

# Improving teaching and learning processes

Education is crucial for the development of sustainable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as it contributes to shaping the views and attitudes of young people. Despite changes over the past two decades, the teaching process remains based on outdated curricula and teaching materials. Combined with a heavy ethnic, religious and gender bias, this means that schools often fail to equip students with the competencies they need for life in a dynamically changing and diverse society. Current education practices hinder reconciliation and jeopardize long-term stability, because they do not foster competencies, such as critical thinking, multiperspectivity, inclusivity and respect of diversity, innovation and collaboration among the young generations.

Over the years, the Mission has been committed to the development of inclusive quality education that would reflect human rights norms and

values, by advocating for and supporting the improvement of policies and practices for primary and secondary education. To this end, the

Mission assists authorities in designing, planning, and leading education reform, as well as in monitoring its impact and adjusting changes based on the evidence obtained by continuous participation of BiH in international large-scale assessments, such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS.

Key areas of interest to the Mission include the development of curricula based on student learning outcomes (SLOs), strengthening teacher competencies, and the enhancement of teaching materials and textbooks.

## Curricula based on student learning outcomes

A path that would allow BiH to move forward from current realities would be the

comprehensive implementation of the enhanced [Common Core Curriculum based on Student Learning Outcomes](#) (CCC SLOs), developed by the Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education.

The CCC SLOs shifts the education paradigm away from outdated practices, such as content memorization and reproduction, to the development of competencies, such as critical thinking and multi-perspectivity. Although clearly stipulated in the BiH Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education, the obligatory implementation of the enhanced CCC based on SLOs is stalled. Therefore, the Mission intensified advocacy and support to the responsible authorities to carry out the

transformation of their curricula in line with the CCC SLOs. The Mission's project "Quality Education through Curriculum Reform" (2018-2022), financed by the Norwegian and Italian governments, yielded [recommendations for such curricula transformation](#), along with comprehensive analysis of current curricula and a unique online platform for curriculum with guidelines for contemporary curriculum development in line with CCC SLOs. Based on these, the Mission supports curriculum reform processes in four administrative units and advocates with other units to initiate theirs.

### Teacher competencies for inclusive quality education

Bringing the improved curriculum to life in a classroom requires equipping teachers with competencies needed for a teaching and learning processes that would lead to inclusive quality education. However, the current pre-service teacher education is not up to this task, while in-service professional development lacks organization and recognition. Both of these shortcomings threaten the implementation of SLOs and the sustainability of inclusive practices. Therefore, the Mission collaborates with international and domestic partners to systemically introduce changes in pre-service education and continuous in-service professional development of teachers.

### Teaching materials and textbooks

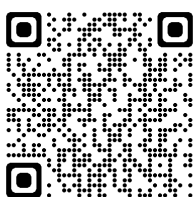
Despite changes to teaching material and textbooks, those currently used across BiH often fail to uphold the values of a democratic society. Textbooks rarely foster critical thinking or the skills needed for life in today's rapidly-changing world. On the contrary, much material, especially for history teaching, is dominated by divisive curricula and is often composed of three ethnically coloured, exclusive and generally mutually opposing versions of history. This poses a considerable threat to reconciliation and social cohesion. That is why the main focus of Mission efforts is the development of history curricula based on SLOs along with the matching textbooks and materials, which would steer the focus on learning and teaching beyond memorisation of historical content to the development of critical thinking skills and multiperspectivity. This would contribute to mutual understanding and social healing.

As a result of the Mission's tireless work, the 2006 [Guidelines for Writing and Evaluation of History Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools in BiH](#) were developed and adopted, followed by a new set of moderately improved history textbooks.

Another major step on this path was development and adoption of the [Common Core Curriculum based on Student Learning Outcomes for the History Subject](#), resulting from the Mission's project "History for the Future –Toward Reconciliation through

Education". In spite of these steps forward, much work still remains. The Mission continues advocating and supporting education authorities and teachers to improve history teaching, with a focus on the inclusion of the period of 1992-1995 into history teaching about what the Mission published in 2023 the report ["History Teaching Materials on 1992-1995 in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Building Trust or Deepening Divides?"](#) with recommendations.

For more information, scan the QR code.



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