

Mapping of VET educational policies and practices for social inclusion and social cohesion in the Western Balkans, Turkey and Israel

Country report: Bosnia and Herzegovina

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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The BiH VET system is among weakest in the Balkans, lagging behind all Balkan countries. The VET reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) started in 1998 and ever since, similar diagnoses and recommendations were reiterated, suggesting that policy acceptance was followed by only partial implementation. Although efforts are being made to align the VET system with the EU, the results have been meagre even though VET has received much attention and is significantly reformed. According to the constitutional setup, the system of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly fragmented which means that legislation and policy regulations have to be adopted and harmonised by all 14 levels of education. Such a system decreases the potential for efficient improvements in VET.

At the same time, social inclusion issues have been addressed mainly through policies focused on people with special needs and the Roma population, while other socially excluded groups are not adequately included through these policies. Social inclusion measures are only sporadically implemented, depending on the capacities of the entity, the cantons, particular institutions or even individuals. A systematic approach to social cohesion is missing.

Considering that 71% of the unemployed have vocational secondary education, while a majority of children enrolled in vocational schools are coming from rural area, it is important to address social inclusion, social cohesion in context of the VET system.

Therefore, this study addresses VET policy developments and policy implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, taking into account social inclusion and social cohesion issues. The methodology was based on Participatory Action Research, a process of investigation which involved both the researchers and the all major actors like school directors, teachers, ministries for education, employers, local community and beneficiaries in a joint endeavour designed to make the research findings relevant and applicable.

The study analyses the institutional framework for vocational education at the national level and reviews the previous research literature on the relationship between vocational education and social inclusion/exclusion and social cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The paper provides an analysis of three case study schools in Sarajevo, Mostar and Foča and the local 'skills development system' in which they are located. The policy process and the policy debate are analysed while the main research findings from the participatory action research with the three case study schools and localities are elaborated in detail. The research findings at the national and local level explain how the research has provided insights into the issues relating to interrelation between VET schools, social inclusion and social cohesion. Finally, the paper provides recommendations for each of stakeholder groups for improvement of the VET system and its role in social inclusion and cohesion improvements in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

SAŽETAK

Sistem srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja u Bosni i Hercegovini je među najslabijim na Balkanu i značajno zaostaje za ostalim zemljama Balkana. Reforma srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja u Bosni i Hercegovini je počela 1998. godine i od tada se kontinuirano donose isti zaključci i preporuke koje pokazuju da su donesene politike u ovoj oblasti samo djelimično impelmentirane. Uprkos naporima da se BIH VET sistem približi Evropskoj Uniji, rezultati su bili nedovoljni mada je značajna pažnja posvećena VET sistemu i mada je sistem značajno reformisan.

U skladu sa ustavom BiH, sistem obrazovanja u Bosni i Hercegovini je veoma fragmentiran što podrazumjeva da svih 14 nadležnih nivoa za obrazovanje trebaju usvojiti i prilagoditi sve regulative donešene na nivou Bosne i Hercegovine. Ovako kompleksan sistem smanjuje mogućnosti za implementaciju efikasnog sistema srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja.

Istovremeno, socijalna inkluzija je uglavnom adresirana kroz politike koje su fokusirane na osobe sa posebnim potrebama i Romsku populaciju dok ostale socijalno ogrožene grupe nisu adekvatno uključene. Mehanizmi socijalne inkluzije se sporadično implementiraju u zavisnosti od mogućnosti i kapaciteta kantona/entiteta, pojedinačnih institucija ili čak samih pojedinaca. Sistemski pristup socijalnoj koheziji nedostaje.

Uzimajući u obzir da 71% nezaposlenih osoba imaju završeno srednje stručno obrazovanje dok većina djece koja upisuju srednje stručno obrazovanje dolazi iz ruralnih sredina veoma je vazno adresirati socijalnu inkluziju, socijalnu koheziju u kontekstu implementacije srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja.

Ova studija adresira politike srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja i njihovu implementaciju u Bosni i Hercegovini uzimajući u obzir pitanja socijalne inkluzije i kohezije. Korištena metodologija je bazirana na Participatory Action Research (Istraživanju kroz aktivnosti uključivanja), koja kroz process istraživanja uključuje i istraživače i sve važne aktere poput direktora škola, učitelja, ministarstava obrazovanja, poslodavaca, lokalne zajednice i korisnika, u zajedničkim nastojanjima da rezultati istraživanja budu relevantni i primjenjivi.

Studija analizira institucionalni okvir za srednje stručno obrazovanje na državnom i lokalnom nivou i daje pregled literature u oblasti srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja i socijalne inkluzije i kohezije u Bosni i Hercegovini. Studija također pruža analizu tri studije slučaja u tri škole u Mostaru, Sarajevu i Foči uz analizu "sistema za razvoj vještina" u lokalnim zajednicama gdje su škole smještene. Proces donošenja politika je analiziran dok su glavni nalazi istraživanja u tri lokalne zajednice detaljno elaborirani. Nalazi istraživanja na državnom i lokalnom nivou pokazuju na koji način je ovo istraživanje pružilo uvid u pitanja i probleme koji se tiču odnosa između srednjih stručnih škola, socijalne inkluzije i socijalne kohezije. U konačnici, studija pruža preporuke za svaku grupu aktera u cilju poboljšanja srednjeg stručnog obrazovanja i njegove uloge u osigravanju socijalne inkluzije i kohezije u Bosni i Hercegovini.

INTRODUCTION

The VET reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) started in 1998 with the Green Paper *VET Policy and Strategy*. It included a list of recommendations for VET reform in the light of harmonisation with EU developments in the VET field. In the succeeding two years, the recommendations of the Green Paper were accepted by the ministries, agencies and institutions at all levels in entities and cantons. In 2001 the White Paper *VET Policy and Strategy* was launched. The documents that followed in succeeding years, while often more detailed, did not diverge significantly from its recommendations. Ever since the VET reform started, similar diagnoses and recommendations were reiterated, suggesting that policy acceptance was followed by only partial implementation (Parkes, 2010). Although efforts are being made to align the VET system with the EU, the results have been meagre even though VET as it has received much attention and is significantly reformed (WB, 2009). A new *Nomenclature of Occupations* - the new Classification of Occupations (nomenclature) composed of 13 families with a total of 100 occupations was adopted in 2004 at the entity level. A *Law for Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education* (adopted in October 2007). The Development Strategy of Vocational Education and Training for the Period 2007-13 has been adopted¹ as has a *VET Framework Law* (Official Gazette No 63/08, July 2008), a *Strategy for VET in BiH 2007 - 2013* (April 2007) and a “*Baseline of the Qualifications Framework in BiH*” (adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH on 24th March 2011)².

It should be noted at the outset, that according to the Dayton Peace Agreement, no social policy responsibilities are allocated to the institutions at the country-wide level³. Article III states that explicitly: ‘all government functions and responsibilities which are not strictly given to the institutions of BiH shall be the functions and responsibilities of an entity’. Not surprisingly, social inclusion has not yet been given sufficient attention in BiH, despite the fact that a social inclusion strategy has been adopted. The concept of social inclusion is mainly related to the people with special needs and Roma population since the majority of social inclusion policies were focused on these two groups. However, according to some surveys, most young people in BiH (aged 15-30) consider unemployment to be the main problem they are faced with.

In the following sections the VET policy developments and implementation will be analysed in the context of social inclusion and social cohesion. The first section provides an overview of policies in relation to education and social inclusion and social cohesion. The following part sets out the institutional framework for vocational education at the national level and reviews the previous research literature on the relationship between vocational education and social inclusion/exclusion and social cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The policy process and the policy debate are analysed in the third part of the first section. The main research findings from the participatory action research with the three case study schools and localities are presented in the second section including a detailed explanation of the methodology. The second part of the second section provides an analysis of three case study schools and the local ‘skills development system’ in which they are located. The following section sets out the findings of the research at the local level and shows how the research has provided

¹ The Strategy was intended to have its incorporated short and long term Action Plan but they have not been adopted.

² It is the first document in BiH dealing with the qualifications framework for all levels of education. It is in compliance with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. It requires further development over the coming years. BiH is prioritising the need to reorganise their qualifications and to set up a national qualifications framework that would fit within the European Qualifications Framework, the objective being to improve transparency, to support skills matching and to promote mobility with the labour market (ETF, 2011a).

³ Ministry for Civil Affairs of BiH, precisely its Department for labour, employment, social protection and pensions has only a coordinating role and cannot make any decision in the policy area

insights into the issues relating to the main research tasks. The final section of the paper provides recommendation for improvement of the VET system.

1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND THE POLICY PROCESS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The VET reform has been implemented in BiH mainly through programmes financed by the European Commission (EC), which has been the major driver of innovation and modernisation in the sector. In addition to the EC, the reform processes relating to VET, social inclusion and social cohesion has been supported by GTZ (in 2003), ADC (Austria), USAID (USA) and SCD/SECO (Switzerland). VET reform was mainly implemented under the EC Phare, CARDS and IPA programmes. The EU Phare programme (1998 - 2000) supported the preparation of the Green paper and the development of curricula in accordance with commonly agreed modular methodology. The Phare VET Bridging project (2000 - 2001) continued the activities of the Phare programme and assisted the preparation of the White Paper. The EU VET I (2002-2004), EU VET II (2004-2006), EU VET III (2007-2009) and EU VET IV (2011- 2013) supported VET reform by reducing the occupational categories from almost 500 to about 100; creating modular education curricula for 13 families of skills, making the VET system more flexible and allowing for increased mobility of students across occupations, forming virtual and real companies at VET institutions and developing links between schools, students and employers (World Bank, 2009). EU VET IV, completed in January 2013, aimed to strengthen the vertical and horizontal mobility in education, building the capacity of the VET Department of the Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education, assist the reform of curricula and training programmes, develop new acts and bylaws in accordance with the Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training.⁴

1.1 Situation analysis at the national level

According to Labour Force Surveys, 63% of employees and 71% of the unemployed have vocational secondary education (see Figure 1 in an Appendix). Accordingly, the role of secondary education is of great significance, particularly if it is borne in mind that those who are unemployed over 12 months, i.e. long term unemployed, account for 82.4 % of total unemployment (BHAS, 2012a). VET is closely related to this, as VET students are substantial cohorts of young people in secondary education of 70-75 %. Consequently, VET graduates are disproportionately represented in unemployment⁵ as more than 80% of unemployed population in Bosnia and Herzegovina has only three years of high school or less⁶. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school years in BiH, 163,417 students were enrolled in 312 secondary schools. Approximately three quarters of them attend VET schools (see Table 1 in an Appendix). About 25,000 of them completed their education in June 2012 and mostly applied to employment bureaus. At the same time VET enrolment rate is decreasing (Table 2 in an Appendix) which can be partly explained with decreasing number of all children in general due to negative birth rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Education outcomes in BiH are well below expectations. VET programmes in BiH are not aimed at increasing practical training and reducing skill gaps in order to meet market needs. Education in general, particularly secondary education has undergone little reform and is thought to be too broad

⁴ EU VET web site, <http://www.euvet4.ba> visited on 1.3.2013

⁵ According to the preliminary results of LFS for 2012, unemployment rate is 28 % (BHAS, 2012a).

⁶ Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011

and insufficiently practical to equip graduates with the types of skills needed to be employable at the workplace (WB, 2009). Due to the lack of regular international appraisal of the VET education, the results of an OECD research into human capital in the Balkan countries will be used here (OECD2006). When the VET system was assessed in an OECD study by government officials, local stakeholders and international staff of the OECD Investment, the BiH VET system was among weakest in the Balkans⁷(Figure 6 in an Appendix), lagging behind all Balkan countries.

BiH had strong but jobless economic growth before 2009, insufficient to make a dent into continued high unemployment. What is most worrisome is that about half of the unemployed are first time job-seekers, mostly graduates of secondary or vocational programs. The unemployment rate among 15-24 year olds is a staggering 63.1% (32.6% for male and 64.0% for female) (BHAS, 2012a), a large increase from 47.5% in September 2011⁸

It is difficult for young secondary vocational school graduates to find a job. In labour statistics, they could be found under the label Discouraged, as a subcategory of the inactive population i.e. among those who are not classified as persons in employment or as unemployed persons. The main obstacle to vocational school graduates' entry into employment is the lack of labour demand with a particular lack of jobs of kinds that fit the educational attainment of the population. This is related to the lack of a comprehensive reform package, part and parcel of which should be the VET system. In the meantime, social cohesion and integration will become more and more fragile.

1.2 The institutional framework for vocational education

Some points to bear in mind when describing the education system of BiH, primarily the general institutional setup, can be seen in Figure 3. According to the Dayton peace agreement, which defines the institutional setup of the country, the main institutions that deal with education and VET are:

- At the country-wide level: (i) Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) with its sector for Education and (ii) Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education in BiH with its VET Department
- At the entity/district level: (i) Ministry for Education of FBiH, (ii) Ministry for Education of RS and (iii) Department for Education in Brcko District
- At the level of FBiH: 10 Cantonal ministries of education

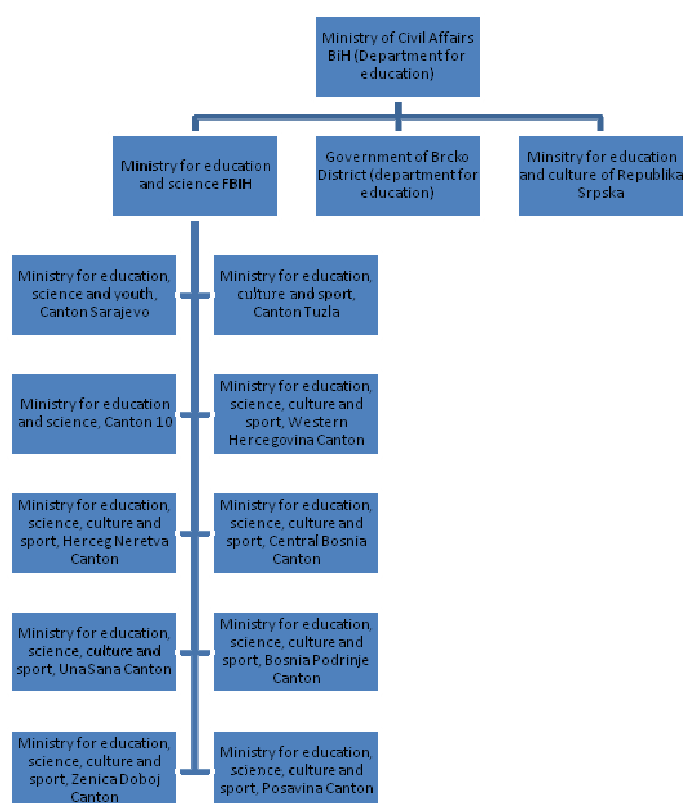
In addition, there are educational institutes established at the Cantonal level in FBiH and one in RS. The main decision makers are the Ministry of Education in RS, the Department for Education in BD, and 10 cantonal ministries in FBiH. The state-wide institutions, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH (sector for education)⁹ and the Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education in addition to the Ministry of Education of FBiH have only a coordinating role. For instance, in the case of the breach of the law the Ministry cannot take any legal action. The real decision-making power lies with the 12 education ministries.

Figure 3: The education institutional setup in BiH

⁷ The VET system were assessed by government officials, local stakeholders and international staff of the OECD Investment For a detailed breakdown of scores please refer to: www.investmentcompact.org.

⁸ Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 2011

⁹ In terms of the number of employees the Sector is small, consisting of just 12 employees. In terms of the number of employees the Sector is small, consisting of just 12 employees.



Another general point to be born in mind is that all administrative units at entity and canton and levels have insufficient capacity and weak governance structures, since just one or two canton-dependent employees are responsible for the administration of education, including VET (Corradini et. al., 2012). The education system consists of fairly independent units with little coordination as defined by the complex constitutional set-up and multiple layers of government. It requires a degree of coordination that is not currently in place. At the moment, decentralized government structures have been coordinated to a certain degree, by the Conference of Education Ministers, who are supposed to meet twice a year, although this is not sufficient.

The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH (Official Gazette of BiH, number 18/2003);

- The Framework Law on Secondary Vocational Education and Training (Adopted in August 2008),
- The Law on the Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education of BiH ¹⁰ (Official Gazette of BiH, number 88/2007)

According to the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH, schools are permitted to design and carry out activities in accordance with the needs of the local market. Schools are also allowed to associate and merge to realize common interests. In addition, the may conduct commercial activities, particularly if related to vocational training, and use revenues in accordance with regulations.

¹⁰ The Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education started operating on January 1, 2009

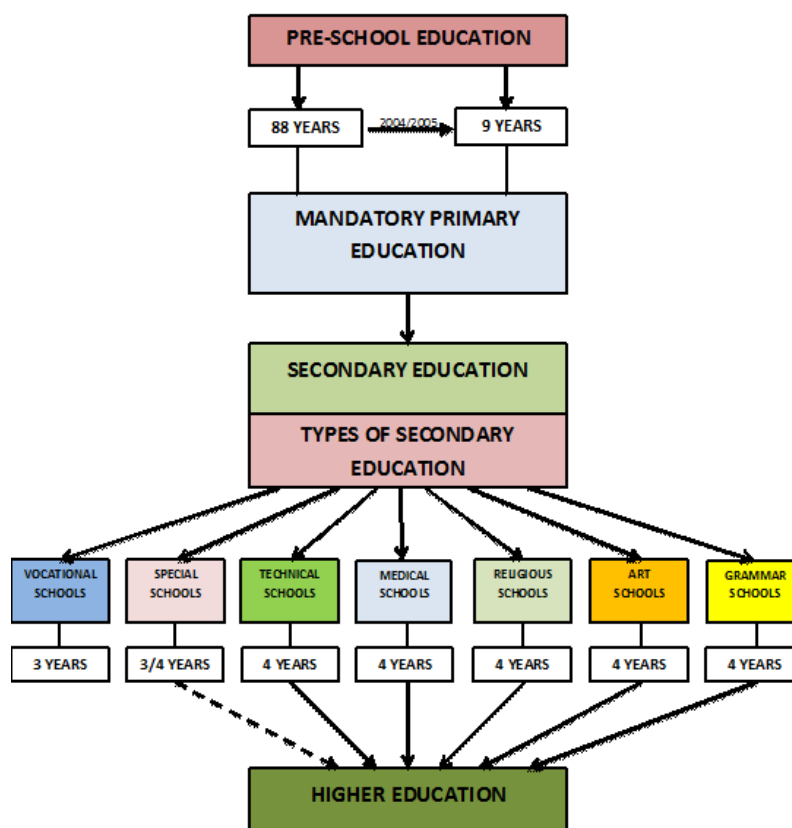
The Framework Law on Secondary Vocational Education and Training was transposed into the legal system of RS but not by all cantons in FBiH, where the VET systems are usually regulated by the Law on Secondary Education, which is supposed to be in line with the Framework Law on VET.

The Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education started operating on January 1, 2009. In addition to the headquarters of the Agency in Mostar there are two field offices, in Banja Luka and in Sarajevo. The Agency operates as an association of the units, one of them being in Banja Luka dealing with Secondary Vocational Education and Training.

VET accounts for 75 % of enrolment in upper secondary education, where it is offered in two forms (World Bank, 2009; Corradini et al., 2012):

- Through three-year vocational profiles leading to specific profession including crafts, and employment, although students are allowed to continue their studies to the next educational level by passing additional exams
- Through four-year technical profiles, leading to employment, enrolment in non-university post-secondary vocational education or to higher education,

Figure 4: The education system in BiH



The scope of VET is mainly limited to initial VET, precisely to secondary and postsecondary non-tertiary VET. In the Federation of BiH the government has only weak capacity to coordinate policy

issues with its cantons even in those areas of shared and joint responsibility envisaged under the constitution (Corradini et. al., 2012).

1.3 The policy process and the policy debate

The establishment of VET Councils as advisory bodies is stated in the Framework Law on VET as a crucial step in enabling labour market stakeholders to influence VET policy. The Conference of Education Ministers advocated the establishment of VETAC but the VETAC at the county-wide level has not been established and no efforts have been made to do so. It is not clear for most of policy makers how to establish the VETAC: just one of them or 13 of them for each family of occupations. Nevertheless, the establishment of VET Advisory Councils should be promoted.

Good cooperation with private employers is a prerequisite for the development of new occupational profiles and fitting curriculum design for the needs of labour markets. However, in order to have VET schools more interested in collaboration with entrepreneurs, the issue of sub-account should be clarified. According to some views, schools have limited interest in commercial activities because of the centralized financial system. More precisely, central collection of income generated by schools, in accordance with the way the treasury operates, is a complex administrative process that provides no opportunities for financial incentives and upgrading of equipment¹¹. Under the current rules, schools must obtain approval from the pedagogical institutes and education ministries for each activity they wish to undertake¹² (Corradini et al., 2012). School does not have its own account, so the funds it generates go to the treasury of the Ministry, and only after a time consuming and complicated bureaucratic process the school can utilize these funds.

One of the reasons why VETACs are not established is the slow process of harmonisation of entity, canton and Brcko District laws with the Framework Law on VET. The Law was adopted in August 2008 and all administrative units (entities, cantons and Brcko District) have been under an obligation to harmonise existing laws in accordance with the recommendations of the Framework Law within six months of its adoption in August 2008.

The key features of the Framework Law on VET include:

- A new enhanced role for social partners and a focus on the needs and demands of the economy
- A central role for vocational schools with increased autonomy in response to local economic needs and possibilities of mergers with other schools to form communities whilst retaining their autonomous legal status

¹¹ An example of the negative impact of the treasury system can be seen with the agricultural school that made EUR 156,000 from income-generating activities only to see the entire amount blocked within the system where they were unable to access it (Corradini et al., 2012).

¹² According to Mr. Hajrudin Hadžimehanović, Assistant Minister of Federation of BiH, the school could turn to the Ministry with its request and the issue of sub-account could be resolved. In other words, the problem of sub-account could be handled without difficulties. However, Mr. Perkan Pervan, a principal of Hotel and Tourism School in Mostar, which is famous for having its students employed even before certificates are issued to them, has also complained about this sub-account. Mr. Miljenko Miloš, Principal of Electro-Technical School in Mostar, complains about the allocation of revenues: 60 % goes to the Cantonal Budget and 40 % to the School. According to Corradini et al., (2012), the funds obtained through income-generating activities are treated in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton are allocated at this way: 35% of funds obtained through income-generating activities are deposited in the central budget while the remaining 65% are used to pay teachers and taxes leaving very little if anything for investment in school infrastructure or equipment.

- Diversification of training offer for new target groups, including adults, through the organisation of short education and training courses at any level and to meet any requirement as a tool for promoting income-generation activities for the schools

However, by the end of 2012 only 50% of administrative units have come into line with the Framework Law on VET (see Table 4 in an Appendix). Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina made some progress and four of the ten Cantons adopted legislation on vocational education¹³.

The very debatable issue is whether the secondary school dropout rates are high or not. According to research studies conducted by some international organizations (UNDP, ETF) dropout rates are high and unacceptable. On the contrary, for BiH dignitaries, dropout rates of 1.1% in Republika Srpska and 2% in the Sarajevo Canton are not high and worrisome. According to the Agency for statistics of BiH the completion rate is decreasing (Figure 4 in an Appendix). According to a UNDP research study, dropouts in secondary education are closely linked to the financial standing of the family, the distance from the school, the lack of interest in continuing education and conflict with the law.

The most frequent reason for dropping out of secondary school is conflict with the law, followed by a lack of interest in education and the poor financial standing of the family. One of the signs of this problem is truancy and a large number of absences. In the majority of cases truancy is a consequence of deep and long lasting frustrations. Within contemporary educational and psychological literature truancy or absence from school is classified as a behavioural disorder. Statistics show that truancy or school absence in the EU countries occurs amongst 10-20% of the school population.

There are no statistics on truancy, even though experience has shown that this problem is present in BiH. This is related to the issue of poor statistics in general and to the poor VET statistics in particular. To make things worse, the last household surveys, which could reveal the picture of poverty and related issues, were conducted in the period 2001-2004.

2. VET PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

2.1 Methodology

The research methodology for this study was based on participatory action research (PAR). At the beginning of the research the desk analysis of statistical data, legal and policy framework that regulate vocational education and social inclusion and social cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted. The major focus of the literature review was on assessment of available reports, journals and other materials pertinent to vocational education and training. The following phase included interviews with national policy makers, policy advisors and stakeholders to identify key issues relating VET to social inclusion and social cohesion in each country. The available statistical data on vocational education and social inclusion and social cohesion were collected. However, due to highly fragmented education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is lack of relevant data on national level while number of indicators on social cohesion and inclusion are not followed.

¹³ EU Commission Progress Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012

Six key research tasks that have emerged at the first stage of the research and were basis for further research activities:

1. Research Task: to map the different policies towards VET, social inclusion and social cohesion in the WBTI countries and assess the relationship between them.
2. Research Task: to map the influence of selection and tracking on social inclusion in the WBTI countries.
3. Research Task: To map the extent of drop-out from vocational education in the WBTI countries and assess the influence of drop-put on social inclusion
4. Research Task: To map the different patterns of school-based vocational education and apprenticeship systems and assess their influence on social inclusion in the WBTI countries
5. Research Task: To map the transition from vocational education to work in the WBTI countries and assess the different ways in which this transition reflects differences in social inclusion.
6. Research Task: to map the role of VET in promoting social cohesion in the WBTI countries

By implementing PAR mechanisms key stakeholders such as school directors, teachers, students, employers, community leaders and others have been invited to participate in the research in an advisory and consultative capacity. The participatory action research was carried out with the participation of three VET schools in the country. In communication with research team, the ETF and relevant ministries for education three vocational schools were selected based on following criteria:

- (i) Presence of inclusive and/or segregation practices (new and/or longstanding)
- (ii) Consideration of diversity (accounting for economic, socio, cultural, religious, and linguistic differences, urban/rural)
- (iii) Instrumental learning (academic attainment and practical learning)
- (iv) Dialogic and/or cooperative learning
- (v) Family/community/employers collaborative involvement in the school
- (vi) Commitment of the school staff to inclusive approaches for all learners a school from the capital city, a school from industrial city and the school from rural area.

The criteria were subjectively scored by country stakeholders on a 0-1 scale and aggregated scores, together with the judgment exercised by country researchers, were used in the final selection of three schools to be invited to participate in the research in each country. Considering the political context of Bosnia and Herzegovina additional criterions for school selection were included: inclusion of schools from two entities and inclusion of schools from communities with one ethnic group dominant. Schools selected for this research in three case studies location were: Electro technical school in Sarajevo, Electro technical school in Mostar and High school in Foča.

A mixture of standard research methods was included in research process in selected locations: in-depth interviews with key actors, focus groups, and teacher and student questionnaires. In-depth interviews were carried out at local level in Sarajevo, Mostar and Foča with school representatives and officials, community-based informants and stakeholders. The interviews have been conducted with school directors, teachers, employers from small and big companies, ministry of education at the cantonal level, employment association at the cantonal level with a following distribution: Sarajevo: 11 interviews; Mostar: 12 interviews; Foča: 10 interviews. Additionally, a sample of 271 students questionnaires were collected from three case study locations together with 71 teachers questionnaires. Pupil's questionnaires addressed selection of school, experience in school, out of school activities, transition school to work and future plans while teachers' questionnaires included

experience in teaching process, social inclusion and cohesion and transition from school to work for children from the particular school.

In order to facilitate successful policy discussion a National Advisory Board (NAB) was established with the relevant key actors at national level. The consultation process with National Board was conducted in the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH to establish and increase the ownership of the process.

Due to significant lack of time for completion of the research the National Advisory Board met only twice. The first meeting was used to discuss research findings and propose recommendations to the Board. In order to avoid frequent repetition of recommendations that cannot be implemented it was agreed that the Board will meet again to provide an opportunity for each Board member to discuss within their own institutions which of recommendations are implementable the most. This approach secured the inclusion of more relevant people. The second meeting aimed to agree on those recommendations that should be part of the report and their significance for improving VET policy and practice.

2.2 Situation analysis

The three locations of schools selected for this study are Sarajevo, Mostar and Foča.

Sarajevo is the capital city of the country, with approximately 350,000 inhabitants, while the Sarajevo canton that includes surrounding towns has around 420,000 inhabitants. Sarajevo is placed well above the national average according to different economic and social indicators. Its GDP per capita is twice the country's average, while the poverty rate is only 5.2%, well below the national average of 18.6%. Also, the unemployment rate is lowest in the country. Although many manufacturing companies were closed or reduced their output as a consequence of war and transition, some new ones emerged and mass unemployment has been avoided. Since it is the capital city and part of the wealthiest canton, it has well-organised NGOs that deal with social inclusion. There is number of organisations that work in the field of child rights including social inclusion but the beneficiaries, such as, for example, children without parental care, are dissatisfied with the outcomes of these interventions¹⁴. This can be partly explained due to the practice of conceptualising social inclusion as an issue mainly related to children with special needs and the Roma population. Other vulnerable groups are not considered as beneficiaries of social inclusion projects.

Mostar is the largest city in the southern part of the country (Herzegovina). It was traditionally the location of large manufacturing industries, including production of military aircrafts. However, the manufacturing in the region was severely affected by the war in 1992-1995 and the transition processes, where the output of the manufacturing industry was reduced considerably, and the share of services increases. Such a change that was not followed by the changes in the educational system resulted in large skills mismatches in this region.

Foča is a town located in the south-eastern part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and is the centre of the least developed region of the country. The town has around 25,000 inhabitants. Most of its industry is

¹⁴ Focus group with 10 children without parental care from SOS Children Village about their inclusion into the social inclusion projects, Focus group conducted on 25th of March in Youth House in Sarajevo by country researcher for Bosnia and Herzegovina for this project

based on wood processing. Its GDP per capita is below the BiH average and poverty rate is twice larger than the country's average.

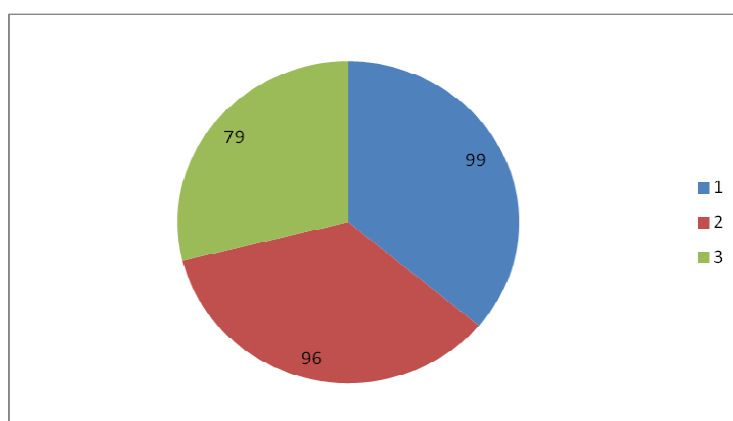
Table 5: Selected economic indicators for regions where schools are located

Region/Canton	GDP per capita	Population	Poverty rate	Number of students per 1,000 inhabitants	Number of schools per 1,000 inhabitants	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
Foča	5,667	57,269	37.0	116	0.7	17.9	42.2
Neretva	7,592	226,632	9.9	174	0.7	22.5	40.9
Sarajevo	13,024	421,289	5.2	186	0.3	33.7	34.5
BiH	6,371	3,843,126	18.6	160	0.6	33.2	43.3

Source: UNDP (2011) and annual reports of statistical offices in BiH

2.2.1 Student questionnaire

In total, 271 completed questionnaires from students in three selected schools (1-Sarajevo, 2-Mostar, 3-Foca) were collected. Distribution of questionnaires by school is presented in the Figure 5 below.



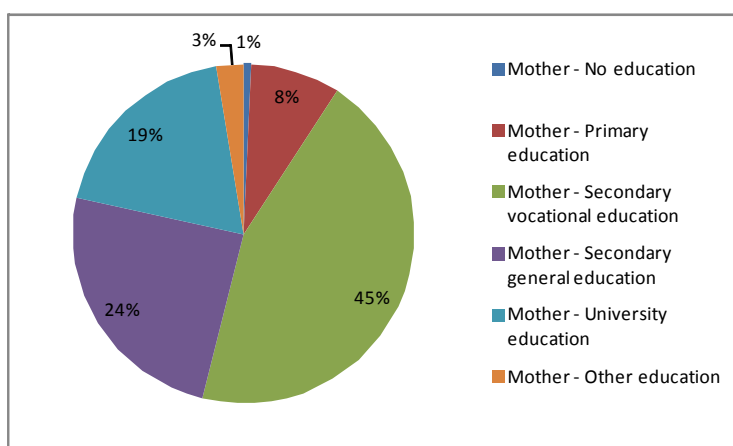
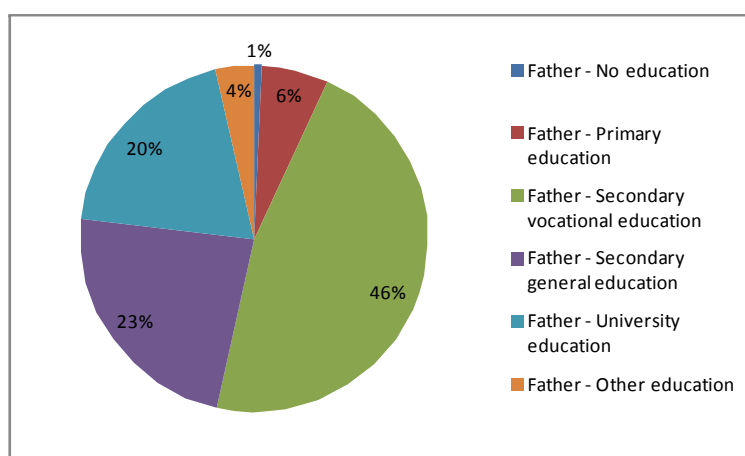
Detailed table of descriptive statistics is provided in Appendix X. The main characteristics of the sample are:

- It consists of predominantly male students (only 22% of students are female),
- The average age is 16.7 years,
- 1.9% of students have a physical disability,
- On average, they spent 8.11 years at primary school,
- 96% of students live with parents,
- On average, they have 2.5 siblings,
- 95% of them have a desk to study, computer and internet connection, while 77% of them have their own room.

The larger proportion of male students in the sample was partly due to the selection of school, but also reflects the fact that VET education is generally more popular among boys. The number of students with physical disabilities in the surveyed schools is lower than the overall proportion, which may

indicate that these students are not provided facilities and are generally not well included in secondary education in BiH, which was also suggested by schools' representatives interviewed.

When we look at the education of parents, the answers show that the largest proportion of students have parents with VET education, which may suggest that the choice of VET education is correlated with the education of parents. This may to a certain extent perpetuate social inequalities and is an important issue related to the lack of social cohesion. Such a strong correlation between parents' and children's' choice of schools, when combined with general lack of tracking schemes that may help increase mobility of households along the income distribution line, suggests that such services are of particular importance in order to improve social inclusion and social cohesion.



When asked about their choice of a particular school, students gave the highest score (4.41) to further study opportunities, and (4.19) to future employment opportunities. The score for further study opportunities might be positively biased due to the selection of schools with mainly four-year studies; it should be lower among students in three-year studies, since students are not allowed to enrol in postsecondary studies before completing year four, according to the current legislation on secondary education. Significant differences exist between male and female students - further study opportunities are more important to female students. This may be in line with the finding that more male students plan to look for a job upon completion of secondary education and that they choose the school because it increases their job prospects. Also, when three schools are compared, further study opportunities, future employment opportunities and reputation of the school are more important to

students from Sarajevo. Interestingly, distance of the school from home is more important in urban areas (Sarajevo) than in rural areas (Foča). No significant differences exist between students with parents of different education level or employment status.

With regards to the choice of vocational instead of other type of school, the most important reasons for such a choice are of economic nature (to earn more money in the future, or to increase chances to get a job). A closely important reason in Sarajevo was to obtain a prestigious profession, while it was not so important in other schools. No differences exist between male and female students. It is somewhat surprising that students expect their job prospects increased after completing VET education, given the fact that VET graduates are disproportionately represented in the unemployed and that they generally find extremely difficult to find a job in a country with 45% unemployment rate. This might be explained with a lack of information available to these students in regard to their opportunities to find a job upon school completion. When experience of students in the school is considered, answers to several questions were collected and analysed. Generally, the scores provided by final year students are lower than the ones provided by first year students. This might suggest that their experience in school was not completely according to their expectations, although it might be only due to the fact that final year students are more critical towards school than first year students. The score for students' happiness in school is around 7 (out of 10), while around 60% of students stated that teachers made them feel welcome. First year students have on average 4 hours of practical work in the school and 0.8 hours in an outside company. On the other hand, final year students have on average 3.4 hours of practical work in the school and 1.5 hours in an outside company. First year students believe that they learn more in classes and that it will help them in the future job than final year students.

Also, differences exist between students based on their sex. Female students are happier and feel more welcome than male students, on average. Female students believe that they learn more in classes and that it will help them in future job than male students. Finally, female students have significantly less practical hours than male students, on average, both in and outside the school. When different schools are compared, students from Mostar are the happiest, while students from Foča are the least happy with the school. On average, students from Mostar have the most, while students from Sarajevo have the least practical hours. These findings coincide with the information collected through interviews, which reveal that the quality of teaching is low, curricula are not updated regularly, and the number of practical hours is too low.

More than 50% of students intend to look for a paid job upon completion of their secondary education. When asked about the support in finding their first job, they stated that the most support is expected from family, then from friends, and much less from teachers, career centres in a school or public employment bureaus. Interestingly, significant differences appear in expectations between male and female students. Female students expect less support in finding their first job from family or friends than male students, but more support from teachers, career centres in a school or public employment bureaus than male students. Also, the mean score for expected support is significantly lower among final than among first year students, for each type of support. When schools are compared, there are no significant differences except for support by teachers, where students in Sarajevo have much higher expectation than students from other schools. All these findings reflect the overall situation in the labour market in BiH, where social networks are extremely important for finding a job, while the role of public employment bureaus is mainly to record number of unemployed who need to visit their local employment bureau every two months in order to receive free health insurance. Therefore, in order to return confidence into the functioning of the labour market, where

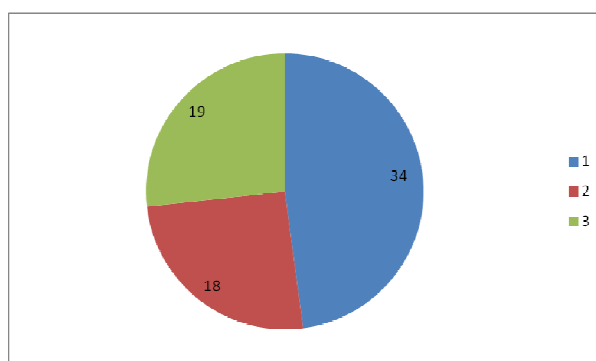
demand and supply of labour are matched primarily through social networks, it would be extremely important to establish career centres in schools, which would work closely with local employers.

Students generally do not expect any difficulties in finding job resulting from gender, ethnicity, disability or religion, but express minor concerns with regards to a school attended and qualifications obtained. For these factors, students in Sarajevo are less concerned than students from other schools. Also, students who have unemployed father express more concerns about school attended and qualifications obtained affecting their job search difficulties. We should not interpret these results as a suggestion of equal treatment of individual with different ethnic, gender or other characteristics in the labour market. Rather, it reflects the opinion that all people experience difficulties in finding a job, so difficulties arising from specific individual characteristics cannot increase these difficulties much beyond that. Particular concerns with regards to a school attended and qualifications obtained are related to students' overall opinion about the quality of their education, therefore their concern about job placement should not be surprising. Students from Sarajevo are less concerned because unemployment rates are considerably lower there than in other parts of BiH. Students with unemployed parents may have particularly negative view about the functioning of the labour market, so these students could be identified as one of the target groups for activities of career services that should be established in schools.

2.2.2 Teacher questionnaire

In total, 71 questionnaires were collected from teachers. Distribution of questionnaire by school is presented in the following chart (1-school in Sarajevo, 2- school in Mostar, 3- school in Foča).

Figure 6: Distribution of questionnaire by school



The main characteristics of the sample of teachers are as follows:

- The average age is 44 years,
- 51% are female,
- 97% stated that they have formal teaching qualifications,
- 91.3% have a university degree,
- 47% have experience in the private sector,
- The average working experience is 13.7 years, out of which 11.2 years have been in the current school.

The answers to questions about teaching experience, school environment, social inclusion in school and transition from school to work were analysed and averages across schools compared. When asked whether a school uses separate tracks based on ability of students, 34% of teachers answered that they

use them, although there are significant differences between schools, as in Mostar only 13% answered that they use separate tracks, compared to 69% in Foča.

Teachers reported many more hours of practical training per week than students. On average, they teach 5 hours of practical training and 15 hours of theoretical learning per week. The number of practical training hours is largest in Foča (7 hours), and lowest in Sarajevo (4.3 hours). Still, these hours are below the number that should be expected in VET schools.

On average, 17.5% of teachers use computers in teaching. This percentage is also largest in Foča (19.9%), and lowest in Sarajevo (15.2%). Teachers identified the maintenance of vocational enrolment as the main challenge the school is currently facing. There are differences between schools, as the challenge of vocational enrolment is most important in Sarajevo, and least in Foča. As available statistical data reveal, vocational enrolment has decreased significantly in the last several years. Linking the vocational curriculum to local labour market needs was considered to be a much less important challenge. However, information collected from local employers does not support such a view, which may suggest that this opinion of teachers is biased and results from the lack of communication between schools and local employers. Teachers give a relatively low score to the quality of vocational education in their school, with the lowest score being in Mostar.

With regards to the environment for students, teachers score their school highly, except for the respect of students, where their score is lower. For the problems with students' behaviour, teachers believe it is around the average, except the bullying problem, which is below the average. A slightly larger average score was recorded for students' discipline in the school in Mostar. Teacher's opinion about adequacy of school's building, equipment and computers is significantly different in the three schools, with the highest scores being in Sarajevo, and the lowest in Mostar. The lowest scores among different types of infrastructure were for equipment. Overall, the situation with buildings and equipment in all schools in BiH is worrisome, because around 80% of the total budget for education in BiH is spent on the salaries of employees, while investments are being delayed, particularly in the recent years of economic crisis during which the governments have been forced to make further budget cuts.

Teachers stated that their school seeks to attract primarily students with a preference for applied studies and students with a professional interest, but not students from a less privileged background, students with learning difficulties or students with disabilities. However, large differences exist in the score for these three groups; it is relatively high in the Sarajevo school, but very low in the Mostar school. This may also suggest a lack of understanding of the role of schools in promoting social inclusion and social cohesion by teachers, who believe that students with disabilities or special needs should be enrolled in "special" schools. This was found in interviews with representatives of schools and ministries of education as well.

When asked about the schools' methods to promote social inclusion in the school, the largest score was given to extracurricular activities and "open days" for the community, while the lowest score was given to activities that are particularly aiming at supporting disadvantaged or disabled students. When schools are compared, the lowest score for each type of support for the promotion of social inclusion was given in the Mostar school. Schools mainly deal with students with learning difficulties or disabled students mainly through the provision of additional support. This suggest that schools lack specific skills in promoting social inclusion and social cohesion by providing better access and special services to disadvantaged groups and by improving communication with them.

With regards to the transition from school to work, the vast majority of teachers answered that they communicate with local employers about the labour market needs and that they provide guidance for students. This is contrary to the finding from the students' questionnaire and from interviews with employers. It may indicate that teachers do not clearly understand their role in supporting the transition of their students from school to the labour market. The share of teachers who answered that they provide guidance is largest in Sarajevo, as is their opinion about the quality of these services. Also, teachers believe that the difficulties in job placement can be experienced by all, but especially by disabled students, those with special needs and Roma students. These difficulties for all different groups are most emphasized in Foča, then in Mostar, and are lowest in Sarajevo, which coincides with the unemployment rate figures for these three regions, provided above.

2.3 PAR research process and research findings

Research Task 2: The influence of selection and tracking on social inclusion

The selection policy into all schools is solely based on the students' performance in primary school. However, the number of years over which performance is measured varies across schools. In Foča, the last four years are considered with a special focus placed on certain classes relevant for the secondary education direction chosen. In addition, in Foča there are two deadlines for enrolment so that all students can enrol, and if a student does not qualify to enrol into four-year programs, he or she can enrol into three-year programs. The electro-technical school in Mostar considers the marks from the last two years of primary school, also placing higher significance on relevant courses. Further, the official from the Ministry for Education and Science explained that they are planning to introduce the primary school exit exam, which will nonetheless increase the chances for students to enrol into secondary education institutions of their choice by providing them an additional opportunity to improve their academic standing. Also, in the Sarajevo Canton, first two years of secondary school are compulsory.

Apart from academic performance there are no other criteria for the selection of students into any of the target schools, on the basis of social and economic standing, gender, origin, nationality, race, religion or place of residence. However, certain demographic and socio-economic trends can be observed in each of the targeted schools, with regards to the region they are located in and the type of education they offer.

In Mostar, even though the school places no preference in the selection process on social backgrounds, trends show that four-year students come mainly from the middle class while three-year students come from rural areas. It is indicative that children without parental care in almost all cases attend vocational schools. In communication with children without parental care they explained that their guardians strictly advised them to select VET and not grammar school.

Due to the types of vocational education the electro-technical schools in Sarajevo and Mostar offer, the vast majority of students enrolled are male, with females composing about 2% of the student body. In Foča, where the secondary education centre provides more diverse vocations, the male to female ratio is almost equal.

There are no national policies oriented to support children coming from deprived communities, and social cohesion is a concept not well known between stakeholders. However, policies on the local level have been developed which provide the opportunity for any student to attend the targeted school regardless of their financial standing. The policies vary amongst the different schools and cities.

In Sarajevo, the Law stipulates that transportation costs shall be provided for all students attending their first two years of secondary education, contributing to social inclusion of students who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to attend school. In Foča, the municipality provides school buses to transport students to and from school, even though it is not stipulated by law.

Also, in Foča, where a trend can be observed that there are almost no students from economically advantaged families as the general state in the region is such, there are no tuition fees for attending the school. Books are handed down from generation to generation, and the Republic's Pedagogue Bureau provides books in some cases. In Mostar, the cost of enrolment amounts to 10 Euros, and the costs incurred for textbooks, transportation and gym equipment are minor.

Financial support for children is organized at the school level depending on school management and on the individual. The "Teachers' Fund" was established in Sarajevo which financially aids students in situations of social need. This fund is informal as it is financed by teachers' contributions, based on their possibilities, and the selection and tracking of beneficiaries is made exclusively based on the school staff's evaluation. Similar, in Mostar, on the pedagogue's initiative, money is collected from staff and students, fund raising events are organized, and, in cooperation with the Red Cross, clothes, shoes and groceries are provided. Further, the "Business fund" was established in Sarajevo companies whose staff decided to provide a scholarship during the children apprenticeship due to their economic situation.

Students with certain disabilities cannot attend the electro-technical schools by law due to safety issues because some parts of the vocational education provided by the school's program involve working with live voltage and potentially hazardous machinery. The Secondary Education Centre in Foča is the only target school where persons with disabilities were enrolled. There are no formal systems for conducting their education, instead there are practices adapted on an individual basis. Thus the rule in effect at the school that a student may have no more than 29 unexcused absences does not regard children with disabilities. Further, there are classes which are closely supervised and where the programs are adapted to their possibilities.

Research Task 3: Drop-out from vocational education the influence of drop-out on social inclusion

There is no structured system for tracking dropout rates in any of the target schools. However, the school staffs of all three schools claim that they have information, through informal data, that the number of dropouts is very low. This is especially particular for the case of Foča, which is a small community so the school staff is informed through personal relationships with the students and contacts with people in the community.

The employment bureaus in the cities of the three target schools do not track dropout rates either. However, in Foča, an idea about the number of students dropping out each year could be found from the Employment Bureau of the Republic of Srpska which has records on the education level and

employment of all individuals registered, and delivers a report to the school regularly. However, when it comes to children that for some reason drop out of school it is extremely difficult to return them to the system. Those children who drop out from the school system (primary or secondary) have an option to complete primary and secondary education only if they pay for external completion of the high school. The amount needed for irregular completion of high school is usually too high for children to continue education. The Ministry of Education will only support two students and provide them with an opportunity to complete high school irregularly.

However, a major discussion has been raised in all schools and with the National Advisory Board about school non-attendance. Schools monitor students' academic performance and absences, which are the main reasons for dropouts, and they are very responsive to negative trends in this sense. In relation to school attendance parents are obligated to ensure regular attendance of their children in school during the period of compulsory education. In case of negligence and irresponsible behaviour, parents are subject to legal sanctions. Parents also have the right and obligation to, according to the circumstances and their possibilities, urge further education of their children¹⁵.

The amount of unexcused absences a student is allowed to have before being expelled varies from school to school ranging from 25 to 45. In Sarajevo, the system recently changed and further contributed to the reduction in the expulsion of students. As of this year, a student is allowed to have 45 unexcused absences, which is an increase from 35 as it was previously. This is a very liberal number because it does not include excused absences. Also, there is the statutory obligation for a student to not miss more than 25% of a class. In contrast, in Mostar, there was a trend of unexcused absences, so the head teacher recently lowered the limit of allowed unexcused absences to 25, with the purpose of improving attendance. While in Foča, according to the school's attendance policy, a student cannot have more than 29 unexcused absences.

All of the schools have defined internal procedures for dealing with these issues, which involve communication with parents, students and doctors. There are also several informal practices the schools use, providing opportunities for students, to prevent them from dropping out.

In Sarajevo the school contacts the parent if the student has five or more negative grades or misses several classes in a row. A meeting is held with the parents and students, and issues are discussed openly. Furthermore, with regards to improving students' academic performance, additional, extracurricular, classes are organized, with no additional compensation, but they have not yielded the expected results because the students who they were intended for did not attend. In order to prevent students from skipping classes uncontrollably, and spending their time on the street where they are at risk of behaviours and influences, the school instituted the practice of conducting verification of excuse notes. If a student has more than two notes, it is the teachers' responsibility to contact the parents and doctors and determine whether the absences were in fact justified.

In Mostar, the school contacts the parents if they notice negative behaviour from the student, so to act on time and keep him or her from crime. Also, if a student fails to attend school for the second day in a row, the councillor contacts the parent. Further, there is a limit as to how many days in a given time period a parent can justify before a doctor's note is required. If absences become too high the councillor contacts the pedagogue who then takes action. Another trend is that children enrolled in VET more often miss classes while those in high school have more negative marks for behaviour.

¹⁵Article 27 of the Framework law on primary and secondary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Foča, if trends of constant absences are observed, the health centre is contacted to verify if the student has a chronic condition. Next, the parents are contacted and asked to sign an agreement declaring that they will pay special attention to their children's academic performance and absences. The biggest trend in absences occurs amongst students in their third year of secondary education. The school also involves the pedagogue, psychologist, the school board, and the teachers' council, the Centre for Social Services, the Red Cross and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, thus creating cohesion. Students are also given the possibility to transfer into a lower degree if the one they are currently in is too challenging. Another problem noted in Foča was the trend of parents not taking care of the students, due to life circumstances, long hours spent at work, health or social problems, not paying attention to their academic performance, absences, health condition and hygiene. Thus the school tries to identify such occurrences and takes measures to change this, from contacting the parent to contacting the centre for social services.

In all three target schools, the trend was present of students transferring to other schools prior to being expelled or dropping out. All three schools have the problem of excuses being easy to falsified and readily available on the black market. Further, all three school had the problem of parents condoning their children' absences and providing excuses, to help the child get a good grade by avoiding exams they are not ready for, or even only because the child does not wish to attend class. This puts students at risk of harmful social factors. Another cause of dropping out or behaviour leading to expulsion was the lack of monitoring of practical education in companies, which leaves kids unsupervised and susceptible to negative influences.

Research task 4: A school based vocational education and apprenticeship systems and their influence on social inclusion

Practical classes are organised in all schools as practical class in school (if it is technologically equipped school, students have the opportunity to work on various data bases, operational systems and hardware), individual apprenticeship or group visits to companies.

Some schools were able to equip several smart class rooms, like the school in Sarajevo, which contain the most up to date computer technology. The Sarajevo school has independently created several smart classrooms equipped with modern technology so its students can acquire practical experience and be competitive in the labour market once they graduate. This plays a great role in school-based vocational education and apprenticeship systems, as the student can conduct extensive practical work and develop skills which will enable them future employment.

According to schools, 250 out of 900 classes consist of practical work and every subject has a practical component, while formally the number of practical subjects per week is increasing during schooling (with up to three days per week in the last grade). The selection of students doing an apprenticeship in companies does not take into account social status, economic situation, gender, nationality, race or religion. However, since there is no formal policy for establishing the apprenticeship system between companies and schools, as the exchange is based on individual contacts between school staff and employers and their good will, there may be indirect or hidden selection of favoured students. Before practical education can be conducted, the school has to sign an agreement on the practical education with the organizations, and only then can it send students there to obtain a practical education grade.

In addition there is no formal monitoring of the progress of the students; it is determined by the director's judgment upon consultation with their apprenticeship mentor. Even though students attend an apprenticeship as part of their practical education grade, there is no structured methodology for determining which students will get the opportunity to complete it. There is an inadequate tracking of the students by the school as the practical education teacher from the school does not visit the students on site during their apprenticeship in order to assess their progress in relation to the school's programs. This is done differently in Foča where the school employs professors as practical education coordinators and who visit the organizations where students conduct practical education, evaluate their performance, keep contact with the persons within the organization who are responsible for practical education, advise students as to which form of practical education would best suit them, arrange the transfer of students between apprenticeships if needed, file progress reports and determine the students' practical education grade. As a result, an employer from Foča notes that students upon their own initiative often stay longer hours than their practical education component stipulates in order to learn more.

Research task 5: Transition from school to work

In general there is a lack of information in schools about students' transition to the labour market. In some small communities, like Foča, tracking is not so difficult but in Sarajevo schools do not have a lot of formal connection with students once they complete education. The current professional orientation model in primary schools is unsuccessful and inconsistent; each school chooses which part of the model they implement. This inconsistency can and does lead to subjective and unfair treatment of students. Most schools only provide basic information regarding job orientation such as: type of available high schools, available jobs and professions; but do not provide proper support to children in choosing their future professions¹⁶. Through communication with all Ministries of Education in FB&H it was stressed that the role of parents would be very beneficial in helping their children choose future professions.

At the same time, the slow process of curricula adaptation to labour market needs have been the major complaint in all companies in all three locations. The curricula for certain subjects have not been changed since 2003 (IT) and for some even since 1994. The school is allowed to change only 10% of its curriculum independently, while the responsible ministry establishes the rest through extensive bureaucracy. In the case of vocational schools specialized in technology, like Sarajevo or Mostar, an ever-changing subject, there is a need to adapt the curriculum to modern developments on a regular basis. In addition, the representative from Konzum noted that neither the school, nor any other organization working in education had ever contacted their company, which is one of the biggest in the region to discuss the development of the curricula. As a result textbooks are very out-dated. As interviewee from the Public Enterprise Forests in Foča noted the same – that no one from his enterprise had ever been contacted by the school or the responsible agencies and institutions with regards to anything more than practical education arrangements.

On the other hand, professors are not in favour of changing the teaching program because they fear that they might lose their job as their field becomes out-dated. Further, communication with the Ministry is very difficult and getting ideas across, especially regarding curricula, is near impossible. The professor attributes this to too much administration, and the main issue of money shortages. As a

¹⁶Interviews with all Ministries of Education on National levels in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

result, the curricula continue to be out-dated, placing students at risk of social exclusion by not rendering them employable by providing them with skills sought after in the job market.

At the same time, most of the representatives in companies complain that children do not gain skills needed to perform the job they should be qualified for. It needs at least six months to train a new worker once she or he starts first employment. In contrast, students who prove themselves during their apprenticeship gain full employment with companies (General Service, Konzum) and do not require additional training, because they have already mastered all the skills necessary to perform the daily operations.

2.4 Comparative analysis

None of the case study schools had any communication between employers and the school in regards to development of the curricula. Therefore, the curricula are out-dated and the schools lack information regarding current labour market needs. The three selected schools reflect the specificities of the cities in which they are located. The school in Sarajevo has the most opportunity to equip its classrooms and organise practical classes within the school. The school in Mostar, a more industrial city, had a stronger connection with the business community, while the school from Foča, as the smallest of selected three cities, developed close communication with parents and local community itself.

Sarajevo: proactive approach to policy development, more practical classes in school and more opportunities for children's feedback

The Sarajevo Canton is more proactive in developing new policy solutions. Therefore, as the Ministry for education explained, there is an initiative in Sarajevo Canton to introduce an elementary school exit exam to increase potentials for children to enrol in their desired secondary school. Moreover, due to the low rate of secondary school graduation in Bosnia, and as one of the wealthiest cantons¹⁷, Sarajevo Canton introduced compulsory secondary education for first two grades. According to legislation compulsory secondary school is free for all children from the canton, which means that the canton covers expenses for books and learning materials including transport costs but just for children in special categories: they come from socio economically deprived background, they have problems in achieving minimum education results or they have problems in behaviour. However, there has been a lot of discussion about this new policy. According to the legislation, children coming from these three groups will be placed in one class and additional support will be provided for them. Support will include special curricula (for completion of compulsory two years, financial support and additional teaching support). At the same time, as Ministry explained that the new policy is not implemented since there is no qualification framework for completion of two years of secondary school. They have also highlighted that the curricula for this type of schooling is missing as they expect schools to develop such curricula if they have children to attend this program. At the same time schools are not paid additionally for development of the curricula and they expect that ministry develop a curricula. Schools also advice children, coming from one of these categories, to complete regular secondary school and not to attend this compulsory schooling program.

¹⁷ However, most of the cantonal Ministries of Education stated that they would be hardly able to financially support the introduction of compulsory high school education. On the contrary, the amount of money necessary for compulsory high school education to be implemented in Sarajevo Canton is about 1 million Euro which compared to the total amount of 26 million that Canton spends on high school education on annual basis is only a 4% increase (Branković N., Arapović A, (2010).

The school in Sarajevo also showed more initiative to adapt curricula in line with labour market changes. The current law makes this task difficult, but not impossible. A teacher from the Sarajevo school noted the example of their last curriculum, which they developed based on intense consultations with relevant experts and labour market representatives, and which they finally succeeded to implement after a long and difficult administrative process.

Performance at the Sarajevo school is constantly evaluated, through anonymous surveys completed by students. Surveys are conducted periodically and on a needs basis, if students submit many complaints regarding particular teachers. In addition, control surveys are conducted, which evaluate other teachers randomly, in order to obtain accurate results.

Mostar: Stronger school connection with industries and better organised support to transition to work

The government does not have a formal policy for placing students in companies and everything is conducted on the basis of friendships and past collaborations. The Mostar school has been successful in establishing such connections. The main companies that the school in Mostar cooperates with in terms of practical education are the Electrical Company, Eronet, cellular phone and internet service provider, and the Aluminum Company. There are also several small companies where the school sends students to conduct apprenticeships. The school has 410 students, Eronet accepts 50 students, and everyone else goes to the Electrical Company. Since the apprenticeship takes place during the summer, the students who do not live in Mostar do not conduct the practical education in Mostar; instead they do it at the electrical company branch closest to their town, about 15 students do this on average.

There is a mentor from the school who attends the practical education, which is conducted every summer, and students from all years enrol. Besides this, there is practical education within the school in the workshops, which is part of the regular curriculum. And while the practical education in the companies provides students with greater opportunities for employment contributing to their social inclusion and making their transition from education to work easier, the practical education within the schools fails to do so because the workshops are by very out-dated and lack modern equipment. The director also tried to point the ministry's attention to this but was unsuccessful.

Moreover, in order to facilitate transition to work the children psychologist in Mostar School creates professional orientation for its students through promotional material to acquaint students with employment possibilities and help them make a choice as a consequence of which they will transfer well from vocational secondary education to the employment sector. One example of programs trying to facilitate the transition of students in secondary education to work is an orientation program started upon the initiative of Employment Bureau professionals and her colleague, both psychologists. As a result the Employment Bureau in Mostar became one of the rare institutions in the Federation to begin an orientation program for final year students of secondary schools. The orientation aims to guide students into choosing a field of study that will give them the best prospects for employment in the future. The program is constantly evolving as it is developed on a trial and error method. For its first year they went to the schools personally, but found it very time consuming, so the next year they started inviting teachers and children psychologist to workshops, held in their offices, training them to guide children to visit the bureau and seek information in regards to their future study. This method was not very effective because the children were not receiving the information and coming to the

bureau, thus, last year, they started organizing workshops for the students directly. This year they began inviting both the children and the parents to the workshops. It was noted that the parents are a very important part of this component as often time their wish, for their children to engage in a particular field of study, is not concurrent with the labour market. It is also noted that working directly with the students and their parents instead of coordinating through the school system is much more effective.

Foča: Better communication with parents and communities

Even though there is always room for improvement, coordinator for apprenticeship in Foča claims that cooperation with community and potential employers is excellent. Attendance is closely monitored and recorded in special registers in school in Foča and closely communicated to parents. If absences still persist, parents are invited to a meeting, where they have to sign an agreement declaring that they will pay special attention to their children's academic performance and absences. The municipality provides transportation for students in the form of school buses, thus contributing to social cohesion, even though it is not obligated to do so by law. Konzum, a company in Foča, gives out scholarships, on the basis of need or performance to students attending the vocational school, which will train them to become its successful employees. This is an outstanding example of a practice a company implements to accommodate the transfer of young people from vocational education to work.

The students conduct practical education with the employers who work in their particular field of studies, so, for example students attending medical vocational education conduct their apprenticeship at the university hospital. This is an excellent practice of easing the transition from vocational education to work as students are given insight into their future work place while still at school. In addition to school coordinator, certain companies have their own practical education coordinator whose purpose is to ensure the quality of the apprenticeship conducted. The school director has an archive of all the detailed reports from practical education of students so to track the success of the cooperation. Often professors from universities come to the school to hold lectures, providing students with more expert knowledge on the fields they are already learning improving their chances of employment and social inclusion.

The school management consists of the school board, teachers' council, class council, an expert working group, and advisory bodies. The student council is involved in numerous projects touching all aspects of social and cultural life, providing the school with funds and students with more learning opportunities, thus improving their chance of social inclusion. The advisory council meets once per year and presents the connection between the school and the employment sector as it is comprised of 9 members amongst who are representatives from the employment bureau who provide data on the number of professions so enrolment could be planned, representatives from the labour market, the private sector, public enterprises, the universities, and the municipality.

3. ACTION PROPOSALS FOR SCHOOLS

This section briefly sets out any recommendations that arise from the research for each individual school, concerning actions they could take which might lead to an improvement in social inclusion and social cohesion with justification based on the findings of the research.

Each school should establish a system of tracking and professional orientation of students. This should address the issue of high correlation between parents' education and students' choice of VET school, which may perpetuate social inequalities.

In particular, the research showed that Electro technical school in Sarajevo should improve system for monitoring of practical classes. The school should establish adequate tracking of the students by the school and the practical education teacher from the school should visit students on site during their apprenticeship in order to assess their progress in relation to the school's programs.

At the same time, more resources should be invested in school infrastructure in Mostar. Since two schools share the same building it is impossible to organise additional classes either for children with lower or higher achievement and to have adequate practical classes in school.

The school in Foca would also need more support in organisation of practical classes. Since the dominant industry in that local community is wood industry children should have potentials to attend practical classes in the company for wood processing in Foca. Due to lack of safety equipment for children they can only occasionally observe wood processing techniques in forest. At the same, afforestation with children has been a school practice before 1992 but due to lack of financial resources it has not been done any more.

Also, all schools should enhance their cooperation with local employers, which would give them opportunity to address several related issues. First, schools should increase the number of practical classes, particularly out of school. Better cooperation with local employers would make this possible. This is particularly important for the school in Sarajevo. Second, school should establish a system of apprenticeships in cooperation with local employers. Finally, schools should cooperate closely with local employers in the process of updating their current curricula, which was identified as one of the key areas of intervention.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out recommendations for policy makers and involved actors concerning improvements that could be made to educational policy, institutional framework, educational practice, and other relevant areas of policy that could have the potential to improve social inclusion and social cohesion related to the vocational education system. The policy recommendations are directed separately at the different policy audiences.

4.1 Policy recommendations for policy makers at national level

The lack of harmonization of legislation on education and inefficiencies generates as a consequence of such situation has been emphasized as an issue during many interviews. Harmonization of legislation on education and more authority provided to the state level institutions, in a country with 13 different ministries in charge of education, become very important areas of intervention when any

action aiming at improvement of educational system is discussed. Lack of harmonized legislation and highly decentralized institutional setup for education creates inefficiencies in any implementation of best possible solutions for improvement of education in BiH.

In general, complete absence or low level of cooperation between different stakeholders in the education system in BiH can be observed. In order to improve cooperation, a systemic approach should be developed and implemented. One of the solutions proposed in discussions with members of the National Advisory Board is establishment of tripartite councils, composed of representatives of schools, ministries and employers, which would be the industry sector based and not linked to cantonal jurisdictions. Having tripartite councils organized according to the industry which they are related to is seen as solution that would be more effective than councils organized according to other criteria.

Analysis of curricula used in VET schools shows that they are mainly obsolete and not very well adjusted to the needs of local labour market. In order to change such a situation, the members of the National Advisory Board proposed a national level intervention that would introduce modular curricula at all VET schools in order to make them quickly adjustable to the labour market needs. Supporting rulebook and teaching material should be also developed. There were few examples of introduction of VET curricula at schools in BiH, but without supporting documents, which reduced effects of its implementation. Also, the current classification of VET occupations should be extended and adjusted to the labour market needs.

Lack of equipment and regular update of teachers' skills were identified both through interviews and the survey as important problems that severely affect the quality of education in VET schools. In order to improve quality of education, the national level government should increase their investments in education, particularly in equipment and improvement of skills of teachers. This will be more effective if the national level ministry would be provided such an authority and larger budget for nationwide interventions, such as investments in equipment and skills of teachers, instead on completely relying on local level budget that can cover salaries of teacher only, without any room for investments.

The results from interviews and focus groups conducted suggest that the centralized system of treasury operating in BiH suppresses possible entrepreneurial activities in schools. In order to provide supportive environment for such activities, school should be allowed to earn money through offer of different services to local community, and to invest such money in new equipment and training of teachers. This can be considered as an alternative to the lack of investments from the national level.

4.2 Policy recommendations for policy makers at local level

At local level, similar to the national level, cooperation between different stakeholders in the education system is not at the satisfactory level and primarily depends on the individual activities by school principals. In order to assure that such cooperation will exist at any local level, a system of local level cooperation should be developed and implemented. First, local level tripartite councils should be established by law. The law should clearly specify their role, and their responsibilities.

Second, a system of regular curricula improvement, update, and development of new curricula based on the requirements of local communities should be developed. In these activities, tripartite councils can take very important role. The system would assure that the problems of mismatch between

schools' curricula and local labour market needs, which was identified as one of the key obstacles for more effective transition of pupils from schools to the labour market, is continuously addressed.

Once schools are allowed to provide services in order to generate income that can be invested in school's equipment and training of teachers, local community should provide support and incentives for such activities run by schools. The precise recommendation discussed by Advisory Board was to enable school generate certain amount of income on their own accounts under conditions that they establish cooperation with industry through Tripartite councils and through various service provision to industry by schools.

Other issues related to social inclusion and social cohesion identified in this study can be addresses by the activities initiated by tripartite councils. For example, there is an initiative from Hastor Foundation to, in cooperation with Ministry of Education, support organisation of sport activities for high school children (mostly children in VET schools as they are coming from rural area) throughout the year. The project will be jointly supported and financed by the largest private company in Bosnia and the Ministry of Education of Canton Sarajevo and Hastor Foundation will implement it in cooperation with high schools. This is in line with the findings from the survey showing that the most interesting extracurricular activity by VET school pupils is sports. Such activities, which can be initiated by tripartite councils and funded by local community budget and support by companies, would address the issue social inclusion and social cohesion in these communities well.

Better cooperation between schools and local employers would increase possibilities for providing more hours of out-of-school practical training of pupils (found to be particularly low in Sarajevo), increase its quality, and consequently make the transition from school to the labour market smoother and more effective.

A system for drop out monitoring should also be established at local level in the first stage, and probably central database could be created at a later stage, in order to address the lack of monitoring of drop-put, identified in this study. This system would provide necessary information about the actual drop out by collecting information about students who left a school and recording whether they continued their education in another school or not at all.

Support to social cohesion and inclusion of children through sport activities

It is agreed that the Ministry of Education of Canton Sarajevo will start the project "Sport against violence in schools" where soccer and basketball games will be organised for children from VET schools and it can be a good example how this could be done. The target group of the project are excluded children coming from socially and economically deprived areas (the indicators that will be used are: highest non attendance rate, school success, etc). The goal of the project is to support inclusion of children from VET and to fight violence in schools through sport activities. The project start is expected on 6th of April 2013 and project evaluation results should be completed by September 2013.

Support for talented and ambitious children

The research showed that talented children do not have opportunity to develop their talent more as additional classes are organised only in some schools and on ad hoc basis. Support for talented and ambitious children could be also provided, in order to address the lack of tracking based on ability. A project that Hastor Foundation will start soon in cooperation with Ministry of Education can be a good example how this could be done. They will start the program that aim to support especially talented children to further develop their potentials and capacities. Children will have an opportunity

to participate on special week long workshops and experts from different science fields will work with them and challenge children's knowledge. The aim is to establish data base with extremely talented children, maximally support their development and boost sector of innovations. The idea corresponds to EU 2020 Strategy, it is in an infant phase and adequate support for establishment of this talent incubator would be needed with potential inclusion of honourable professors and experts.

4.3 Policy recommendations for international donor organisations

International donor organization, before further action in this field, should provide support to more detailed research about the potentials for creating better connection of schools with local labour market needs, by addressing specific issues such as identification of the communication/cooperation gap¹⁸ between schools and local employers, and why employers are not interested to be included in education process. Moreover, the research should help mapping the points of contact between employers and schools and developing the use the best practice as a role model.

Also, donor organization could provide more funding for further education of school teachers at local universities. This would aim at improving the quality of teaching, found by survey to be relatively low in schools in BiH, and also to allow smoother implementation of new curricula, which may require teachers with different skills, who could be provided education in new skills instead of being replaced by new teachers.

4.4 Policy recommendations for NGOs/CSOs

Other organisations, particularly local civil society organisation dealing with the issues of education and social inclusion, should be more involved in the development of new curricula, by providing their services and participating in local tripartite councils. In particular, local NGOs should take their role in providing quality assurance and monitoring of the system of regular changes of curricula in order to increase the positive influence of these changes on the quality and matching of these curricula to the needs of local community.

Also, these organizations should in the short run develop services that would provide alternative to non-existing services in schools or result from lack of cooperation between different stakeholders. In the long run they should work on advocating policies and activities that would provide these services in schools and that would enhance cooperation between stakeholders at the local level. For example, these organizations can introduce services that will address the lack of tracking and professional orientation in schools, by providing such services to children coming from less privileged socio-economic background. Finally, NGOs and CSOs can participate in apprenticeship process for students.

¹⁸ Around 30% of employers complain that skills at the labor market are not adequate.

CONCLUSIONS

Children enrolled in VET in Bosnia and Herzegovina are usually children whose parents have VET education as well. It is somewhat surprising that students expect their job prospects increased after completing VET education, given the fact that VET graduates are disproportionately represented in the unemployed and that they generally find extremely difficult to find a job in a country with 45% unemployment rate. These data are highly worrying considering that enrolment into the VET schools is more related to children coming from rural area and children coming from socio economically deprived backgrounds, like children without parental care.

This is even more concerning when it is known that the BiH VET system is among weakest in the Balkans¹⁹, lagging behind all Balkan countries. According to the constitutional setup the system of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly fragmented which means that legislation and policy regulations have to be adopted and harmonised by all 14 levels of education, which decreases potentials for the efficient improvements in VET. Another general point to be born in mind is that all administrative units at entity and canton and levels have insufficient capacity and weak governance structures, since just one or two canton-dependent employees are responsible for the administration of education, including VET.

A number of international actors tried to support Bosnia and Herzegovina development of functional VET system over last 15 years. However, not much has been done. Ever since the VET reform started, similar diagnoses and recommendations were reiterated, suggesting that policy acceptance was followed by only partial implementation.

It can be concluded that the policy making in VET in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be described as not evidenced based, highly incoherent, ambiguous with lack of interaction between key stakeholders relevant for policy development. The policy development in Bosnia and Herzegovina is more politically than evidence based driven. The actors that highly influence the policy development in all sectors, including VET, are either international community that do not understand properly the socio political context of the country when they advocate or impose certain policies or local politicians that do not consider important evidence based policy making over their own interest. As a result, most of the VET policies are in place, either as the framework at the national level or at the local level, but their implementation is lacking. This goes in all aspects of the VET education and its connection to social inclusion and cohesion.

There is a lack of harmonisation of VET legislation, which mainly influences the establishment of tripartite councils as precondition for establishment of the communication between different stakeholders important for VET functioning: schools and employers. According to the research, majority of schools do not have tripartite councils while in some schools councils are established but their functioning is lacking as they meet up on ad hoc basis.

Moreover, due to the centralised financial system in place, and the treasury system, schools have limited interest in commercial activities. More precisely, the central collection of income generated by schools in accordance with the way the treasury operates is a complex administrative process that

¹⁹ The VET system were assessed by government officials, local stakeholders and international staff of the OECD Investment For a detailed breakdown of scores please refer to: www.investmentcompact.org.

provides no opportunities for financial incentives and upgrading of equipment²⁰. Under the current rules, schools must obtain approval from the pedagogical institutes and education ministries for each activity they wish to undertake. As a result, schools lack both equipment and a regular updating of teachers' skills, factors that were identified as problems that severely affect the quality of education in VET schools.

In order to improve the quality of education, the national and local level government should increase their investments in education, particularly in equipment and improvement of skills of teachers, or they should adopt regulation that would enable schools to generate certain income on annual basis. It is important that communication between schools and industry is increased so to enable school to gain income through cooperation with employers and industry, and set up systems to monitor the quality of apprenticeships in companies.

Beside the financial issues that burden school performance, vocational schools lack a monitoring system for children drop out. Due to system fragmentation, once a child is out of one school no one can say if the child who left the school enrolled in a school in another canton. According to the research, dropping out is highly linked with non-attendance at school, and schoolteachers confirmed that children who frequently do not attend school are likely to drop out. However, the non-attendance policy is against the evidence base, but the corresponding ministries have increased the number of non-attendance days accepted during the school year. Again, schools adapted the policy to local circumstances, and to the school and local needs, so that schools accept different numbers of non-attending days on annual basis.

It can be concluded that Bosnia and Herzegovina should immediately make significant improvements in VET education. The policy in VET should be based on evidence and made on the basis of communication and interaction of all stakeholders, with each stakeholder taking responsibility for the implementation of the adopted policy. Such an approach would require a very precise use of policy instruments:

- “Carrots” (training of teachers in social cohesion and social inclusion, enabling schools to generate income if they cooperate with business, enabling children get free books if their parents inform school officials about their enrolment into the another school)
- “Sticks” (serious consequences for lack of policy instruments implementation)
- “Sermons” (information provided on labour market needs, professional orientation for children).

As one of results of the findings few pilot projects will be implemented. The Ministry of Education of Canton Sarajevo in cooperation with the Hasto Foundation and support of business community will organise the series of sport games (soccer, basketball) for children in high schools coming from socially and economically deprived areas. Moreover, the Ministry of Education of Canton Sarajevo will start the program that aim to support specially talented children to further develop their potentials and capacities.

The long term intention is to use data from this research for outreach activities and presentations on research conferences for exchange of best practice and policy diffusion and the first one is the RRPP

²⁰ An example of the negative impact of the treasury system can be seen with the agricultural school that made EUR 156,000 from income-generating activities only to see the entire amount blocked within the system where they were unable to access it (Corradini et al., 2012).

Annual Scientific Conference where their Research Fair will be used for seeking partners for projects implementation based on this research findings.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Methodological Note

Sequencing of the Participatory Action Research Approach

Step 1: Establishment of national advisory board (NAB) and first NAB meeting to discuss aims and methods of the project and collect advice on key issues and procedures. Interviews with national policy makers, policy advisors and stakeholders to investigate key issues relating VET to social inclusion and social cohesion in each country. Documentary sources will be consulted and statistical analysis will be carried out as appropriate and needed.

Step 2: Formation of local advisory board (LAB) of local stakeholders. Presentation and discussion of aims and purpose of the project, the participatory action research methodology, and the draft pupil and teacher questionnaire.

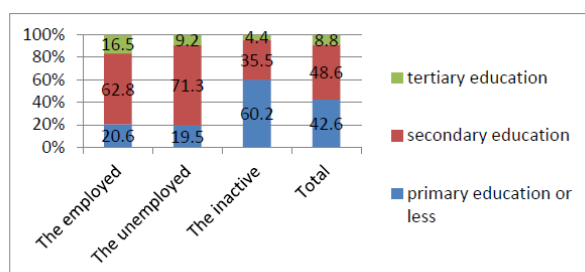
Step 3: Following the initial LAB consultation meeting, research will involve in-depth interviews at three case study vocational schools in each country (school directors, teachers and representatives of parent associations) and with key informants in the local community (local government, employers, trade unions, civil society). Focus groups will be carried out at local level at the three case study locations with community-based informants and stakeholders as appropriate. Documentary sources will be consulted and local statistical analysis will be carried out as appropriate. Implement short pupil and teacher questionnaire to entry level and final year students and teachers followed by data processing and analysis (descriptive statistics and cross tabs only using Excel and/or SPSS if available – LSE team will provide core question set).

Step 4: Presentation of research findings (executive summary in local language) from qualitative and quantitative research to national and local advisory boards for discussion of the research findings and their significance for improving VET policy and practice in relation to social inclusion and social cohesion.

Step 5: Writing up full country reports in English, incorporating comments and reflections of advisory boards

Appendix 2: Figures

Figure 1: Working age population by education, BiH 2012



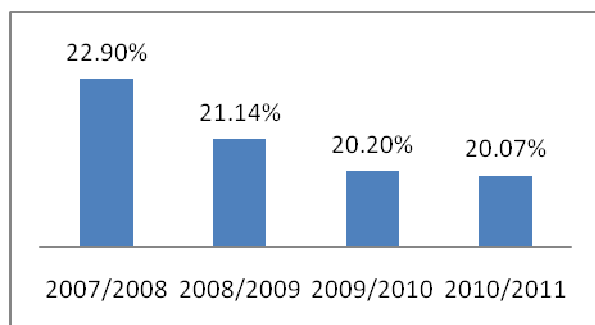
Source: BHAS (2012a)

Table 1: Secondary Education at the Beginning of the 2011-2012 School Year

	Number of classes	Students	
		All	Girls
Grammar schools	1628	41155	25797
Art	111	1514	861
Religious schools	78	2157	1039
Secondary schools for children with special needs	76	411	152
Technical schools	3171	83573	42040
Vocational school	1441	34607	10717
TOTAL	6505	163417	80606

Source: BHAS (2012)

Table 3: Vocational school enrolment rate (2008-2011)

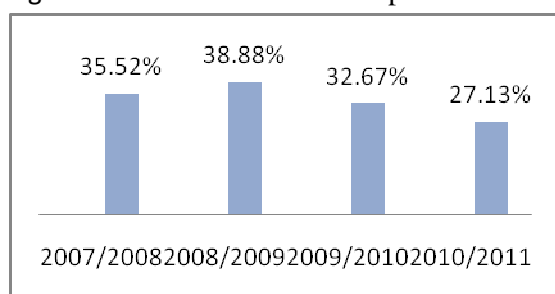


Source: The Agency for Statistics of BiH

Table 4: Administrative units which harmonized their laws with the Framework Law on VET

Administrative unit	Law	Date
Brčko District	The Law on secondary education	
Republika Srpska	The Law on secondary education	
Una Sana Canton	The Law on secondary education	June 2012
Tuzla Canton	The Law on secondary education	December 2011
Herzegovina Neretva Canton	The Law on secondary education	Not yet
Zenica Doboј Canton	The Law on secondary education	Not yet
Sarajevo Canton	The Law on secondary education	

Figure 2: Vocational school completion rate



Source: Agency for statistics BiH (2012)

Figure 5: Distribution of questionnaires by schools

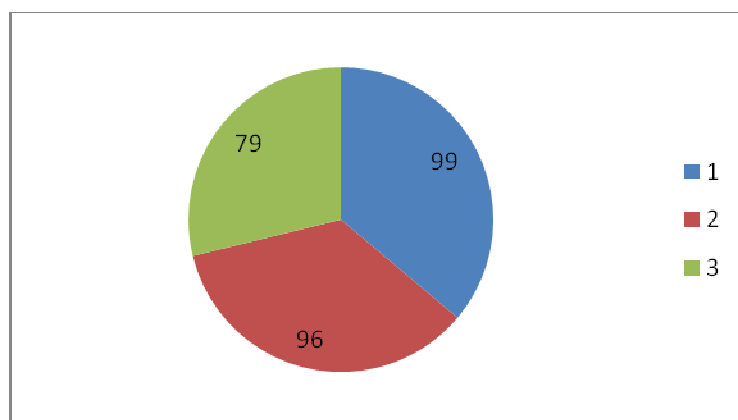
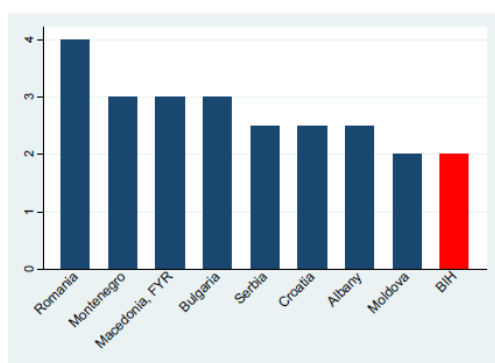


Figure 6: The VET system quality assessed by government officials, local stakeholders and international staff of the OECD Investment



Source: OECD (2006)