described through the presentation of the complexity of learning outcome-based knowledge, skills and competencies. These eight levels cover all levels and types of education (formal, non-formal and informal).

Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently developed the Action Plan for the development and implementation of the BiH Qualification Framework 2014-2020 (which is in the adoption process), which elaborated the design, connection, testing and revision of all the elements, processes and procedures within the BiH Qualifications Framework in detail and its role in the development of human resources and ensuring quality.

Since its establishment the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance has adopted necessary policy documents in the exercise of legislative competences in the development of higher education and ensuring quality. The Agency has developed following reference documents in the field of accreditation: *Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in BiH*<sup>15</sup>, which are aligned with the first chapter of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education; *Decision on the Norms Governing the Minimum Standards in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*<sup>16</sup>, as well as the criteria for the accreditation of study programs in BiH, and study programs for distance learning - *Decision on Amendments to the Decision on the Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.<sup>17</sup> The Agency keeps the State Register of accredited higher education institutions in BiH, based on the *Regulations on Keeping the State Register of Accredited Higher Education Institutions*.<sup>18</sup>

The Agency has so far organized a series of educational workshops and international conferences for stakeholders on quality assurance in higher education in this area.

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<sup>15</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, No. 75/10.

<sup>16</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, No. 100/11.

<sup>17</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, No. 44/13.

<sup>18</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, No. 91/11.

In exercising competencies defined by the Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Agency, following the completion of the procedures of accreditation, entered the first five higher education institutions into the State Register of accredited higher education institutions in BiH in 2013. Based on the proposal of the competent authorities, the Agency has appointed, so far in 2014, two commissions of experts who provide assessment and conduct quality audits and make recommendations on accreditation of higher education institutions, and issued two recommendations on accreditation.

The implementation of the project *Strengthening the Institutional Capacity for Quality Assurance* (IPA 2011) has started in September 2013. The aim of the Project is to increase the mobility and employability of the labour force by improving the quality of work of higher education institutions in accordance with the Bologna process. The purpose of the Project is to promote and develop human resources and institutional capacities for quality assurance in higher education.

Since the development of higher education and quality assurance has significant European context, the Agency has completed the first phase of membership in international associations for quality assurance in higher education reaching the possible level of membership in these associations. The Agency has become a full member of INQAAHE and CEENQA. The Agency has the status of an associate member of ENQA, which is a partnership relationship of the Agency and the reputable European association.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE EFA OBJECTIVES**

A very important policy document in the field of education is the Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2008 – 2015. The Education for All (EFA) objectives are in a certain way recognized and incorporated into the document. However, the implementation of these objectives has not been fully completed.

The Education Reform Strategy, laws and various policy documents promote the principles of equal access, availability, acceptance, and effectiveness of official recognition, non-discrimination and lack of segregation in education.

It is necessary to make adequate efforts to implement the principles of inclusiveness that education legislation provides. Existing practice and prejudices continue to affect a large number of children with disabilities. These children are marginalized from the beginning, from early childhood, due to lack of access to basic education in mainstream educational institutions, teaching staff who is not prepared to work with them and school programs that are not flexible and customized to the specific educational needs of these children.

BiH undertakes a number of activities aimed at ensuring equal access to and participation in the educational process in coordination with the competent education authorities, and in accordance with its mandate.

## 5. PROSPECTS BEYOND 2015

One of the strategic priorities in BiH beyond 2015 should be **preschool upbringing and education**, and increase in the percentage of children involved in preschool upbringing and education; **develop an inclusive education system** which will eliminate the barriers to access and equal participation of all children in preschool, primary and secondary education and provide specially-designed programs of activities necessary to address the issues of specific groups (in particular Roma and persons with disabilities); **provide better links between education and the labour market** through the establishment of quality dialogue between relevant social partners (educational institutions, employers, employment services, etc.) when developing and innovating curricula and creating educational policy in secondary schools and higher education institutions; **develop an education statistics system in accordance with EUROSTAT** and strengthen statistical institutions in BiH in order to produce statistical data comparable and in line with the EU standards; **reform the financing of the education system** to ensure effective education.

The overall objective of education in BiH should be full harmonization of the education system with the European system of education and providing knowledge mobility and creating a modern and well-trained workforce.

Inequalities to which vulnerable groups are exposed in education need to be urgently addressed, because the lack of education or low level of education is an obstacle to the prosperity, quality of life and ability to escape poverty.

It is important for BiH to continuously measure its progress in relation to the EU standards because the gap expansion in terms of education, skills and education of the workforce will affect the long-term progress in the country, since it largely depends on the good results achieved in the education sector.