

Republic of Serbia
Ministry of Education and Sports

**EDUCATION REFORM IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA:
THE FIRST STEPS AND FORTHCOMING CHALLENGES**
Belgrade, Sava Center, September 5-7 2002

R E P O R T

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

The Conference Education Reform in the Republic of Serbia "The First Steps and the Forthcoming Challenges" was held in Belgrade from the 5th to the 7th of September 2002. The conference was organized by the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Serbia. It was also financially supported by the following organizations and institutions: the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Fund for an Open Society–Yugoslavia, KulturKontakt–Austria, Stability Pact – Task Force Education and Youth, the Institute for Open Society Education Programs for Southeast Europe (OSEP-SEE), the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Swiss Development and Cooperation agency (SDC). The Council of Europe and OECD provided expert support for the Conference.

Around 1000 participants, domestic and foreign guests attended the Conference. The domestic participants are education representatives of relevant groups: principals and teachers in primary and secondary schools, university professors, school psychologists and pedagogues, experts and associates of science institutes, expert and professional associations, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, unions, representatives of republic and local political structures, as well as the Ministry of Education and Sports. The foreign participants represented significant international organizations and institutions.

CONFERENCE AIM

The aim of the conference was to inform the representatives of the education system in Serbia and the donor community on the progress achieved within the first wave during past six months, to check its soundness and relevance through the overview and analysis of

the first reform steps outcomes. Another was to present the second wave strategy and action plan and discuss concrete issues thus facilitating enhanced flow of information among all actors in the field and ensuring in depth discussion among key policy makers, educational experts and the donor community on the present status and the long term strategy steps of education reform. Furthermore, the conference also served to ensure the transparency of the education reform and to provide for the information-based involvement of all stakeholders in the education.

CONFERENCE WORK

The Conference was opened by Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindji_, followed by welcome speeches of the Minister of education and sports of the Republic of Serbia Ga_o Kne_evi_, Sonja Liht on behalf of the Fund for and Open Society, Mary Black on behalf of UNICEF and Jim Stevens on behalf of the World Bank.

The Conference work took place in plenary sessions and in working groups.

The first day of the Conference consisted of plenary sessions. The reform processes in general and vocational education were presented (speakers: Tinde Kova_ Cerovi_ and Refik _e_ibovi_, assistant ministers of education) as well as the reform processes in tertiary and higher education (speakers: Srbijanka Turajli_, assistant minister of education, Ladislav Novak, professor at Novi Sad University and David Crosier, European University Association).

The second day of the Conference consisted of the morning work group sessions that addressed topics and areas related to the *first wave of reform*, that is the areas in which the first reform steps have already been taken. These are: decentralization and democratization in education, teacher professional development, Entrance examinations and quality assurance, Education for democratic citizenship, Secondary vocational education in a flexible system and Higher education (problems of diploma accreditation, transnational education and the European credit transfer system).

The afternoon plenum and work group sessions of the second conference day were dedicated to the second wave of reform, that is the areas for which the conceptions are developed but are still the subject to a public discussion or further development. On the plenum, the working version of the curriculum reform strategy in the compulsory and secondary education was presented (speaker: Ljiljana Levkov, Faculty of Philosophy Belgrade), after which the topics related to the various aspects of the curriculum reform were discussed in four separate working groups (Education principles, aims, outcomes; Structure of the curriculum and education areas; Structure and organization of the education system; Preparations for the implementation of the curriculum). The fifth afternoon group on the second day of the Conference was devoted to tertiary vocational education.

Working groups dealing with areas from the third wave of reform, areas in which issues are being opened and reform moves just being planned, marked the third day of the Conference. These areas are: Minority education; Education of children with special needs; Evaluation and accreditation in higher education; Social partnership, private and specialized schools; Info-communicational technologies in education and Foreign languages in the Serbian education system.

The summaries of the work group reports are given in the further text.

During the second and third days of the Conference, participants could visit the *Project Market*, and get acquainted with the selected VET schools projects and a number of NGO programs accredited by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

The closing notes were given by the Minister of Education and Deputy Ministers, as well as esteemed foreign guests Monika Mott of KulturKonakt, Gustav Reier of GTZ and Pasi Sahlberg from Finland. .

CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the Conference especially emphasized the achievements in and the further development of the essential elements and "pillars" for the efficient implementation of the reform processes: professional development and specialization, the participation principle in formulating and implementing reform conceptions, sound two-way information and communication of all relevant actors in the process of education and redefined governance and supervision in education to ensure the accountability. The first steps have already been taken in all of these areas, most of the reform conceptions have been developed and their implementation is underway. The forthcoming steps include the further development of the reform concepts for the specific areas and their implementation through a whole series of new activities to be organized in school. Internal and external evaluation of reform concepts and implementation are already conducted and will be applied to and in all further reform steps. Only then, we will have schools that will raise competent, responsible and independent children (see the attached scheme).

The educational public in Serbia actively participates in the formulation and realization of reform processes. The 1000 participants in this Conference, the huge interest in the plenary presentations and the work in groups, the widely distributed materials and the participants' keen interest in the possibilities and ways of direct involvement and further participation in the reform, are the firmest acknowledgement that the education workers and professionals have been irreversibly drawn into the reform processes.

Given the wide array of reform domains and topics, the Ministry of Education and Sports plans to organize the seminars, workshops and roundtables on the sub-regional level in

the coming period. Those gathering will deal with specific reform areas and their peculiar issues and problems and will involve a smaller number of participants.

FOLLOW-UP

- Gathering all presentations, materials and reports presented at the Conference, their broad dissemination to the actors of the educational process, publication of all relevant materials on the Ministry of Education and Sports website.
- The continuation of the work of the expert groups still developing their conceptions and establishing of the new ones for the reform areas to be addressed in the "third wave". Especially intensive activity is planned in the area of compulsory and general education curriculum development and implementation.
- To ensure the participation and involvement of a large number of actors in the development of reform conceptions and implementation, in all domains and on all education levels. For example, as from mid-October, the curriculum core team will visit a number of schools throughout Serbia to discuss the relevant issues. Also, the series of "Us in the Reform" talks will continue on the school level.
- Continued organization of seminars, roundtables and workshops where experts and actors in the educational process would work on defining reform conceptions and the methods of their implementation on an equal footing.
- The continuation and intensification of cooperation of international organizations and institutions in order to integrate the Serbian education system into world currents as quickly and completely as possible, as well as to exchange experiences and expert and financial support to reforms.
- Establishment of a public relations service on the level of the Ministry of Education and Sports, which would deal with promoting reform activities and informing the educational and general public, in order to ensure the transparency of reform processes, and encourage and facilitate the participation of all stakeholders as well as the general public in the reform processes.

RESULTS OF WORKING GROUPS' WORK

THE FIRST WAVE OF REFORM

Decentralization and Democratization in Education

The groups considered a wide range of topics related to this area:

- Amendments to the law on primary and secondary education, regulating the new method of election and new composition of school boards, a new method of principal election and a new concept of governance-pedagogical supervision of school operation. New parent councils and school boards have been formed in schools, and the election of principals is underway. The preparations are made for the training of principals and school board members, to build their capacities to implement the changes in the method of governance, management, control of school work and evaluation of school work, within the education decentralization component of the World Bank credit for Education Improvement Project.
- The school development project has been presented, the pilot phase of which had been realized in 40 schools in 4 regions in Serbia. The aim of the project is raising the quality of teaching/learning and extracurricular activities and including the local community in the school development. The school development plans involve 3 aspects of decentralization: administrative, qualitative and financial. The main phase of the project will be realized with World Bank credit.
- The "Project on Twinning of Ministry of Education Regional Departments with European Counterparts" (Twinning project) has been presented. The project supports the process of decentralization on the regional level through connecting, i.e. twinning the MoES regional centers with similar centers in European Union countries and countries in transition, and it is conducted with financial support of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of this project is to facilitate the process of decentralising responsibility for education management and governance in Serbia to regional actors. .
- Also presented were the advantages of a decentralized financing system compared to the centralized one. As the definition of the financial formula of the education budget is still worked on, the combination of a centralized and flexible financing system has been proposed as the solution suitable to our conditions.

The issues separately raised in discussion referred to the de-politicization of the school board members and principals selection, definition of mechanisms for the sustainability of reform processes and to the authority for implementing the law on primary and secondary schools in Vojvodina.

Foreign guests Jim Stevens, Eluned Robert Schweitzer, Helen Addison and Peter Rado have enriched the work of this group with their presentations and participation in discussion.

Professional Development of Teachers

The issues this group dealt with:

- The "Program of teachers' professional development in Serbia" project has been presented. The project is realized with the financial support of the government of the Republic of Finland. This project, which provides assistance to the professional development of teachers in Serbia through the reform of the curricula for pre-service teacher training at the teachers' faculties, is already implemented as a pilot at the teachers' faculties of Belgrade and Sombor, and the experiences will be shared with other faculties for teacher education.
- The directions of changes in teachers' professional development have been presented. They refer to the systematic organization of the various programs, program accreditation, defining the criteria for the teachers' career advancement, preparing teachers for the new and more complex roles foreseen by the education reform, establishing an institutional framework for teachers' professional development and forming a database.
- The project for supporting the national center and regional centers for in-service teacher training and professional development that the Ministry of Education and Sports will implement with the support of SDC and possibly other donors.
- The accreditation procedure for programs for the professional development of education employees determined at the Ministry of Education and Sports has been presented. Accreditation is one of the first steps towards establishing a teachers' professional development system with clearly set standards. It allows for systemic supply of quality programs with all relevant information, which are accessible to every education worker via the Catalog of Professional Development Programs.
- The criteria for advancement and the procedures of selection for certain professions, developed in the Ministry of Education and Sports, have been introduced. Special emphasis was put on the role of the school in evaluating the quality of teachers' work, as well as the significance of teachers' self-evaluation.

Numerous questions were raised in discussion: on the possibilities and method of financing various forms of teachers' professional development, the role of professional societies and associations, the accreditation possibilities for different programs, the position of teachers with different views towards professional development, the problem of inadequate staffing of specific positions and the methods for overcoming the problem. Also mentioned was the possibility of licensing, which represents one way of proving the

competencies of the teacher's calling. It was suggested to define the sorts of activities that the title-bearers should conduct.

Entrance Exams and Teaching Provision Quality Assurance

Within this working group:

- The principles that guided the expert team for education quality assurance in recommending a strategy for this field have been presented, of which the most important are the development of a comprehensive monitoring system and the development of the evaluation system that would be the support to the establishing and assurance of the quality of education rather than the control system.
- The conception and realization of this year's entrance exam has been presented and the changes planned in the area for the coming academic years have been announced. The changes would ultimately lead to the establishment of a final examination in 2006/07. Those tasks will be carried out by the National Center for Educational Standards and Evaluation, the formation of which is expected by the end of 2002, with the financial support of World Bank credit.
- The PISA project has been presented, that is, a pilot research conducted in our country in the period April-May 2002. This was the first time that we took part in an international testing. Within this, Mr. Ian Whiteman of OECD spoke of the process of evaluation and the PISA project from the international perspective.
- The statistics of primary and secondary education devised at the Ministry of Education and Sports have been presented.

Many issues were opened at the discussion. The question of standards was raised: this year the expert group for quality assurance determined the areas in which systematic monitoring and evaluation should be conducted and proposed a preliminary list of indicators and the further work on those issues is connected with the work of the curricular commission. The development of standards depends on the work in these two areas. It is also one of the areas of concern of the National Center for Educational Standards and Evaluation, the establishment of which is underway.

The speed-slowness dilemma as regards the introduction of entrance exam changes has been pointed out. In respect of creating the conditions to make the choice of secondary school easier for children, numerous influencing factors have been mentioned and many suggestions made, such as better definition of educational profiles, better guidebooks for parents, enhancing professional and vocational guidance services, etc. Also raised were questions dealing with the knowledge tests passing threshold at the entrance exam, specifically the threshold level, whether it should exist separately for each subject, etc. The participants suggested the analysis of the tasks as well as an analysis of the students' achievements according to various variables.

Education for Democratic Citizenship

Topics this group dealt with:

- Presentation of the contents of the Civic Education program, teacher training, implementation strategy, as well as hitherto experiences in respect of program realization and suggestions for their further development and application. The introduction of Civic Education as a separate subject in primary and secondary schools is an element of the broader project of democratization of the entire education system.
- Presentation of the results of internal evaluation of the Civic Education program, as well as the results of external evaluation conducted by the experts of UNESCO, UNICEF and the Open Society Institute from Budapest, upon request of the Ministry.
- Also presented were the programs developed and implemented by non-governmental organizations: Civic initiatives – "Project Citizen" and Friends of Serbia's Children – "The Primer of Child Rights". In both cases the focus was on local activities, on the stronger promotion of civic initiatives and better adult information on the convention on children's rights.
- The experience of Great Britain (Mr. Graham Morris), where civic education is a compulsory subject, has been presented.
- The need was expressed for establishing a special unit within the Ministry of Education and Sports to deal with the strategies for school democratization and education for democratic citizenship and human rights with the special emphasis on the child rights.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in a Flexible System

The group addressed a wide array of topics and problems, and the most significant conclusions referred to:

- The horizontal and vertical mobility and step-by-step education – the future secondary education system should be: flexible, diversified, coherent, decentralized and democratic. This is the road for the new school that will try to connect the education, labor market demands and personal wishes of individuals.
- The position of teachers in a flexible system – the teacher gets a great autonomy but also the responsibility in the process of the school decentralization and democratization. In the situation where the school designs a part of the curriculum, and where the student chooses his/her subjects/modules and decides on the level of education corresponding to his/her capabilities, the teacher needs to be prepared for the permanent changes in the teaching contents, introduction of new technologies, possibly changes in the position of work...
- The modular education system – the reasons why it was necessary to introduce modules and elective subjects into teaching were explained on the example of pilot

projects for agricultural schools. The principle of the pilot project was explained and the first reactions from schools presented / insufficient parent information, student satisfaction with subject selection, the teachers' need for further training.

- School network reform – the new approach to defining the school network will introduce two important principles to our education system: standards and quality, economy and efficiency.
- Practical teaching and the position of students with employers – the directions for the Law on vocational practice have been considered, as well as the significance of decentralized schools with active participation of school boards on selecting and deciding on introduction of the new occupations and the influence of economic trends on the modification of educational profiles through social dialogue.

In this work group, Mr. Gustav Reier of GTZ also presented the project of training teachers in economic schools.

Higher Education – Diploma Recognition Issues, Transnational Education and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

This working group dealt with issues directly related to the concept of the European space of higher education.

- Speaking of diploma accreditation, the European credit transfer system (ECTS), diploma supplement and transnational education, the speakers discussed their functions, the principles they relied on and the mechanisms of their application, but they also reflected on the additional effects, expectations and other aspects that should be borne in mind. That way, the diploma supplement, as a description of the academic content of the studies, contributes to the transparency of the institution awarding the diploma.
- The European credit transfer system is, among other things, expected to increase the competitiveness of Europe on the world "market" of higher education.
- It has been noted that, although our legal framework is not yet adequately developed, the first steps in introducing this system (calculating students' work) into our higher education have been taken, thus the prerequisites for student and teacher mobility in our country are for the first time being created.
- The variety of forms and the increasing number of institutions dealing with transnational education – i.e. offering schooling outside the country whose institution awards the diploma – require careful regulation of the responsibility of institutions for the quality and value of the diploma they issue.
- The potential advantages of transnational education have been noted: it covers the fields missing in national higher education (expensive, insufficiently attractive); it

overcomes the limitations set by the national schooling (gender, minority language etc.).

- It has been emphasized that with all aspects of reform, the noted principle for diploma recognition should be adopted as the desirable relationship between given solutions or recommendations and practice – that the acceptance of instruments should be followed by their application.

Foreign experts, Mr. Sjur Bergran and Mr. Juan Carlos Dugue Ametxazurra, have significantly contributed to the work of this group.

THE SECOND WAVE OF REFORM

Principles, Goals and Outcomes of Education

The issues the group dealt with referred to the existing situation in the definition of education principles and goals; what the expert group for curricula had proposed in respect of principles, goals and outcomes and why it is necessary to define them; what outcome-oriented education is and why it is necessary; what the methodology of defining and the implementation of education goals and outcomes is; what the development of lists of proposed principles, goals and outcomes are based on, and what we should be governed by in the further definition and implementation of education goals and outcomes.

The main conclusions of this work group pertain to:

- Accepting the conception of education focused on aims and outcomes and providing consent in principle to the proposed list of aims and outcomes
- Opening the issue of the conception of contents based on aims and defining the outcomes
- Stating that the CONTENTS, i.e. their adequate selection based on aims, are an important task for the commissions for education areas
- The need for the aims to be fully operational
- The importance of the methodology for testing outcomes and developing the evaluation system. It has been accentuated that not all outcomes can be measures, since there are some immeasurable categories, but they must not be overlooked
- The need to also conduct an analysis of the process, not only the determination of outcomes.

Curriculum Structure and Education Areas

This working group dealt with elements for curriculum development such as: the developmental concept of education, education areas as the starting point for curriculum conception, curriculum structure and the institutional structure for curriculum development.

A series of questions related to curriculum structure, its implementation and the organization and methods of implementation of teaching emerged in discussion. The following issues were discussed:

- Uncertainties on who passes and approves the national and school curricula
- The planning and realization of the number of the lessons (lessons' fund) from the National Curriculum Framework that each school creates by itself, making its school curriculum
- The fear of possible misuses of the free space opened to schools in creating the programs

- Staffing issues and role distribution (what are the teachers, psychologists and pedagogues, parents, local community representatives each to do) in creating the school curriculum
- The necessity of capacity building of the existing teaching staff that should soon start working according to a completely new concept focused on achieving the desired results; timely informing teachers and supporting them in the implementation of contents and creation of independent programs
- Definition of school profiles and the realization of pilot projects as well as the method of financing them.

The basic conclusions of the group's work referred to the fact that the transition of the concept of education from a plan and program mandatory for all to the curriculum will enable higher quality education focused on meaningful linking of all components of various forms of knowledge and their applicability in future life, work and further education. This way, all participants in the education process (teachers, principals, psychologists and pedagogues, pedagogical advisors, parents) qualitatively change their role and their responsibility for quality assurance of the education process, the outcomes of which will be evaluated, is increased.

Mr. Alexandru Crisan, an expert in curriculum issues, greatly contributed to the work of this group.

The Structure and Organization of the Education System

This group dealt with comparing the characteristics of the existing education system to the proposed new structure of an education system based on the open and decentralized model of a system in which the school cooperates with both the stakeholders and the institutions, educational and other. The new structure assumes:

- Extension of the compulsory education to nine years, its division into three three-year cycles and completion with a final examination prepared, realized and processed on the national level.
- Three-year general secondary education completed by a general final exam (matura) ensuring passage to university)
- Secondary vocational education that may last one year (training for certain jobs), two (some trades and crafts), or three years (and longer) after which students may take either the vocational final exam (providing qualification), the general final exam (enabling entry into university studies), or both.

The questions that were especially discussed are: cycles in compulsory education – especially the second one, in which the teaching of integrated subjects is planned, the planned teaching subjects (basic, compulsory, elective, facultative), as well as accelerated advancement of gifted students, where it was concluded that the future law must regulate the matter. The discussion also addressed final exams, i.e. the content of the exam and the dynamics of the intended changes, as well as the teaching staff and their training for work

in reformed education. The greatest interest was expressed regarding the profiles of teachers that are to teach in the second cycle of compulsory education (where teaching will be subject-based, but the subjects will be integrated) and it was concluded that the opportunity to educate the staff should also be given to the teachers' faculties.

Implementation of the the Curriculum

The primary topics discussed in this working group referred to the necessary prerequisites for curriculum implementation.

- The need for quality information dissemination that would reach all teachers as well as the general public was noted.
- One of the forms of information dissemination but also of active involvement of the participants into the process of transition to the curriculum is the continuation of the participative processes that the Ministry has already successfully implemented, but now focused to the discussions of the curriculum, where significant feedback affecting both the formulation and the implementation of the new concept would also be received.
- The next step would be providing support to the establishment of school or local teams, with accompanying stabilizing mechanisms.

It has been pointed out that the procedure for new textbooks, which would no longer merely be copies of the plan and program, should be defined as soon as possible, since good new textbooks may be a shortcut in the transition to the curriculum.

Specifying what the teachers may change in their programs even during this academic year has been recommended, since this is the way to gain the trust and to motivate the teachers to participate actively in the curriculum development.

Higher Vocational Education and Training

This group discussed reforming college-level vocational schools into university-level ones. The group's work included an overview of the current condition and status of institutions for the level of college education, the relationship to market demands and the prospects opened by the education reform, as well as the national occupation nomenclature.

- Presentations and discussions indicated that higher vocational schools in Serbia and Montenegro explore the potential space for them within higher education reform. Having recognized themselves in its aims, they see as the advantage their connection to the economy and the acquisition of practical knowledge during studies, and set as their aims increased efficiency of studying, three-year studies, practical orientation, deepening the existing relations with the economy. At the same time, they point out the need for creating the adequate legal framework for their work.

- The group proposed the establishment of universities of applied studies, but it was noted that in Vojvodina this form of education sees its future positions within the existing universities.
- The group also reexamined the inherited (self-management system) national nomenclature of occupations as a factor hampering work mobility.
- Higher vocational education was, on the example of Germany (Mr. Wilhelm Parlmeyer), presented from the perspective of the market demands, and not according to the estimates of higher education institutions. The data shown indicated the significance of this form of education for small and medium entrepreneurship, its flexibility and sensitivity to local and regional needs.
- Analyses of the required structure of employees' knowledge (the relationship between the theoretical and practical knowledge of experts by the activities structure segments) conducted by large companies for their own usage may serve to assess the synchronization and advantages of individual kinds of higher education compared to the economy requirements.

THIRD WAVE OF REFORM

Minority Education

This working group dealt with identifying the problems in the education of students of minority groups and with finding out ways to overcome the existing problems.

The following topics were especially discussed:

- Organization of teaching in minority languages,
- The contents of the programs for the mother tongue, the Serbian language, history, music and art,
- Education and professional development of teachers in minority languages,
- Enrollment into school and education of Roma students,
- Textbooks in minority languages and equipping school libraries,
- Questions of bilingual teaching,
- Reasons behind the decrease of the number of students educated in minority languages,

Peter Rado presented the experiences of Central and Southeast European countries in the respect of minority education.

The main conclusions of the group's work referred to:

- The need to form teams to deal with education of the Roma
- Aligning the concept for minority education with future reform steps
- Intensification of work on the production of textbooks in minority languages

- Harmonizing the work of all organizations and institutions interested in the subject matter.

Education of Children with Special Needs

The contents of presentations and discussions in this working group may be grouped into three areas:

- An analysis of the current system of education of students with special needs, which indicated very small coverage of children in special schools, a significant number of unsuccessful students in regular school, the inability of regular school to admit these students, low coverage of preschool education, nonexistent adult education, the impermissibly high proportion of the Roma population in special school,
- Proposing starting points for reforming the education of special needs students, such as:
 - The application of the principle of quality education for all set by the Ministry of Education and Sports and international documents dealing with children
 - The building and development of a comprehensive, related system of education that will vertically encompass education from preschool to higher and adult education and horizontally offer three alternatives: inclusive, special classes within a regular school and special schools for severe disabilities
 - Training and preparation of teachers for working with special needs students
 - Introducing process diagnostics and monitoring each student with special needs
 - Training that enables the acquisition of the practical knowledge and skills required for everyday life
 - Participation of parents, associations of persons with special needs and the labor market in the process of reform as well as in the work of the future reformed schools.
- Information on the hitherto work on reforming education in this area within the Ministry of Education and Sports, such as the establishment of the expert group, its activities, international cooperation, foundation of the documentation center for special needs. The proposals for further work pointed out that our hitherto positive experiences in the integration of children with developmental difficulties into regular schooling and an initiative for setting up a website for education for special needs has been taken.

Ms. Kaija Miettinen has presented the experiences of Finland in respect of education of children with special needs.

Evaluation and Accreditation in Higher Education

Within this working group:

- The report on the state of preparations for the introduction of accreditation into our higher education was presented, as well as a proposal on the method of establishing an accreditation agency in Serbia based on the experiences of countries that have such agencies and it was noted that the sound solutions of some open questions are still sought after.
- The Austrian model of the Accreditation Council has been presented (Mr. Helmut Konrad) and the details of their solutions and practice, which also included the information that the majority of the council members are foreigners, proposed and appointed by the Austrian bodies for this purpose, with the explanation that it is a reflection of Austria's belonging to the international academic community.
- The discussion on accreditation have been set into the broader perspective by expert statements: that in Europe, the question is no longer whether to conduct accreditation but what kind of accreditation should be accepted and that those who do not pass the accreditation will soon have difficulty finding their place in the European education system.

Social Partnership, Private and Specialized Schools

A wide array of topics was discussed within this working group: the state of the school network and the prospects of its redefinition and further development, the social dialogue within the Socio-economic Council of Yugoslavia, standardization and standards in education, the private sector in secondary education and the formation of teams for providing psychological support for persons in emergency situations.

- As regards the prospects for redefining the school network, noted was the necessity for developing new specialized schools (e.g. economics gymnasiums) that should meet the demands of the labor market and enable filling the vacuum between general and vocational knowledge. Apart from this, an analysis of the hitherto changes in the field of vocational education has been conducted (founding new schools, introducing new educational profiles), as well as an analysis of this year's enrollment into secondary schools, reflecting on the relationship of the plan to the students' interest. The need for working on the innovation of the occupational nomenclature and the introduction of new educational profiles was noted.
- Within the topic on social dialogue and partnership there has been word of the functioning of the Social Council of Yugoslavia and the problems related to the implementation of specific decisions was discussed. Also discussed was the Draft bill on employment with special attention paid to the organization of additional education.

- Concerning the standardization and standards in vocational education, most of the talk was on the significance and type of standards and the principles of standardization in vocational education. The basic elements and carriers of quality in vocational education have been identified, as well as the need for teachers' professional development. Emphasis was placed on the necessity of affirming the social partnership model and the integrative approach in the creation of vocational education standards and occupational standards. The Scottish model of certification of modular units was presented.
- It has been concluded that the development of the private sector in secondary education ensures the competitiveness of knowledge and the conditions in which it is acquired, enhances the accessibility to secondary education, raises the quality, realizes the optimal structure of schools according to type of occupation and regional location, conducts positive selection of students and teachers etc. The necessity of legally regulating the subject matter was emphasized.
- The participants were informed about the Ministry of Education and Sports project for forming teams for psychological crisis interventions in emergency situations affecting the school population within the educational environment and outside it.

Info-communicational Technologies in Education

This group's work was based on the realization that the building of information systems and databases as well as the usage of computer technology in teaching is significant for education development and quality improvement. However, it was recognized that their application and building requires time and significant financial means.

- The Ministry of Education and Sports projects being developed were presented:
- The building of an information system – project in cooperation with the World Bank
- Experience about the organization and further development of the information network through area information centers for supporting the system of enrollment into secondary schools.
- The experiences of certain educational institutions and organizations were presented. The speakers vividly presented the possibility of using info-communicational technologies in accordance with educational needs and characteristics of the given environment.

During the presentation, numerous issues were raised that cannot be reduced merely to technology questions but that belong to the social dimension, our current conditions and the needs in education.

One of the issues discussed is related to the educational computer software – its creation, evaluation, accreditation and production institutionalization. The group noted the

intention of the Ministry not to establish an institution for this form of software but that it tends to open competitions for quality software and teaching contents in accordance with the funding available from the budget.

The group expressed concern over the low quality of work of the greatest number of ICT teachers as well as over the shortage of experts of the profile.

It was recommended that the schools rely on their own forces and work on the building up of the existing capacities with emphasis on the professional development in this area.

Foreign Languages in the Serbian Education System

This working group dealt with the currently hot problems in the realization of foreign language instruction with special focus on the possible ways of overcoming them, with the aim of more intensive and higher quality foreign language teaching.

An overview including the most recent data on the proportion of languages in primary and secondary schools in Serbia was provided, the data on the number of students choosing an elective language in primary school, the data on the expertise of the teaching staff, on the demands for the introduction or change of language, on the pilot projects of using alternative textbooks, as well as on the condition in the faculties educating the teaching staff.

The discussion considered problems referring to:

- Curriculum reform on faculties, since the programs are perceived as outdated and nonfunctional, with a low number of classes for the foreign languages teaching methodology.
- The professional development of the current teaching staff for the purpose of familiarization with the latest tendencies in foreign language teaching and for the sake of modernization of the teaching process, directing it towards the development of communicational and cultural competencies of students
- The proportion of unprofessional staff in the teaching of foreign languages – several solutions were proposed to this acute problem, all of which include immediate methodical-didactic training
- The textbooks – we already have alternative textbooks in foreign language teaching, but it is necessary to form an expert commission to review the textbooks of all foreign publishers, compare them to the curriculum and devise a list of suggestions to avoid inadequate selection. The need for the encouragement of teachers' own authoring attempts was noted
- Portfolios – Council of Europe document as an informative tool for the person learning foreign languages using which he/she can accurately define his/her competence level
- Multilingualism, where it was concluded that it is necessary to foster multilingualism and to emphasize various languages, even languages of neighboring countries or minorities. This would on the one hand prevent the creation of elite status of certain languages, and on the other aid the development of tolerance

towards other languages and nationalities and the acceptance of cultural differences.