



Mixed Secondary School Travnik (on the left), Catholic School Center (on the right), Travnik, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013

Overcoming Ethnic-Based Segregation: How to Integrate Public Schools in Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sara Barbieri (PhD), IDSCS
Roska Vrgova (MA), Zašto ne
Jovan Bliznakovski (MSc), IDSCS

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Abstract

The regulation of education in countries with different ethnic and linguistic groups is often a challenging and contentious issue, as it tries to respond to the different needs of groups. The policy brief addresses the issue of ethnic-based physical segregation in public schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH, with focus on the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Macedonia (MK). It shows how both countries miss to provide integration between different ethnicities through the educational system and addresses the consequences of the segregation practice which is in place. Furthermore, it makes recommendations for policy stakeholders on the grounds of successful (or partially successful) practices from both countries.



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Introduction

The right to education is a universal human right that is recognized worldwide. Its importance for the personal development of individuals and building of societies cannot be overstated. According to UNICEF's Human Rights Education for All approach¹, the right to education encompasses the obligation of the state to rule out discrimination at all levels of the educational system, to set minimum standards and to improve the quality of education.

The policy brief addresses the issue of ethnic-based physical segregation in public schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Macedonia (MK).

In regard to BiH, the analysis is centered on the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) with a focus on three cantons, Herzegovina-Neretva, Zenica-Doboj and the Central Bosnia Canton. In FBiH, the students at schools are physically segregated along Croat and Bosniak ethnic belonging, whereas in the context of Macedonia, the segregation will be discussed in regard to the two largest ethnic groups, the Macedonian and the Albanian. The decision to compare these two countries stems from a preliminary consideration: both countries experience a strong social division along ethnic lines which is mirrored in the structure and functioning of the educational and schooling system.

The relevance of this issue in the broader debate over reconciliation in the Balkans and in relation to the EU integration process has been underlined, once again, by the European Commission's 2013 Progress Reports for both countries. As pointed out by the 2013 Progress Report for BiH, the ethnic-based separation and discrimination in some public schools in the Federation remains a serious concern. In FBiH children continue to study in divided schools – 'two schools under one roof' (original 'dvi je škole pod jednim krovom') – in some cantons, and mono-ethnic schools across the country do

¹ UNICEF (2007) *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education For All*, New York, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001548/154861E.pdf> (accessed 04 June 2013).

not foster the development of an inclusive multi-cultural society². In the case of Macedonia, the Commission points out that "the trend of separation along ethnic lines in schools and incidents of inter-ethnic violence continues"³.

The question of education is highly political and strongly shapes the future of the two countries, as it directly influences the development of new generations capable to live in an ethnically plural world. The existing phenomenon in FBiH, 'two schools under one roof' refers to the system developed after the 1990s war, which aimed to encourage return of refugees. The step done in the name of integration, is becoming a consolidated source of segregation, as children are physically separated and learn from different curricula. The separation is manifested also through attendance of classes in different shifts, at different floors of the same building (with a prohibition issued by the school authorities to visit the other floor⁴). In some cases children are obliged to use separate entrances, or use the same entrance, but there is a physical barricade, which shows the borders of movement.

A similar situation is replicated in Macedonia, where schools divided along ethnic lines are widespread. The division is a consequence of the character of the school system which allows instruction in mother tongue for non-majority communities. In Macedonia there are schools in which students from different ethnicities study in their own mother tongue, a situation which implies division in different class groups. These schools are called 'mixed schools' (original 'мешани училишта'). In many cases, 'mixed schools' adopt a strict shift-system where different ethnic groups use the same school premises at different times of the day. This situation reduces the contact among students of different ethnic backgrounds

² *Bosnia and Herzegovina Progress Report 2013*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, 16 October 2013, p. 17.

³ *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Progress Report 2013*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, 16 October 2013, p. 12.

⁴ Personal interview with teachers and students from the primary school "Gornji Vakuf", 18 June 2013.

to minimum. According to data from the school year 2010-2011, ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian students are highly isolated among themselves in primary education. Nearly 100% of all ethnic Macedonians study in Macedonian language and a very high percentage of ethnic Albanians study in Albanian (97.83%)⁵.

The result of these practices is that both educational systems keep reinforcing instead of counteracting ethnic divides. In both countries politicians seem to avoid the problem or simply do not consider this situation to be of any urgency. The brief depicts the current situation in BiH and Macedonia and offers recommendations for stakeholders to overcome the problem. The recommendations are made on the ground of positive examples of integration through education found in both countries, gathered from desk and field research⁶.

Background of the problem: root-causes and challenges for tackling segregation

BiH and Macedonia are ethnically diverse countries, and although different in intensity and time of occurrence, both countries have gone through violent conflicts between the largest ethnic groups.

The heavy war in BiH which lasted from 1992-1995 ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA)⁷. The Agreement divided the country into two autonomous entities: the Republika Srpska (with a majority of Serb population, RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (with a Bosniak-Croat majority, divided into ten cantons), and the Brčko District as a separate autonomous province. Although education is briefly noted in Annex 6 of the DPA, the mandate to implement educational reform was not awarded to any

specific institution as was the case with other areas for reform⁸.

The most challenging feature of the education system in BiH is its fragmentation. According to the current Constitution there is no state level ministry of education, the competences are on entity level and district level in Brčko. In FBiH education is further managed on cantonal level, except in Žapče Municipality where competences are devolved on municipal level⁹. There are thus 14 different ministries of education in BiH. The challenge of coordinating so many different authorities was attempted to be overcome by establishing the Conference of Ministers (CoM) of Education on BiH level, chaired by the Ministry of Civil Affairs composed of ministers from the different ministries. Furthermore, there is another body called Coordination of Ministers¹⁰ on the level of the Federation responsible for coordination of policies on FBiH level. The mechanisms which should ensure coordination of the complex system are not efficient and functional. As the European Commission notices in its 2013 Progress Report, they met only twice during the course of one year. It is important to emphasize that BiH is a signee of several human rights conventions and is obliged to ensure respect of the rights of each child to cultivate his/her culture, religion and the use of his/her mother tongue, and the rights of parents to choose the education they consider most suitable for their children, in accordance with the laws. Since 2002, BiH is a member to the Council of Europe. In one of its monitoring reports (2008), the Council states that 'the European future of the country to a great extent depends on the capacity of the authorities of different communities to build a common education framework'. Additionally, the UN Committee for Economic, Social and

⁵ State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia (2012) *Statistical review No. 2.4.12.06/720*, June

⁶ Fieldwork was conducted through interviews with school staff, parents, students, political representatives and representatives from the academia and international organizations in both countries.

⁷ *The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina - the Dayton Peace Agreement*, http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=380 (accessed 10 June 2013).

⁸ Perry, Vallery (2003) *Reading, Writing and Reconciliation: Educational Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. European Center for Minority Issues, Working paper #8, p.42.

⁹ BiH and the FBiH Constitutions allow transfer of competences on municipal level when the majority of the population in a certain municipality is different from the majority group in the canton.

¹⁰ Although CoM should be composed of representatives of all cantonal ministries of education in FBiH, the reality is that there are only 6 cantonal ministries taking part in the discussions organized by CoM.

Cultural Rights requested from its member states to do anything possible to abolish the practice of ‘two schools under one roof’.

Macedonia went through a violent turmoil in 2001 when ethnic Albanian military formations clashed with the state security forces dominated by ethnic Macedonians. The outcome of the conflict was the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA)¹¹ between the largest Macedonian and Albanian political parties at the time. The OFA arrangement kept the unitary character of the state intact but offered advancement in the rights of minorities in several spheres related to the development of decentralized government, non-discrimination and equitable representation in the state bodies, the expression of identity, the use of languages and education. In the sphere of education, one novelty which the OFA stipulated was the introduction of state-sponsored higher education in the language of the communities comprising at least 20% of the population (the Albanian). In the spheres of primary and secondary education, the right of instruction of mother tongue, active since the times of former Yugoslavia, was simply reconfirmed with the incorporation of the OFA into the legal system¹². The introduction of state-sponsored higher education had also affected the lower educational levels, contributing to the reinforcement of the division in public schools on ethnic and linguistic lines.

In MK, education is under competence of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and the municipalities. So-called municipal schools are founded and function under the competence of municipalities, while state schools are under the competences of MoES. The language of instruction at school as well as the educational program and school branches

are determined with the *Establishment Act*, drafted and signed by the founding party, i.e. the municipality or MoES. In this way, the legal framework for primary and secondary education in MK is more centralized than the one in BiH, even though a degree of decentralization exists through granting ownership of municipalities over schools.

Current situation: scope of the problem and consequences

The past animosities between the largest ethnic groups in both countries regarding the character of the state as well as different interpretations of historical events have led to the creation of different teaching curricula for the subject of history, language and religion. Firstly, in both countries students in primary and secondary education are separated into different schools or classes along linguistic lines. Different languages of instruction in the case of FBiH imply different educational curricula. In FBiH students strictly follow three different curricula: curricula in Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian language. There is no unified program which students follow in the subjects of history and religion. Similarly, in Macedonia, there are different teaching curricula for the subject of history, one in Macedonian and one in Albanian. These characteristics of both educational systems offer little points of contact between students who study in different languages.

Currently, in FBiH there are 34 schools which operate in the model of ‘two schools under one roof.’ This model often entails that within a single building there are two school administrations, with separate management and principles, one Bosniak and the other Croat¹³. Additionally, there are 17 schools which exist as single administrative entities (still there are two schools with single administration).

A similar system is replicated in Macedonia where schools divided along ethnic lines are widespread, however not typically according to

¹¹ The full text of the Ohrid Framework Agreement can be accessed at:

<http://www.ucd.ie/ibis/filestore/Ohrid%20Framework%20Agreement.pdf> (accessed 18 October 2013).

¹² Full text of the Macedonian Constitution, including the OFA amendments, can be accessed at: <http://www.slvesnik.com.mk/content/pdf/USTAV-eng.pdf> (*Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, with the Amendments to the Constitution I-XXX*. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, accessed 11 March 2013).

¹³ OSCE Bosnia and Herzegovina (April 2009) *Report of the Working Group for Analysis of the phenomenon “two schools under one roof”*.

the ‘two schools under one roof’ model, except in the municipalities of Struga and Kicevo where schools settled in one building but divided administratively exist. In Macedonia, the more typical arrangement is known as ‘mixed schools.’ According to data from the school year 2007-2008 there are a total of 84 primary schools which organize instruction in two or three languages, i.e. ‘mixed schools’. Most of them (50) are schools where instruction is organized in Macedonian and Albanian, a smaller number (14) in Macedonian and Turkish. There are also schools which organize instruction in three languages - Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish (13). The administration of the school is however unified. As in FBiH, these schools do not always assure contact for students from different ethnic backgrounds.

Enduring segregation: from temporary to permanent?

Although, in the past decade there has been some progress towards solving the segregation in schools, still both countries have a long road ahead. The fact that the recent trend shows more drawbacks and stagnation than progress emphasizes the need to bring the issue on the agenda, to revisit old and invent new ways for reforming the structures that become more and more consolidated.

In May 2012, the Municipal Court in Mostar (FBiH) passed a first instance judgment which found the classes based on the ethnic principle discriminatory. The Ministry in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton was obliged to undertake necessary steps to organize uniform classes for all children and to stop the discriminatory practice of segregating children by September 2012¹⁴. The Judgment was however not enforced by the given deadline. On the contrary, in June 2013, the Cantonal Court of Mostar responded positively to an appeal submitted on this judgment. The

¹⁴ In February 2011, the Association of Citizens ‘Vaša prava,’ filed an appeal against the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, the Elementary School ‘Stolac’ and the Elementary School ‘Čapljina,’ requesting from the court to determine that the practice of educating children of Bosniak and Croat ethnicity in the two defendant schools was discriminatory.

Cantonal Court stated that parents of children who attend segregated schools actually have the right to enroll their children into such schools. According to this decision, in FBiH ‘two schools under one roof’ results to be an *acceptable practice* as long as there are parents who want to enroll their children in such schools. Following these developments, the system becomes more entrenched. The latest Progress Report of the European Commission¹⁵ also states that there was a similar case in October 2012, where the Travnik Municipal Court¹⁶ rejected the active legitimacy of the plaintiff. The issue, which already has a political value, is moved to a new legal frame, which still needs to be addressed.

In Macedonia, physical segregation is justified by teachers and school principals with avoiding violent clashes between students from different ethnic background. Throughout the past years, sporadic violence has been visible between high-school students from Macedonian and Albanian ethnic background in Skopje, Kicevo and Struga. These events fueled the opinion that ‘mixing’ is ‘dangerous’. School authorities have answered with increasing physical separation, most commonly by placing students in different parts of the building where contact would be minimal, or in other cases, by placing students in different time-shifts. In relation to this, students show high level of prejudice and mistrust towards students from different ethnic background as one recent survey on student perceptions in secondary education showed¹⁷. As in BiH, also in MK the established system becomes further consolidated to answer to occasional outbursts of student violence.

¹⁵ *Bosnia and Herzegovina Progress Report 2013*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, 16 October 2013, p. 18.

¹⁶ Popovic, Ana (2012) *U ‘dvije škole pod jednim krovom’ nema diskriminacije*. Vecernji.ba, 25 October 2012, <http://www.vecernji.ba/vijesti/udvije-skole-pod-jednim-krovom-nema-diskriminacije-clanak-467962> (accessed 15 August 2013).

¹⁷ OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje (2010) *Age-Contact-Perceptions. How Schools Shape Relations Between Ethnicities*. Skopje, January.

Hope in view: from segregation to integration

Many claim that the educational system based on segregation is legitimate since parents make a voluntary choice to which school they enroll their children. Just as one of the directors puts it, *‘there is no segregation. The parents and the children have a choice. We do not forbid any student, regardless of its ethnic background to come and study at our school’*¹⁸ (which was as well the argument used by the Cantonal Court in Mostar). However, the question remains how much information do these parents have, and on what basis do they make their conscious choice, and whether this segregated system contributes to a safer and peaceful future, or further enhances the social cleavages which lead to total alienation and hardship to live with the ‘other’. The ‘other’ created through the system is seen as threat that will assimilate ‘my ethnic identity, and is to be feared’¹⁹. Despite the challenges, there have been some instances in which determination of multiple actors have provided examples of hope for integration, and represent a start of counter-trends towards reformation. In FBiH individual schools supported by international organizations, local civil society organizations, parents, cantonal and municipal governments, have decided to move forward and integrate the school premises, staff and students. In Macedonia, CSOs tried to implement activities to foster integration in primary and secondary schools. Besides, the central government, represented by the Ministry of Education recently adopted a Strategy for Integrated Education which aims to tackle the ethnic divide. These positive trends are discussed below through the cases of the primary school in Konjic and the Mostar gymnasium (FBiH) and the introduction of the concept of integrated education (MK).

FBiH - First Primary School in Konjic²⁰, and the Mostar gymnasium²¹

‘I am a Serb, and I have been teaching Croatian and Bosnian to many generations, even when the school was divided, and now when it is integrated. My role as a teacher has never been undermined due to my ethnic background’, said Radmila, a teacher at the First Primary school in Konjic.

‘We have made the changes possible by focusing on the children’, Halid Mustafic. Director of First Primary School in Konjic.

Many would find this statement as expected reality in a democratic society, where teachers are not judged by their ethnic background, but on their professional qualifications as teachers. Sadly, this is a rare exception found in the ‘two schools under one roof’ and ‘mixed schools’. The First Primary School in Konjic is a former ‘two schools under one roof’, which contained a glass barrier dividing the Bosniak from the Croat school, and is one of the rare environments where dialogue and multiethnic communication is flourishing nowadays. As one teacher recalls everything started in 2000, when a CSO approached the school with an idea to create a common teacher-parents council²². The staff of the school embraced the idea, and the council was formed. They held regular meetings where mutual issues were discussed. First the school staff met with parents and explained their plan for integration, then the parents were asked to sign a statement to confirm that they were happy with the approach, and that the children will continue attending the school, if the integration changes took place. As the Director explained, they found it easy to agree with people, but they had problems with the politics in the canton. As the idea for integration was becoming realistic, and all efforts were put in this direction, there appeared a challenge how to deal with the extra staff, which would come out of the

¹⁸ Personal interview with official staff from a school, Jajce, 17 June 2013.

¹⁹ Personal interview with a Teacher, at Primary School “Gornji Vakuf”, Gornji Vakuf, 18 June 2013.

²⁰ Primary school in Konjic called “Prva Osnovna škola”, which used to be an example of ‘two schools under one roof’ consisting of “Prva Osnovna škola” and the Catholic School Center (Katolički Školski Centar).

²¹ “Stara Gimnazija” (Old Gymnasium).

²² Open University, Bosnia: Two schools under one roof, 07 August 2012, <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/education/educational-technology-and-practice/educational-practice/world-class-films-bosnia-two-schools-under-one-roof> (accessed 10 May 2013).

unification of two administrative bodies²³. As officials explain, the cantonal Ministry of Education for three years refused to ensure employment for the extra staff, which eventually was transferred to other schools in BiH.

Besides the work with the parents, the school was organizing joint extracurricular activities, celebrations, joint excursions for the students from the two schools, so when the unification happened in 2005, as Radmila explains, it was not really felt, as the schools were already integrated.²⁴ What officials reiterated as a problem was the politics, and lack of support for integration by official institutions.

Another example of integration is the gymnasium in Mostar. The “first stimulus for the integration of the Mostar Gymnasium came from the U.S. government, which offered \$1 million in assistance to the school under the condition that 392 students in the temporary Bosniak Gymnasium are reintegrated.”²⁵ Almost any calls and initiatives for integration of schools are more easily accepted by Bosniaks rather than Croats due to their fear of being assimilated²⁶, but although Croats’ first reaction was negative, the integration took place. According to an OSCE report²⁷, the integration follows the rule of rotation of directors (by ethnic background). There is joint management and administration, a joint teachers room, joint shifts, joined equipment,

and the students use the same sport hall and the same entrance. There are two different Assemblies of Teachers, as well as a joint Assembly which acts upon request²⁸.

The integration of the primary school in Konjic and the Mostar gymnasium are only on the level of administration, but still the Croat children follow the cantonal curriculum in Croatian language and the Bosniak children follow the federal curriculum in Bosnian language. So besides the joint usage of the same laboratories, sport halls and informatics cabinets, the students do not follow any other class together. There is a long road ahead to achieve complete integration or reformation of these schools, but these positive cases should be more talked about, and used as examples to achieve this reformation and integration.

MK - CSOs initiative and integrated education

The concept of integrated education in Macedonia is supported by various CSO initiatives. Most notable is the one by the *Nansen Dialogue Centre* which has implemented a model of integration based on extra-curricular activities, training of teachers and cooperation with parents in eight schools in Macedonia (seven primary schools and one secondary). The first Nansen school was opened in 2008²⁹. Responding to the division on linguistic lines, this model involves activities in two languages with two teachers from different ethnic background. This has been highly successful in the selected schools as it managed to bring students, parents and teachers together.

This bottom-up approach was followed by developments at the political level. In the beginning of 2011, the Ministry for Education and Science (MoES) introduced the subject ‘Macedonian Language’ for the members of non-majority communities from grade one in

²³ Personal interview with official representatives, and staff of First Primary School, Konjic, 20 June 2013.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ OSCE report, 2005 as cited in: Hromadžić, Azra. “Discourses of Integration and Practices of Reunification at the Mostar Gymnasium, Bosnia and Herzegovina”, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Special Issue on Education in Conflict, The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Comparative and International Education Society, (November 2008), pp. 541-563.

²⁶ For more details on the discourse of integration, please refer to the following article: Hromadžić, Azra. “Discourses of Integration and Practices of Reunification at the Mostar Gymnasium, Bosnia and Herzegovina”, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Special Issue on Education in Conflict, The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Comparative and International Education Society, (November 2008), pp. 541-563.

²⁷ OSCE Bosnia and Herzegovina (April 2009) Report of the Working Group for Analysis of the phenomenon “two schools under one roof”, p.11.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The schools are based in the following municipalities: Jegunovce, Strumica, Petrovec, Karbinci, Konche Cair and Vinica. See <http://www.nmie.org/index.php/en/our-schools> (accessed 20 June 2013).

primary education³⁰, contrary to the practice of teaching this subject from grade four in primary school. However, this decision became highly unpopular for parents, students and teachers from non-majority communities. The Government's claims that it will bring integration in education were not embraced. Finally, the decision was declared to be incompatible with the laws by the Constitutional Court and MoES was forced to a withdrawal. Following these events, in mid-2011, the Government decided to offer a more systematic approach towards the problem by introducing the Strategy 'Steps for Integrated Education'³¹. With this, the concept of integrated education³² came to the forefront as a valuable option to overcome the rising ethnic division in education.

The Strategy puts forward several measures which are divided into five thematic groups: I) Promotion of integration through joint activities (curricular and extra-curricular); II) Integration through learning the languages of other communities; III) Development of educational plans and programs which would contribute to integration; IV) Raising the competences of teachers to implement integrated education; and V) School management in the context of the process of decentralization. Unfortunately, the Strategy was not followed up by an Action Plan and does not fully specify the time-frame of implementation, though all of the proposed activities should be completed by 2015. Back in 2005, the Government also adopted a general Strategy on Education for the period 2005-2015, but the concept of integrated education was not promoted through that document³³.

At the time of writing of this brief, there are no mechanisms in place which evaluate the

implementation of the different strategies and laws for creating integrated education on annual basis, that will ensure an end of these segregating practices in the near future. Thus, it is impossible to determine the progress in the area, and until when the expected changes are supposed to take place. Additionally, there is no envisaged structural financial allocations which will ensure implementation of intended measures, and utterly abolishment of segregation³⁴.

Conclusion

The problem of physical segregation in public schools is of major concern both in MK and FBiH. Although there is no complete resemblance in the root-causes of the problem, still there are some similarities. Both societies are post-conflict environments where preservation of ethnic, cultural and religious identity matter significantly. This is mirrored in the educational systems which allow different treatment for students from different ethnic background. The right to instruction on mother tongue contributed to the creation of separate ethnic programs and curricula. This is in particular the case in subjects such as history, religion and folklore. Both the practice 'two schools under one roof' (in FBiH) and the model 'mixed schools' (in MK) enforce ethnic divide. Although one might expect that the authorities will strive to provide conditions for integration, as the latest developments in both countries show, there has not been much progress in this regard. On the contrary, reforms are highly stagnated as these practices are used/abused to spread fear, and manipulated by politicians to win points among their electorate.

And although in both societies there is great intellectual awareness of segregation, the same is fully supported, not only by the majority of politicians, but also by the majority of parents, students, and teachers. The authorities entrench the segregation, by recalling the right of parents to choose best education for their children. Not much is talked, and known about

³⁰ Ministry of Education and Science (2009) *Decision on amendments and supplements to the curriculum for the educational activity of the nine-year primary school* (no. 07-6323/1), 27 August.

³¹ Ministry of Education and Science (2010) *Steps towards integrated education in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia*, October.

³² On integrated education see OSCE (2012) *Selected Strategies and Approaches on Integrated Education including Bilingual and Multilingual Education*.

³³ See Ministry of Education and Science (2006) *National Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015*. Skopje.

³⁴ The Progress Report from 2013 states that "State funding has yet to be allocated for the implementation of the Strategy on Integrated Education" (page 12).

the benefits of eradicating this system. Although there is nominal acceptance by the authorities that change is needed, the lack of will and steps for implementing it is astonishing. The positive contributions of the civil society through different activities aimed at integration are overshadowed by the lack of institutional support. A striking difference in both countries is that while in MK the concept of integrated education is receiving more positive appraisal, in BiH the case seems to be the exact opposite.

Moving from these considerations, this policy brief offers recommendations addressed to different stakeholders, directed at overthrowing the physical divide, believing that small and big steps which reflect perseverance and dedication of all actors can bring the needed changes in both societies. We consider that a coordinated multilayer action at the societal level is much needed in order to overcome the present situation.

General recommendations

1. There is a need for an **educational ‘myth busting’ campaign** which will provide concise, correct information of what the integration/reformation of schools entails and how the programs in which the children from different ethnicities have intense contacts can give benefit for their lives and future possible carriers. There is a general fear, especially among Croat schools, that students will be ‘assimilated’ during this integration process (BiH). Similar reactions have been also recorded in MK.

2. **Change of discourse** when discussing the segregation in schools. A resistance for discussion was observed when only mentioning the phenomenon of ‘two schools under one roof’ (FBiH), especially in schools which apply the Croatian curriculum. A shift in terminology from ‘**integration**’ to ‘**reformation**’ could ease the discussion, at least in the local environments. In order to create an atmosphere of cooperation, change of the discourse is a necessity. This is needed as there is a negative perception and fear, induced and

encouraged through political and media discourse as well.

3. A **clearly defined period of work for each cantonal ministry in FBiH (where divided schools are present) and MK to conduct integration/reformation** of the schools.

4. A **clearly defined plan and activities for each divided school in BiH and MK**, according to the stage of integration of the school. This is necessary as schools function in different local contexts.

Policy makers

1. The cantonal governments in FBiH and the Macedonian government must propose and the Parliament has to allocate **more finances** in support of integrative measures. Tackling physical segregation through integrated/reformed education clearly has financial implications, so there is a need to develop an adequate financial plan which can also be included in the strategies. Stronger financial capacity could give the possibility to organize after-school activities and joint events for students of different ethnic background.

2. The Coordination of Ministers in FBiH **should provide for coordination and cooperation among the cantonal ministries** at the FBiH level which will ensure implementation of the same laws and programs on Federation level, by creating specific obligations and programs for integration with a **clearly defined period** for implementation.

3. The concept of **integrated education in Macedonia has to be included in the general Strategy for Education** which ends in 2015. When drafting the new post-2015 Strategy, the Government should include the measures already proposed through the Strategy “Steps for Integrated Education”. Moreover, the Government should follow up the Strategy for integrated education with a detailed Action Plan which would foresee all necessary measures along with time-frame for implementation, as well as financial allocations.

4. The cantonal ministries of education (FBiH) and MoES (MK) have to support **training of teachers** to gain additional skills on how to nurture and encourage inter-ethnic mingling of students, and to gain more culturally sensitive communication. Students must develop a sense of civic respect for the ‘others’ and of cultural differences and interactions in multiethnic societies. Additionally, teachers should be trained in managing and prevention of conflicts which could potentially arise between students from different ethnicities.

International Community and civil society

1. The international community should financially support **long-term capacity building programs** for different target groups: ministries, school management, teachers, parents and children. The programs should be synchronized with the programs of the ministries and schools, in order to avoid overlapping and to increase efficiency, with clearly defined period for the ministries which are obliged to conduct the integration of the schools. These programs would have to last long enough so the students, parents and other actors see the benefit, and undergo a smooth transition from the current system to the new one, during which they will also be provided with the correct information of what this process will entail on their behalf.

2. **Conditioned funding for schools**, whether in infrastructure or capacity building, with a precondition to commit to the principles of integration/reformation, through clearly defined conditions which will lead in that direction.

Public schools (principals, teachers and staff)

1. Enhanced **proactive role** of managing bodies of schools – the School Boards and the Principals – in assuring contact among students from different ethnic backgrounds.

2. Establishment of **broad coalitions between students, teachers and parents** within schools in support of integrated education. The school

management bodies have to take the “steering wheel” in the creation of such coalitions.

3. Instead of promoting measures of separation of students for the sake of ‘security’ schools should **design activities, both curricular and extra-curricular**, that would encourage interaction among them. For a start, all sports activities, school trips, theater plays, celebration of holidays, and celebration of graduation should be organized at the same time in the same places, which will allow for more informal interaction between students.

4. Creation of a joint **Assembly of Parents**, where there are two schools in the same building and where segregation is recorded. The Assembly should meet on regular basis, and should be involved in solving concrete problems which the school or the students face. Students’ representatives of the last classes could also be included in the Assembly.

The Media

1. **Promotion in the media of the concept of integrated/reformed education** in Macedonia and FBiH. These concepts were not promoted with positive label and more informative articles that reach different ethnic groups are needed. The media should engage in a more critical appraisal of the problem.

2. **Proactive promotion of examples of integration** that will increase the trust of the community, as opposed to the current atmosphere of fear.

3. **Presentation and promotion of correct information on and the implications of an integrated/reformed school system** in most read and watched television channels that will contribute to an increased number of informed citizens.

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