

## **Modernizing Literature and Language Teaching**

### Justification

Despite perceived “language barriers” that cause the separation in schools of children of different nationalities living in BiH, as the Brcko District experience has shown, children of different national backgrounds can sit together for mother tongue classes and not suffer any loss of national identity nor fail to enter the universities of their choice in BiH, Serbia or Croatia. Due to the unique language situation of BiH, the Council of Europe’s concept of plurilingual education can be used as a tool against discrimination on the basis of language, and also opens opportunities for wider and more integrated learning of multiple languages across the curriculum.

### Groundwork

Language education in BiH can be perceived as a basis for assimilation (in the case of minority students attending classes) or segregation (in the case of “two schools under one roof”). In both scenarios, selected literature and reading materials are often not balanced and focus more on developing narrow group loyalties rather than universal values. This is paradoxical in a country where the three official languages are entirely mutually intelligible, but demonstrates the fact that language has become a tool of identification, and is losing its first purpose: communication.

In the case of Brcko District, the only administrative unit in BiH in which almost all schools are truly multiethnic, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian languages are taught in joint classes, while students wishing to deepen their knowledge of a particular language can do so in separate classes. These cases, although not always ideal, show that there are possibilities for change and improvement in the field of language education, as long as consistent efforts aimed at finding sustainable solutions are invested. Support and assistance to all willing institutions and individuals is also key where the resources that are already available at the levels of BiH and the international level (EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, and others.).

### Current Activities

In order to introduce the concept of plurilingualism to teachers and Ministries, a conference on mother tongue teaching was held in 2010 in co-operation with the Education Agency, European Centre for Modern Languages and the High Commission for National Minorities. The conference has provided a basis for a systematic strategy regarding all aspects of language teaching, including issues of teaching materials, especially the analysis of textbooks and readers, the training of authors and teachers in new methodological approaches, and curricular standards and skill-sets.