

Republic of Serbia  
Ministry of Education and Sports

**Education reform in the Republic of Serbia:  
QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL:  
A WAY TOWARD A DEVELOPED SOCIETY  
Strategy and Action Plan**

**International Donor Conference:  
FROM VISION TO CONCRETE STEPS  
Belgrade, Sava Centre, January 16. – 17, 2002**

**Conference Report**

The International Donor Conference on educational reform in Serbia was held in Belgrade on January 16th and 17<sup>th</sup>. The Donor community was represented by 60 individual participants from 41 national and external expert institutions, NGOs, as well as from 6 embassies in Yugoslavia. The Conference was organised by Serbian Ministry of Education and Sports with organizational and financial support of UNICEF, OECD, Task Force Education and Youth, OSEP-SEE and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

## **Purpose of the Conference**

The International Donor Conference served two purposes: to inform the donor community on the key findings and the recommendations of the thematic reviews carried out by OECD, UNICEF and World Bank which have been integrated into the current reform strategy of the Ministry of Education and Sports, as well as the strategy and action plan of education reform in the Republic of Serbia, prepared by the Ministry; and also to give donor community the opportunity to discuss concrete issues on education reform with representatives of the Ministry, members of the expert groups and the representatives of Serbian educational community.

## **Agenda**

The Conference was divided in two parts:

1. Half-day presentation of findings and recommendations of respective analyses and evaluations to the broader education public (participants of the January Teacher Days) and the presentation of The Ministry of Education and Sports document on education reform strategy and plans.
2. Discussion among educational experts and donors based on panel- and poster-presentation of the specific projects as parts of educational reform.

## **First Day**

Both conferences, donors and curricular, were opened by Dr Zoran \_in\_i\_, the Prime Minister, and Dr Ga\_o Kne\_evi\_, Minister of Education and Sport in Government of Serbia. The participants were welcomed by Gerhard Kowar, education co-operation co-radiator for Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and special representative of Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, by Steven Allen, UNICEF special

representative for Balkans; by Terrice Bassler, director of Open Society Education Program for South East Europe; and by Christine Stromberger, member of OECD Secretariat.

After the formal opening, the presentations were continued plenary. During the first part the most important findings and conclusions of the thematic studies that depicted current situation in Serbian education system, including working conditions, human and financial resources, and quality of educational outcomes were presented. Christine Stromberger, OECD representative, and Eluned Roberts Schweitzer, on the part of World Bank, presented OECD Thematic Review of National policies for Education in Serbia, focusing on governance issues, legal framework, issues and barriers in curriculum, assessment and standards, professional qualification of teaching staff and pre-primary education as the main topics included in the review. On behalf of UNICEF, Dr Ivan Ivi\_ presented the UNICEF evaluative analysis of primary school system in Yugoslavia, conducted by the expert group between March 2000 and June 2001. The analysis included key elements of education system organisation and structure, such as normative basis, scope, financial, equipment, cadre, quality and efficiency of the system etc. The concept of the evaluation, essential results with their implications, conclusions and recommendation were pointed out in the presentation. The inferences of these reviews, including the one conducted by World Bank expert group, are the basis of the strategic document of Ministry of Education and Sports. This document defines assumptions, essential activities and reformative implementation dynamics in the education.

Essential conception, action plan and dynamics of reform steps are described in this document which is the integral part of this report. They are based on the strategic propositions of expert groups that were working on the certain key aspects of education policy, summative findings, and the most distinctive requests of different interest groups, described in the Discussion on Reform. The key questions of the proposed and the projected education system are: ability to respond to all educational needs of every person involved; decentralisation, formula-based per pupil financing of the schools and transparency; quality of educational conditions and outcomes accordant to the

educational standards; principles of justice and equal chances, with paying special attention to the educational problems and needs of the outnumbered social groups; provision of conditions for a life-long education and lectures focused on learning; promoting values such as peace and tolerance; professionally adequate teaching cadre; school development. The first wave of the reform activities is planned for the period 2002 – 2004, and it assumes balanced development and improvement of the most important constituents of the education system. It also presumes that no activity remains on the level of general declarations and legislative resolutions, but becomes a part of a common teaching practice. The proposed strategy and action plan of education reform in Serbia was presented by Doc. Dr Tunde Kovacs Cerovi\_, Deputy Minister. The most important conclusions and proposals resulting from the Roundtables on Reform held with more than 8000 education stakeholders throughout Serbia were described by Borislava Maksimovi\_ from the Ministry of Education and Sports.

## **Second day**

The participants of the Donor Conference witnessed the unpacking of this reformative action package during the second day of the Conference. It was unpacked toward essential subjects and projected reform directions, according to the main aspects of the system and to the educational levels. Every topic had its panel- and poster-presentation. Panel-presentations focused on strategic propositions, including framework, reasons for certain strategic decisions, and the effects on their implementation on the education system as a whole and on the persons involved. The contents of the solutions were in more details presented on the posters, using basic, coherent ideas which, although connected, can be developed as the single, separate projects. The presentations included the following major topics:

**Democratisation of the Education System:** The major strategy of the proposal follows two basic principles: the principle of equity and the principle of responsible participation, which means, in the terms of action, access to and respect of equal rights for all, free

flow and availability of information, development of the principles and procedures in democratic decision-making, clear definition of roles and rule of procedure and building cognitive and social competencies at all level. For the forthcoming period following projects are planned to be implemented: Setting up the national and regional councils for education; Information dissemination; Organisation of discussion on democratisation; School management and governance; Networking of schools which have introduced innovation in the field of democratisation of education; In-service training programs and empowerment for democracy in education. The integral part of the process of educational system democratisation is the plan and program for introduction of education for democratic citizenship, which includes developing of syllabi for civic education and teacher training programs. (Presenter: Prof. dr Mirjana Pe\_i\_, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade).

**Decentralization of the Education System:** Decentralization of education in Serbia opens a series of strategic issues, the most important being: governance of the education system, education finance, competence for the development and the procedure for adoption of the curriculum, authorization and procedure for opening new school, advanced training of teachers, supervision of management, financing and realization of curriculum and teaching programmes, evaluation (internal and external). (Presenter: Prof. Dr Jasna Soldi\_ Aleks\_i\_, Faculty of Economics, Belgrade).

**Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development:** New standards and new programs in continuous professional development of teachers are proposed. The following specific action projects are anticipated: Curricular Changes for Teacher Training Faculties; Developing the System of Practicum Sites (Practical Training Units) for Teacher Training Colleges and Faculties; Designing and Licensing System of Teachers Induction; Training the Mentors for Teachers' Induction; Strategic Teachers Training for the Reformed Teacher Roles; Establishing Regional Centres for Professional Development of Teachers; Compiling an Overview and Analysis of the Existing Networks of Current Training Programs and the Trained Teachers; Defining the

Criteria/Requirements for Teachers' Professional Promotion. (Presenter: Prof. dr Ru\_ica Rosandi\_, Teacher Training Faculty, Belgrade).

**Quality Assurance Assessment and Evaluation of Education Outcomes:** The main strategic goal is to establish well-balanced system for quality monitoring and evaluation of educational outcomes that cover different types of evaluative activities: school (self) evaluation, supervisory service and external exams and surveys. Besides establishing the National Centre for Education Standards and Evaluation, the priorities are: Implementing Programme for International Student Assessment 2003 (PISA); Transforming the Supervisory Service; Movement for Quality School; Training the Key Specialist of the Education Standards and Assessment Service. (Presenter: Doc. Dr Aleksandar Baucal, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade).

**School Reconstruction and ICT Support:** The data and illustrations of the damaged school buildings and schools with bad working conditions, needs for reconstructions and additional investments in modern school equipment were presented. Regarding the support to ICT, the main projects of ICT Steering group are: Establishing Current State of Affaires; Establishing a Best Practice ICT Program; Establishing Benchmarks, Incentives, Control Mechanisms; Developing a Viable Operating System for All Governmental Initiatives; and Assist Decision Making in New Initiatives Utilizing ICT. (Presenters: Ilija Juri\_ and Dr Gabor Mesaro\_, Ministry of Education, Belgrade).

**Pre-primary Education:** The main reform goal is to transform the existing forms of preschool education into a decentralised , diversified and comprehensive system that will meet the determined standard of quality care and education of preschool children and will enable the parents to enjoy their rights of choice and participation. (Presenter: Tatjana Pavlovski, M.A. Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade).

**Primary and Secondary Education, including School Development and Curriculum Reform:** The key-question of any education system is the question of the broadly accepted curriculum possible for realization and based on re-defined educational

standards. The work on new curricula has actually begun by forming expert groups of different fields of study. Proposals for curricula changes and innovations in the foreign languages learning/teaching were presented with more details. The project of school development based on the school grant program was also described. (Presenters: elimir Popov, M.A, Deputy Minister, Ljiljana uri and Borislava Maksimovi, Ministry of Education, Belgrade).

**Vocational Education and Training:** The concept of secondary vocational schools reform assumes: the survey of VET school network and the situation at the labour market; establishing Centre for vocational and adult education development to provide in-service teacher training; training VET schools principles in the modern management and communication with local community and social partners; setting vocational education standards concerning the classification of vocational education profiles and occupations; linking schools with non-formal vocational education. (Presenter: Iskra Maksimovi, M.A, Ministry of Education and Sports, Belgrade).

**Adult Education:** The conceptualisation of the adult education policy assumes: adoption of national program on adult education, determination of priority areas in adult education, defining the overall amount of public funds for supporting adult education, and providing adult education infrastructure support. (Presenter: Prof. Dr Sne\_ana Medi, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade).

**Higher Education:** Establishment of modern higher education system in accordance with the Bologna process assumes expected impact within the system ( increase the efficiency – reduction of the drop out rate, length of study; introduce quality assurance mechanisms – staff and teaching; establish the relevance of the curricula related to the national needs and market demands; incorporate students as partners in the education process), as well as expected impact on the broader scale ( contribution to the democratic development; support in the transition process; promotion of the value of European integration). (Presenter: Prof. Dr Srbijanka Turajli, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education).

**Youth Policy and Youth Strategy:** The project consists of four proposals: Expert Teams and Working Groups Framework for 2002 –2003 (the main tasks are to prepare proposals for amendments to the existing laws, and constitution as well as proposals on creating new laws on youth, and to develop additional legal provisions); Info-Center (to set up local branches of the Youth Section in 15 towns in Serbia and to establish a reliable database with all information concerning youth organizations in Serbia); »Stay Here« Public Campaign ( to make an impact on the youth to stay in the country); and Removal of Architectural Barriers (to adapt University buildings in Serbia). (Presenter: Aleksandra Vidanovi\_, Ministry of Education and Sports, Belgrade).

The International Donor Conference ended with a press conference with the representatives of Ministry of Education and Sports and representatives of co-organizers.

### **Follow-up**

During the Conference a need for intra-regional co-operation and exchange of information was clearly recognized. The conference was closed by cordial thanking to all participants. The Conference materials were sent to those who were unable to attend. It is planned to deliver them the project proposals, too. In the following period, the direct contacts between donors and Ministry are expected.

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