

LEARNING BY DOING

REVIEW OF BIH ACCESSION TO COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES:
LIFELONG LEARNING AND YOUTH IN ACTION

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Summary

With the ratification of the Framework Agreement between the European Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the general principles for the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Community Programmes, BiH has gained access to 32 new potential strategic support mechanisms¹. Participation in the Community Programmes presents a step towards being ready for the future requirements implied by EU membership, preparing the country to assume some responsibilities towards the Union early on, thus being ready to better utilize the benefits brought forth by EU membership once in the Union. Therefore, it presents an opportunity for BiH to gradually learn how to utilize the EU funding available in implementing reforms necessary for its further development. While other countries in the region are moving at a much faster pace towards accessing these Community Programmes, BiH is currently lagging behind.

This paper evaluates BiH's position when it comes to accessing the Lifelong Learning (LLP) and Youth in Action (YiA) Community programmes, relevant to the process of much-needed reforms in one of the key public spheres in BiH – the education sector. BiH is lagging behind with the implementation of the Bologna process, consequently distancing itself from the ambitious European strategic goals laid down in the Lisbon Strategy.

Given the BiH institutions and the potential beneficiaries are still unable to fully comply with the accession requirements for LLP and YiA in a satisfactory manner; they are missing out on the opportunity to fully utilize these competitive funds. The low performance in accessing these funds presents a negative reference for BiH in the overall process of moving towards European integration; in addition to its overall low ratings in implementing baseline European reforms also impeding progress in this area.

Though Brussels has been reluctant to provide the country with support in accession to community programmes at this point in time, BiH needs to maintain strategic focus, as the reforms in question are not something which can happen overnight but rather a result of concentrated long-standing efforts. For these reasons, the country must begin the preparations early on – starting with upgrading the existing strategic documents with in depth assessment of its internal capacities and needs, gradually putting in place the necessary institutional infrastructure, but also focusing on engaging the currently existing resources and capacities towards fully utilizing the EU funding opportunities currently available to BiH.

¹ If taking account of all the sub-actions/programmes within the larger frameworks.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CoE	Council of Europe
CoM	Council of Ministers
CP	Community Programmes
DEI	Directorate for European Integration
DG	Directorate General
DG EAC	Directorate General of the European Commission for Education and Culture
DIS	System of Decentralized Implementation of EU funding
EAHE	European Area of Higher Education
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EM	Erasmus Mundus
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EVS	European Voluntary Service
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme
FYRM	Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
HE	Higher Education
IPA	Pre-Accession Assistance
LLP	Lifelong Learning Programme
MoCA	Ministry of Civil Affairs
MoFT	Ministry of Finance and Treasury
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
RS	Republika Srpska
SALTO	Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities (Agency)
YiA	Youth in Action
WB	Western Balkans

INTRODUCTION

Starting with 2007, the general European funding structure, for the implementation of the European Communities budget, has been modified for the budget period ending in 2013. This implies that the EU has adopted new methods for funding, both for the EU member-states as well as funding for external assistance of the EU neighbouring and candidate countries. Some of the previous programmes have continued to run within the new budget period; however, merging together in order to achieve further simplification. At the same time, new instruments and programmes supporting the European Development Strategies and policies have been established. The new funding opportunities of the EU have been structured in five major categories: Pre-Accession Assistance, External Assistance, Regional Assistance, Natural Resources, and Community Programmes.² Additionally, there has been indication that there will be further restructuring of EU funding in the next budget period, starting in 2013.

In the context of access to EU funding opportunities, the current focus of Bosnia and Herzegovina has primarily been on the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).³ In addition to IPA, the EU provides all Acceding and Candidate countries with the opportunity to participate in another line of funding programmes, the Community Programmes.⁴ Though these programmes have primarily been conceived for the Member states, they have also been opened to the countries of Western Balkans as part of the Stabilization and Association process. As such, they provide the opportunity to aspiring member states to familiarize themselves with the EU funding policies and working methodologies of the European Commission, preparing them for accession to the EU and the easier transfer and manoeuvre within the EU regulations. The Council of Ministers of BiH has signed the General Framework Agreement with the EU on access to these funds in 2003⁵, which formally opened the door for BiH to participate in the Community Programmes, granting the country the opportunity to participate in 32 Community Programmes⁶.

Participation in the Community Programmes presents a step towards being ready for the future requirements implied by EU membership, preparing participating countries to assume some responsibilities towards the Union early on, thus being ready to better utilize the benefits brought forth by EU membership once in the Union. In the case of BiH, this presents an opportunity to gradually learn how to utilize the EU funding available in implementing reforms necessary for its further development. Additionally, an assessment of its present capacities to make use of the Community Programmes opportunities also serves as an important indicator to the EU in terms of illustrating BiH's preparedness to become a member. This assessment seeks to evaluate BiH's position when it comes to accessing Community Programmes in one of the key reform areas – the sphere of education.

² EU portal 2007-2013.eu, accessed on 22.01.2010. available at:>> [<<http://www.2007-2013.eu/by_scope.php](http://www.2007-2013.eu/by_scope.php)

³ IPA, was designed in order to create a single funding framework for Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries, thus facilitating the transfer from one status to another. It is divided into five components (1. Transition Assistance and Institution Building, 2. Cross-Border and Regional Co-operation, 3. Regional Development Component, 4. Human Resources Development Component, 5. Rural Development Component), of which BiH has accesses to the first two, under its status of Potential Candidate Country.

⁴ budget for 2007-2013 approximates 75,237 million Euros

⁵ Council decision of 2 June 2005 concerning the conclusion of a Framework Agreement between the European Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the general principles for the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Community Programmes. Official Journal of the European Union No. L192/80

⁶ Initially there were only 24 Programmes; the new Programmes, that emerged after the General Framework Agreement, are also open to BiH.

1. COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES TARGETING EDUCATION

Accessing the EU Community Programmes carries important advantages, which will be illustrated through the analysis of two programmes primarily targeting the education sector, through both formal and informal approaches. However, there are certain elements common to all Programmes, illustrating the steps non-member states have to take in order to participate, which will be examined first.

1.1 Access to Community Programmes for Non-Member States

As stated in the introduction, in the long term, the participation in the CPs shows a country's preparedness and ability to become a member state, by illustrating its understanding of the EU's bureaucracy and institutional working as illustrated by its successful absorption of funds and as such it is an important reference for each country aspiring to the EU membership.

Since the programmes were initially only open to the Member states, who are filling the EU-budget via regular membership fees, additional special regulations have been established for the eligible-non member states, including the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for each individual programme. The MoU carries an annual fee that has to be paid as the contribution to the EU budget, ensuring that each country wishing to participate contributes to the EU budget. Therefore it is crucial for each country to evaluate its capacity to participate in the Community programmes, while having the opportunity to gradually accede in contribution and absorption the Community's budget, gradually learning how to work with the Community's budget once it becomes a member state and has to cover the full membership fee. This is why it is important for an aspiring member country to start its preparatory steps immediately and in best alignment possible to its own strategic goals and necessities – i.e., evaluating what are the most beneficial programmes for it to join at its given stage of development.

In the context of BiH, one of the core development needs is related to the necessary reforms in the sphere of education. The BiH educational system has recently been subject to many negative reports, coming both from internal as well as external evaluators. BiH's educational system, and particularly the area of higher education, is in dire need of funding that will contribute to its reform efforts.

1.2 State of Higher Education in BiH

The BiH Education system has been going through education reform since 1996, facing significant obstacles related to the institutional infrastructure but also due to the lack financial resources limiting the pace of this process. In 2003 BiH signed the Bologna Declaration with the aim to integrate the BiH higher education (HE) into the European Area of Higher Education (EAHE). The process has shown to be very difficult and complex thus far, in particular in what pertains to its harmonization on the whole territory of BiH. The HE framework law adopted late in 2007 has not fully been implemented at the cantonal level by the end of 2009⁷. With the aim of increasing the quality and efficiency of the Universities, the law also provides guidelines for reforming the institutional structure of higher education institutions – such as integration of Universities, reforming the curriculum, unifying the study cycles period, unifying the evaluation methodology, etc, which still needs to be followed through⁸. Most Faculties are still independent legal bodies, under the authority of the competent Ministries, which do not have the necessary capacities for quality control. The consequences of such a highly

⁷ Commission of the European Communities. *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2009 Progress Report*, SEC(2009) 1338, pg. 43-44. Brussels, 14.10.2009, available at <http://www.delbih.ec.europa.eu/docs/ProgressReport20092.pdf>

⁸ Currently, there are only 2 Universities in FBiH that have integrated, and the degree to which this has been accomplished is also questionable, while in Republika Srpska the Higher Education law also accommodates this change to happen, and the Universities in RS are proceeding with the integration, however the effects of it have so far not been evaluated in either of the institutions.

decentralized⁹ and disharmonized management of education have shown devastating results for graduates from some faculties or universities. In 2007, the RS Ministry of Education and Culture has voided 294 diplomas issued by some Faculties in RS¹⁰, because these institutions did not fulfil all necessary requirements to achieve accreditation for its diplomas. This scenario illustrates the weak mechanisms of quality control over the institutions that have initially obtained operational certificates, but subsequently failed to meet the quality standards. Consequently the students graduating from these institutions are penalized for improper educational system, a disaster which the authorities did not prevent, nor address in a timely manner.

This problem doesn't only pertain to RS but also to FBiH. For example, at the time the students from the Medical School of the University of Zenica graduated, the law has not been changed to accommodate the recognition of the so called "Bologna Diplomas". As a result, graduates from this institution are protesting against state institutions for not acknowledging their acquired diplomas and obstructing them from exercising their profession. New graduates across BiH are facing enormous difficulty in obtaining recognition of their qualifications, due to the inexistence of a National Qualification Framework and a developed system of quality assurance.¹¹ The establishment of institutional frameworks and regulations that were supposed to prevent these problems from happening are coming too late.¹²

The problem of low quality of education is also very much reflected in the media, particularly when it comes to the topic of "Bologna-system graduates". Headlines such as "Bologna open to interpretation"¹³ and "Bologna process producing higher number of diplomas but no knowledge to support it"¹⁴ are becoming more and more frequent.

As an additional problem, further aggravated by the irregular implementation of the Bologna reforms, **the quality, quantity and type of qualifications produced by higher education institutions do not correspond to the current needs of the labour market, causing ever higher unemployment rates amongst the newly graduated.** Employers are dissatisfied with the knowledge the students obtain at BiH universities, stating how the quality of education insufficiently answers their needs.¹⁵ The students themselves have recognized the need to introduce more practical learning into the curriculum, if they are to acquire the necessary skills that would prepare them for the transition into the labour market. Surveys indicate that 37% of young people are dissatisfied with the practical lectures provided in their Schools¹⁶. The 2009 BiH Progress Report identified the same core problems in the sphere of education:

Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to continue its efforts, in particular for the full implementation of the Framework Laws, establishing a National Qualification Framework and developing quality assurance, addressing the issue of education meeting the needs of the labour market, and developing the lifelong learning concept.¹⁷

These are just some of the issues within the BiH educational system that require immediate attention. In gen-

⁹ BiH has 13 Ministries of Education, 10 Cantonal Ministries, 2 Entity ministries, Department of Education of District Brcko, and MoCA on the state level charged with responsibility of coordination.

¹⁰ RS canceled 294 diplomas achieved at the Business Economy Faculty in Banja Luka, and Faculty of Business Management in Bosanska Gradiška. Sarajevo x.com, *Provjera diploma državnih službenika stečenih na pravnim fakultetima*, Sarajevo 27.12.2007. available at >><http://www.sarajevo-x.com/bih/clanak/071227113><<

¹¹ Karabegović, Dženana. *Bolonja kako kome odgovara*. Radio Slobodna Evropa, Sarajevo, 19.11.2009. available at >> http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/bolonjski_proces_bih/1881700.html<<

¹² The Framework Law on Higher Education was adopted in 2007, while individual Higher Education institutions had begun with the implementation of the Bologna Process already in 2004, furthermore the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of BiH, has been formed late in 2009, and has still not begun to function fully, the same situation is with the Center for Information and Recognition of Qualifications.

¹³ "Bolonja kako kome odgovara" - the approximate interpretation of this title critically indicates the lack of harmonization in the implementation of Bologna-process reforms, which are rather subject to interpretation of individual institutions. There is no common and unified understanding of the process and its requirements. Comprehensive reforms are substituted by implementing bits and pieces out of what is perceived as Bologna. Karabegović, Dženana. *Bolonja kako kome odgovara*. Radio Slobodna Evropa, Sarajevo, 19.11.2009. available at >> http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/bolonjski_proces_bih/1881700.html<<

¹⁴ Skuletić, Sanja. *Mnogo diploma, malo znanja*. Dnevni Avaz, Sarajevo, 17.01.2010. available at >><http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/komentar-dana/mnogo-diploma-malo-znanja><<

¹⁵ Karabegović, Dženana. *Bolonja kako kome odgovara*. Radio Slobodna Evropa, Sarajevo, 19.11.2009. available at >> http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/bolonjski_proces_bih/1881700.html<<

¹⁶ GTZ, Komisija za koordinaciju pitanja mladih, *Mladi trebaju omladinsku politiku! – Analiza položaja mladih i omladinskog sektora u Bosni i Hercegovini*, GTZ, Sarajevo, 2008 page, 86. available at >>www.mladi.gov.ba<<

¹⁷ Commission of the European Communities. *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2009 Progress Report*, SEC(2009) 1338, pg. 43. Brussels, 14.10.2009, available at <http://www.delbih.ec.europa.eu/docs/ProgressReport20092.pdf>

eral there are numerous other issues pertaining to youth and their position in the society, their passivity in organizing, the problems pertaining to the opportunities to travel due to the visa regime, etc. All of these problems have to be adequately addressed through establishment of appropriate policies and programmes, which unavoidably has financial implications. The opportunity to accesses CP has been provided, what awaits is a good strategy and prep-work on how to utilize these funds to the greatest benefit of its users. Therefore, this assessment will examine in more depth two Community Programmes that aim the financial resources towards the development of Education and Youth.

1.3 Significance of the Community Programme Framework for BiH Educational Reform: Focus on LLP and YiA

In the context of numerous difficulties jeopardizing the status of higher education in BiH and the position of youth as such, there is a dire need to mobilize all sources available towards concrete activities helping remedy the current situation. Some of the aforementioned Community Programmes provide financial resources for specific frameworks contributing to the enhancement of the presently fractured and disharmonized educational system. These focus on improving the quality of education so that it meets the needs of individual as well as those of the society, through complementing the needs of the labor market and enhancing the position of the youth in the society.

Within the programmes currently open to BiH, the specific programmes contributing to these aims are the Life-long Learning (LLP) and Youth in Action (YiA) Programs, whose main objectives are the enhancement and the improvement of education in Europe, seeking to support the Lisbon Strategic goals: “[to] foster interchange, co-operation and mobility between education and training institutions and systems within the EU so that they may become a world quality reference.”¹⁸ Aiming to address and modernize education and training systems in the participating countries, to European added value directly to individual citizens participating in its mobility and other co-operation actions.¹⁹

If universities are to become more attractive locally and globally, profound curricular revision is required – not just to ensure the highest level of academic content, **but also to respond to the changing needs of labour markets. The integration of graduates into professional life and hence into society, is a major social responsibility of higher education.**²⁰

The **Life Long Learning programme** is offering diverse instruments to support the improvement of the institutions and human resources that are providing educational services; support the establishment of academic cross border cooperation programmes aiming to exchange good practices, as well as establish common curriculum, but also support the Bologna Process aims – create unified recognizable educational systems thought Europe, answering the questions of diploma recognition, single grading systems (the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), common quality assurance rules, etc. (see Table 1 for LLP programme details).

¹⁸ Decision No. 1720/2006/EC Of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 – establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, OJ. L 327/45, 24.11.2006

¹⁹ European Commission Communication - *Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy*, COM(2005) 152, Brussels, 20.4.2005, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0152:FIN:EN:PDF>

²⁰ European Commission Communication - *Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy*, COM(2005) 152, Brussels, 20.4.2005, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0152:FIN:EN:PDF>

Table 1. Lifelong Learning Programme

Integrated Programme for Lifelong Learning (LLP)			
Comenius Pre-school and school education	Erasmus Higher Education and Advanced Training	Leonardo da Vinci Initial and continuing vocational education and training (VET)	Gruntvig Adult Education
Transversal Programmes 4 key activities: Policy Development, Language learning, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Dissemination			
Jean Monnet Programme 3 key activities: Jean Monnet Action, Operational Grants for European institutions; Operational Grants for European Associations			

Source: Portal on EU Funding²¹ ☒ Accessible to BiH ☐ Inaccessible to BiH

The LLP programme is a valuable instrument that can be effectively used to resolve numerous education issues BiH is currently facing. Particularly, the Erasmus programme, which is a sub-programme of LLP, focuses on the Higher education. Its actions target the improvement of the quality of education through financial support for the institutions in establishing cross-border cooperation between universities for development of new academic programmes with it encouraging the multilateral projects, furthermore supporting the human resources development, particularly the university teaching staff, through opportunities for teaching abroad as well as receiving training abroad. Additionally Erasmus also focuses on the needs of the labour market by targeting the cooperation between academic institutions and enterprises (labour market actors) to teach abroad and participate in university cooperation projects, through it enhancing the link between the labour market and education. Other valuable actions directly aim to provide students with the opportunities to study abroad, as well as achieve training abroad and develop their linguistic skills. Therefore, the potential of Erasmus alone, sub-programme of LLP, provides are significant opportunities for Bosnian Universities and students.

The particular aim of the **Youth in Action Programme** is enhancing the cross border cooperation of youth, which particularly relies on mobility of young people as well as their direct engagement in project development and implementation. It focuses on contributing to individual development through informal learning. The YiA Programme includes priorities such as learning for life through the volunteer activities that young students ages 18-30 can engage in, and through it develop new skills; improve their personal, educational and professional development, under the European Voluntary Service action. Additional actions under this programmes are Youth for Europe, encouraging young people to become active EU citizens; Youth in the World, aiming at exchange among young people and organizations in light of creating partnerships; Youth Support System, supporting improvement of youth workers and organizations activity quality, and finally supporting youth policy cooperation through facilitation of dialogue between young people and policy makers at the level of EU. (See Table 2 for illustration of all 5 YiA Actions and sub-actions).

²¹ Portal on EU Funding, 2007-2013.eu, accessed on 14.01.2010. available at: http://www.2007-2013.eu/by_scope_lifelong.php

Table 2. The Youth in Action Programme

Youth in Action		
Action 1 - Youth for Europe	Encourages young people's active citizenship, participation and creativity through youth exchanges, youth initiatives and youth democracy projects.	
Action 2 - European Voluntary Service	Helps young people to develop their sense of solidarity by participating, either individually or in group, in non-profit, unpaid voluntary activities abroad.	Learning for life!
		Co-operation and friendships
		Accreditation
Action 3 - Youth in the World	Promotes partnerships and exchanges among young people and youth organizations across the world.	Co-operation with EU neighbors
		Co-operation with other Partner Countries of the world
Action 4 - Youth Support Systems	Includes various measures to support youth workers and youth organizations and improve the quality of their activities.	
Action 5 - Support for European Co-operation in the Youth field	Supports youth policy co-operation at European level, in particular by facilitating dialogue between young people and policy makers.	

Source: Portal on EU Funding  Accessible to BiH  Partially Accessible for BiH  Inaccessible to BiH

The aims of the Youth in Action Programme, providing opportunities for informal education and cooperation of Youth in Europe, are complementary to those of LLP. This is why these two programmes are usually placed together under one umbrella agency on the national level, which is responsible for coordination and implementation of the projects awarded via LLP and YiA.

In addition to contributing to positive national development trends in the sphere of education, the significance of these two programmes mirrors itself in the Lisbon Strategy, whose core aim is to make the EU "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment, by 2010"²². Education plays a significant role in the achievement of these goals, implying that the enhancement of the quality of education, its modernization, and in particular, further development of lifelong learning schemes accessible to all citizens needs to be a core focus of future development activities, if we are to keep up with global and regional trends. Young people are the future of the society and, recognizing this fact, these programmes are in particular aimed to improve their position in the society as well as to invest in the development of future human resources. As such, these programs provide funding opportunities for activities that BiH is bound to undertake if it is to enhance the quality of its educational system and comply with the requirements implied by the European Area of Higher Education (EAHE).

With opening the access to the Community programmes to the countries in the process of European Integration, the EU seeks to support the process of the candidate and potential candidate counties, aiming to establish proper legal and institutional framework necessary to assume the responsibilities and develop capacities for the accession into the European Union via the provision of technical support. It is furthermore important to stress that accession to the CP with high entrance fees should be wisely estimated as well as the capacity to fully utilize the funding. A country may negotiate to access only one sub-programme, which is of the greatest interest to the country, thus reducing the cost of the entrance fee for the whole programme, while at the same time making the strategic decision to participate.²³ This is why it is necessary for BiH in the long run to develop its capacities to utilize the available funds efficiently.

²² European Union Parliament, *Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March Presidency Conclusion*, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm

²³ Jadranka Mihic, ACIPS Round table "Establishment of the Decentralized Implementation System for the EU Funds: Monitoring of the progress and recommendations for the future steps" Panel II "Accession of BiH to other EU Funds: focus on Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programme", Sarajevo, 27.01.2010.,

2. BiH ROAD MAP FOR LLP AND YiA

The BiH Education Strategy for 2008-2013 clearly states that: The integration of BiH's education system into the European Area of Higher Education (EAHE) implies, as one of its strategic goals, the development of capacities for absorption of EU financial assistance from the Community programmes²⁴. Several steps in this direction have already been made in regards to BiH's accession to the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action programmes. In 2008, the Council of Ministers has adopted a Roadmap and Action Plan for BiH to accede to these Programmes by 2013²⁵. In light of this, the roadmap illustrates obligatory steps and phases that BiH has to undergo prior to the signing of the MoU with the EU on full participation in these Programmes. The country's progress in the implementation of these requirements will be discussed next.

2.1 Challenges in Establishing Competencies

The Road Map and Action Plan for accessing the LLP and YiA programmes, devises the "order of moves" that need to be taken in preparation for this, rather than a concrete timeframe (see Table 3)²⁶. As such, it sets out the benefits that BiH gains through the participation in these community programmes, and furthermore defines the competent institutions in charge of the implementation of activities in this regard. The Road Map provides activities and guidelines to the following **competent authorities: the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA), Directorate for European Integration (DEI), Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT) and the Council of Ministers (CoM).**

The most important bodies in charge of coordinating the roadmap implementation are the MoCA and DEI. MoCA is the state level institutions recognized by the Directorate General of the European Commission for Education and Culture (DG EAC) as the competent authority for negotiations on all matters related to Education. As such, it has played a crucial role in the process of accessing education-related programmes so far. The Road Map was adopted upon MoCA initiative, with this institution having drafted and prepared the document itself. However, one problematic area remains the fact that **the CoM has to this point not given the MoCA the political mandate for negotiations with the EC, and as such the MoCA is not fully authorized to carry the process of negotiations.**²⁷

2.2 BiH Progress towards LLP and YiA by 2010

The CoM adopted the Road Map and the Action Plan for BiH to access the LLP and YiA Community Programmes by 2013 in 2008²⁸. However at the time of this research, there was no significant progress identified since its adoption.

At the time of preparation of the Road Map and Action Plan, a situational analysis was conducted, which identifies the advantages that BiH already possesses which demonstrate its preparedness to access these two Programmes. The current advantages discussed in the Road Map focus on the existence of a demand for these programmes in BiH, as, much like we discussed before, they answer the country needs and strategic goals within this sector. They also cover the significant interest of EU member states to work with partners from BiH, the great interest on the local and regional level to participate in these two programmes, the existence of already developed international contacts with partners from EU countries, and the general context of moving forward in the process of EU integrations, etc.²⁹ It is also notable that the **Road Map recognizes the sig-**

²⁴ Vijeće Ministara BiH, *Strateške pravce razvoja obrazovanja u Bosni i Hercegovini sa planom implementiranja 2008.-2015.*, BiH 2008, available at: >> [>> http://www.mcp.gov.ba/zakoni_akti/strategije/Archive.aspx?template_id=198&pageIndex=1](http://www.mcp.gov.ba/zakoni_akti/strategije/Archive.aspx?template_id=198&pageIndex=1)<<

²⁵ Vijeće ministara Bosne i Hercegovine, *Mapa puta i plan aktivnosti za uključivanje BiH u EU programe za cjeloživotno učenje i mladi u akciji (do 2013. godine)*, BiH 2008, available at: >> [>> http://www.mcp.gov.ba/o_nama_org_jedinice?id=28](http://www.mcp.gov.ba/o_nama_org_jedinice?id=28)<<

²⁶ Vladimir Pandurević, Delegation of the EC to BiH Task Manager, 20.01.2010. Interview.

²⁷ The extent of this problem came to light when attempting to contact MoCA for an interview on this topic. The MoCA sector for Education declined participation in the interview, stating how the institution cannot offer insight into BiH's progress in accessing the LLP and YiA, nor any other EU integration process, as it does not have the mandate to decide over these matters (Esma Hadzagic, Assistant Minister of MoCA Education Sector, E-mail Correspondence 20.01.2010). The problem of lack of clarity in assigning jurisdiction results in a situation where one of the key actors in this reform process is unable to take over full responsibility in working towards the implementation of necessary Roadmap activities, ensuring successful end-results of the process.

²⁸ *Mapa puta i Plan aktivnosti za uključivanje BiH u EU Programe za cjeloživotno učenje i mladi u akciji (do 2013. godine)*, Službeni glasnik BiH broj 15/6. July 2008.

²⁹ Ibid Pg.7

nificance of the structural advantages that these programmes offer to the countries in transition, such as timely familiarization with the legislation, regulation and overall functioning of the EU on legal, financial and institutional level, which will provide preparation for complete integration into the EU³⁰. However, the Road Map fails to provide a detailed assessment of the legislative and institutional requirements that BiH needs to fulfil in order to participate in the programmes, other than stating with which EU legislation BiH has to comply, which can be extracted from the Action Plan for the implementation of the Road Map. **A detailed assessment of currently available capacities of the key institutions relevant to this process should be conducted in such a way as to enable the Road Map to provide more precise and clear guidelines for each particular sector regarding their role, responsibility and requirements that need to be fulfilled. In addition to that, domestic legislation needs to be reviewed juxtaposed to the Acquis Communautaire and provide a comprehensive analysis on legislation, related to the Community Programmes, that remains to be harmonized.** Therefore, the Road Map should illustrate into more detail steps ahead of BiH and its institutions for becoming a full member to LLP and YiA. The following segment illustrates one of the most significant institutional requirement, which however has to go hand in hand with legislative harmonization etc.

2.3 Required National Institutional Structure

The Action Plan indicates the requirement for establishing an **independent National Agency**.³¹ National agencies "are structures set up at national level for the coordinated management of the implementation of the Community Programmes at Member State level. **They play a key role in the management of the decentralized parts of the programme, where they are responsible for the evaluation, selection and management of projects**"³². The Community Programmes are further subdivided by sub-programmes/actions, can be implemented centrally, i.e. the European Commissions respective Directorate General oversees and manages the process, or through decentralized method, which transfers the obligations from the European Commission to the respective national institution i.e. the National Agency.

Article 6 of the Decision Establishing the LLP³³, enumerates the tasks of the Member States (same conditions apply to the candidate countries and countries of Western Balkans)³⁴ requiring certain conditions to be met in order to ensure the efficient running of the Programme at the national level. All of these conditions are related to the **establishment of an appropriate structure for the coordinated management of the implementation of the LLP actions at national level**, which is accomplished by the **independent national agency**. The Agency is in charge of securing **adequate staff, appropriate infrastructure, ensure mechanisms to avoid conflict of interest and apply financial and management rules laid down at the Community level**. Additionally, the agency must **offer financial guaranties by a public authority**. Furthermore, the state has to ensure audit and financial overseeing of the national agencies, and prior to its work provide the Commission with the necessary assurance as to the existence, relevance and proper operation of the national agency, all of which have to be in place to assume all responsibilities in managing the EU funds. In addition to the requirements enumerated, the first condition, set in the general guidelines for the implementation of the Communities Budget, requires **additional screening of whether the country has fulfilled the legislative framework related to the implementation of the EU budget and its principles**. Very similar requirements have been stressed in the EP & CoE decision establishing the Youth in Action Programme. With some variations, **the budgetary principles remain the same in all EU Programmes**.³⁵ The structural requirements described above are a time-consuming process. To take a close regional example, the establishment of the National Agency has shown to last approximately 3 years in Croatia.³⁶ This is another reason why **BiH needs to think about necessary steps and institutional structure for the implementation of these community programmes early on**.

³⁰ Ibid pg.5.

³¹ Ibid. pg. 15

³² European Commission, The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 – Glossary, accessed on 06.01.2010 available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/guide/glossary_en.html

³³ Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, OJ L327/45.

³⁴ Ibid. Article 7.

³⁵ Decision No 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing the 'Youth in Action' programme for the period 2007 to 2013. OJ L327/30.

³⁶ Agencija za mobilnost i programe Europske unije. *Godišnje izvješće o radu Agencije Za mobilnost i programe Europske unije za 2008. godinu*, Zagreb, Januar 2009.

As stated above, despite substantial similarities, the YiA programme differs in some of its requirements, and it was evaluated that BiH should start preparations in this field. Specifically, significant efforts have been made to establish a Youth Agency³⁷ tasked, amongst other things, with the management of the YiA Programme. Financial resources have been planned for its establishment within the IPA 2009. However, the process encountered political disagreements between different government levels³⁸, as a result, the attempt failed, and the funding planned has been put on hold.³⁹ However, the Road Map itself does not call for the establishment of a separate Agency for YiA, but rather that both the YiA and LLP Programmes be administered through one Agency. As such, the envisaged management under the Youth Agency would have been a step away from the Road Map.

Regional experiences also show that the majority of the countries in the region have established one single Agency governing both the LLP and YiA programmes. Former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia and Croatia for example, although still in the preparatory measure phase, have one Agency⁴⁰ for both Programmes. These Agencies are currently coordinating the open LLP and YiA components. They will later assume the responsibility over whole Programmes, once their respective countries fully join. Slovenia, on the other hand, has established two Agencies, one for each Programme respectively. However, Slovenia has participated in the Community Programmes since the beginning⁴¹ and under different conditions, as it was already a member state when these programmes have become operational. Taking into consideration the already overburdened BiH public administration, **it seems advisable to govern the programmes under one single Agency, avoiding overlap of responsibilities and reducing the cost of the establishment of additional administrative structures.**

Given the differences in approaches and the different level of advancement of countries in the region in implementing the requirements for joining community programmes, **a thorough review of regional experiences needs to be taken into consideration as well as to establish close links and communication channels between the institutions that are undergoing or have completed the procedure and process related to the Community Programmes.** Particularly so, because BiH is currently not in direct line of communication with the Directorate General EAC on accession into LLP and YiA Programmes. Given that BiH is generally running far behind in the EU integration process, the DG EAC expressed limited capacity to commit time to BiH in terms of providing directives, stating how they will return their attention to the country at a latter stage⁴², without precisely indicating what stage that should be. Presumably, this implies the **necessity** for the country **to demonstrate steps forward in way of pending European reforms prior to putting Community Programmes back on the priority agenda.** Some of the on-going EC criticism is directed towards overall BiH administrative capacity, or problems connected with the slowing down **process of implementation of the public administration reform**, as well as barriers in the **establishment of a Decentralized Implementation System (DIS) for the management of European funds.**⁴³ The decentralized management of EU funding provides an important indicator of BiH's capacity to assume responsibilities of a member state. Furthermore, as some of the Community Programmes, or their sub-actions, are of decentralized nature, implying the need for the country (via a specialized National Agency) to take over management and implementation responsibilities from the European Commission. This discussion makes clear the interconnection between these

37 The establishment of a Youth Agency has been a recommendation of the European Commission Delegation to BiH.

38 The major argument against it was the objection to the transfer of jurisdiction to the state level, turning a technical EU requirement into a political issue.

39 Jan Zlatan Kulenovic, Direktor Omladinske informativne agencije, ACIPS Round table "Establishment of the Decentralized Implementation System for the EU Funds: Monitoring of the progress and recommendations for the future steps" Pannel II "Accession of BiH to other EU Funds: focus on Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programme", Sarajevo 27.01.2010., Vladimir Pandurevic, Delegation of the EC to BiH Task Manager, 20.01.2010. Interview.,

40 For FYRM it is the Nacionalna Agencija za evropski obrazovni program i mobilnost, available at: <http://na.org.mk/index.php/pochetna.html>, for Croatia it is the Agency for Mobility and European Union Programmes, available at: www.mobilnost.hr

41 Which means that Slovenia did not have to go through the negotiation procedure for each Community Programme separately, as it was already EU member, which gives it the right to participate fully in all Community Programmes. However it still had to establish the National Agency and receive accreditation for its functioning, in order to secure proper management of the funds coming from the Communities budget.

42 Upon having taken the initial steps in the preparation of BiH for the LLP and YiA, the MoCA assumed its responsibility to start the communication with the European Commission on preparatory procedures to join these two programmes. Following the necessary steps that needed to be taken, the first one is that the competent authority, in the case of BiH this is the MoCA, has to express its interest for participation through a written notice to the DG EAC, the competent Directorate General for the LLP and YiA Programmes. The letter indicating the interest has been sent early in 2009 from MoCA to DGEAC. The response, or the reaction to the initial request was that BiH is still not ready to assume the preparatory procedures for access to these programmes, as this process has to go hand in hand with the process of decentralization, the harmonization of legislative regulations particularly those pertaining to finances, and further more BiH must indicate a greater degree of EU integrations preparedness, which it does not at the time. Therefore at this point, in regards to BiH accessing the LLP and YiA, nothing is to be done. Jadranka Milić Delegation of the European Commission Task Manager, Interview. January 2009, Vladimir Pandurevic, Delegation of the European Commission to BiH, Task Manager, Interview 20.1.2010

43 Jadranka Milić Delegation of the European Commission Task Manager, Interview. January 2009, Vladimir Pandurevic, Delegation of the European Commission to BiH, Task Manager, Interview 20.1.2010

reform processes. **Though BiH is not a current priority of DG EAC, an early start of the implementation of CP structures⁴⁴ should be a priority for the country. Much like the implementation of the DIS structures, the implementation of structures and internal capacities for the management of these programmes are core preparatory steps for successfully participating in these programmes once opportunity for application presents itself, as well as for EU membership as such.** As summed up in Table 3, very few formal steps towards joining the programmes have been accomplished thus far.

Table 3. Implementation of the Road Map and Action Plan for Inclusion of BiH in the EU Programmes Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action (by 2013)

Plan of Activities for the Implementation of the Road Map and Action Plan for Inclusion of BiH in the EU Programmes Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action (by 2013)	Status (February 2010)
Signing of the Framework Agreement for BiH participation in the Community Programmes	Accomplished Agreement signed, ratified and entered into force on January 8, 2007.
Roles of key state institutions clearly defined. (MoCA, DEI, MoFT, CoM, BiH Ministers in BiH)	Partially accomplished Key institutions have been identified and their roles generally defined. Further specification on and guidelines on their particular tasks need to be assessed.
Capacity building of state institutions and forming of the team responsible for negotiations with the European Commission and the DG EAC (envisioned for no later than the first quarter of 2008)	Not accomplished
Assessment and revision of BiH legislature, in what pertains to: 1. Visas 2. Value Added Tax (VAT) 3. Finances 4. Residence permit 5. General financial flows 6. Taxes 7. Public procurement in accordance with EC law	Not accomplished The visa issue may be possibly resolved in 2010. BiH has been presented with the road map for the liberalization of the visa regime specifying the obligations that need to be fulfilled in order to gain visa free travel in the Schengen area. Up to date BiH has not fulfilled all the tasks, thus the citizens of BiH have to obtain Visas for any travel abroad, which is a costly, time consuming, and uncertain process for the applicants.
Establishment of independent national (state) agency (for LLP and YiA) in accordance with the EC regulation on national agencies.	Not accomplished (Efforts to establish the Youth Agency failed)
Share of financial warranties secured by the government.	Not accomplished
Signing of the MoU for participation in LLP and YiA (separately)	Not accomplished
Payment of the entrance fee	Not accomplished
Securing the financial funds for the entrance fee.	Not accomplished
Securing the existence of corresponding state fund for the co-financing of the successful beneficiaries.	Not accomplished
Stating of tender procedures for project proposals.	Not accomplished

Source: Road Map and Action Plan for Inclusion of BiH in the EU Programmes Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action (by 2013)⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Especially given extensive time full implementation requires, if judging from other countries' experiences.

⁴⁵ Mapa puta i Plan aktivnosti za uključivanje BiH u EU Programe za Cjeloživotno učenje i Mladi u Akciji (do 2013. godine). Službeni glasnik BiH broj 15/6. July 2008.

3. MAKING FULL USE OF EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES: NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The generally negative picture when it comes to moving forward in accessing the community programmes calls for further analysis of steps BiH needs to take in order to plan its timely entrance into the programmes. This also includes the securing of financial means to cover the programme entrance fee. In order for BiH to have the financial means secured once it is technically prepared to apply for the Programmes, the planning needs to take place in parallel to the MoU signing process, and requires a good coordination between MoCA and DEI. This is particularly so if the entrance fee is to be financed from the IPA funds, as was the case for the FP7 Community Programme. IPA allows for a country to use the funds for accessing the Community Programmes if it is defined as the beneficiary's national strategic goal.

Moving towards accessing the Community Programmes requires a detailed capacity and risk assessment, including both the analysis institutional capacities as well as of the capacities of potential beneficiaries for absorption/implementation of programmes in question. In the latter case, some conclusions can be reached through analyzing the beneficiaries' current engagement in absorption of other EU funding accessible in this domain. This analysis is an imperative for good planning and capability assessment and will be examined in the following sub-chapter.

Another reason a very careful assessment is necessary is the fact that **the moment BiH fully integrates in the LLP, it will also be disqualified from accessing other EU education funding, more precisely the Tempus fund**⁴⁶, which has been of great importance so far in the educational reform. Rather than being competition-based, Tempus provides secure national funding on a country-by-country basis. Therefore, provided BiH fulfils the complex application requirements, its projects are more or less 'guaranteed' funding within the amount designated for the country for a given period. As such, Tempus currently presents a more suitable type of funding for BiH's current state of development. However, once BiH joins the European Union, as is its aim, it will have to be ready to compete for project funding with other member states, which is why an early capacity-building in accessing Community Program funding is a necessity. BiH present readiness can in part be assessed through looking at its current activities when it comes to absorption of EU funding for education activities presently accessible. This will be the focus of the final two components.

3.1 BiH's Performance in Currently Accessible EU Funds Related to Education

Tempus and Erasmus Mundus

From the general statistical overview, it is visible that Serbia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia are the most active countries in the region when it comes to participation in both Erasmus Mundus (EM) and Tempus programmes (see the Tables 4&5 and Image 1&2 below for an overall picture of participation). The number of applications and successful placements of projects is indicative of the countries' overall awareness and capacities to take part in these projects. Tempus is also providing funding for Joint Projects based on the establishment of Joint Programmes⁴⁷ and the Structural Measures⁴⁸, both project types are focused to address partner country needs and aid them in convergence with the EU developments in the HE field, while aiming to have impact in higher education at institutional or system level. "Tempus also contributes to preparing the pre-accession countries of the Western Balkans for their participation in the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme."⁴⁹ In the period 1996-2009, since BiH started participating in Tempus it has participated in projects with the cumulative value of 27 million Euros⁵⁰, however it is estimated that the full potential of these Programmes has not been used.

⁴⁶ Tempus is an important external EU policy instrument. Therefore, once BiH integrates into the LLP, which is an instrument of internal EU policy framework, it stops being subject of external policies.

⁴⁷ "Joint Projects are based on multilateral partnerships between higher education institutions in the EU and the partner countries. They can develop, modernize and disseminate new curricula, teaching methods or materials, boost a quality assurance culture, and modernize the management and governance of higher education institutions." EC DG EAC, Tempus: Modernization of Higher Education in Countries Surrounding the EU, available at: >> http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc70_en.htm <<

⁴⁸ "Structural Measures contribute to the development and reform of higher education institutions and systems in partner countries, to enhance their quality and relevance, and increase their convergence with EU developments." EC DG EAC, Tempus: Modernization of Higher Education in Countries Surrounding the EU, available at: >> http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc70_en.htm <<

⁴⁹ EC Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency, *About Tempus IV (2007-2013)*, available at: >> http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/programme/about_tempus_en.php <<

⁵⁰ National Tempus Office Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Tempus in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. available at: >>: http://www.tempusbih.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=106 <<

"[...]BiH is currently a beneficiary of the Programmes that do not require specific admissions [...], experiences from these programmes vary, but unfortunately we as a country, [...]have a very low level of participation and we are, literally, continuously receiving critiques from Brussels, that the participation of our students is very, very low in these programmes."⁵¹

Table 4. Overview of BiH participation in Tempus (2008)

Accepted projects - Tempus IV - 2008, Breakdown by partner country, region and type of project					
Country	Joint Projects (JP) (1)		Structural Measures (SM) (1)		Total
	National projects	Multi Country Projects	National projects	Multi Country Projects	
Albania	0	7	0	0	7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	6	0	3	9
Croatia	0	8	0	1	9
FYRM	1	11	1	3	16
Kosovo	0	4	1	1	6
Montenegro	0	4	0	3	7
Serbia	3	12	1	1	17

Source: European Commission/Executive agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture⁵²

Table 5. Overview of BiH participation in Tempus by projects (2009)

Breakdown of (latest) applications by country of the applicant and by type of projects Second call for proposals Tempus IV 2009 (number of applications)						
	JP curricular reform	JP governance reform	JP higher education and society	SM governance reform	SM higher education and society	Total
Albania	1					1
BiH	2		2		1	5
Croatia	9	4	3	1	3	20
FYRM	6	3			1	10
Kosovo	1		2			3
Montenegro	5					5
Serbia	8	2	12	3		25

Source: European Commission/Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture⁵³

⁵¹ Jadranka Mihic, Delegation of the European Commission to BiH Task Manager, ACIPS Round table "Establishment of the Decentralized Implementation System for the EU Funds: Monitoring of the progress and recommendations for the future steps" Pannel II "Accession of BiH to other EU Funds: focus on Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programme", Sarajevo 27.01.2010.

⁵² European Commission/Executive agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture, *Accepted projects - Tempus IV – 2008, Breakdown of projects by partner country, region and type of project*, last access: 03.02.2010, available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/results_compendia/documents/stats_tempus_4_2008_accepted_a.pdf

⁵³ Source: European Commission/Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture, *Breakdown of applications by country of the applicant and by type of projects (Tempus IV - Second Call for proposals)*, last access: 09.02.2010, available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/results_compendia/documents/stats_tempus_4_2008_accepted_a.pdf

Similar case is with the EM Programme, which is aiming to increase student and academia mobility. While it is evaluated that EM has since its initiation ensured mobility of several hundred academic staff⁵⁴, most of them coming from third countries, only 2 participants have been from BiH⁵⁵. Similarly, out of 20 000 students, mainly from the third countries, that obtained EM Scholarships for studying abroad, only 25 came from BiH. BiH is also running behind in participation if we compare it to other countries in the region. 131 students from Serbia already benefited from EM although Serbia started participating in the programme one year later than BiH, in 2007⁵⁶.

If we consider Image 2, illustrating the number of students from the WB countries having received scholarships through EM in 2010, as well as Image 1, illustrating the same data for the last scholarship period, we see the situation is almost identical. This illustrates the unchanged performance of countries examined - while some are performing well others, including BiH, are remaining behind. The new European Economic Strategy⁵⁷ envisions that 20% of graduating students in the European Area of Higher Education should have had a study or training period abroad, and therefore it is an imperative for BiH to immediately step up its participation in these projects and provide higher incentives for the students to travel abroad for academic and learning purposes.

Until recently, there was no national institution providing structured information about Erasmus Mundus opportunities in BiH. The National Tempus office has recently started the promotion of EM. The MoCA has also added a sub-site to their web that generally provides information about the opportunities to study abroad. However, the effects of this activity are not visible yet. **Further assessment of the efforts currently carried out to promote the programme need to be made and further methods established in order to increase beneficiary participation and usage of this resource.**

⁵⁴ EC Directorate General for Education and Culture, *The EU contribution to the European Higher Education Area*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010. pg 12, available at: >> http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/higher/ehea_en.pdf <<

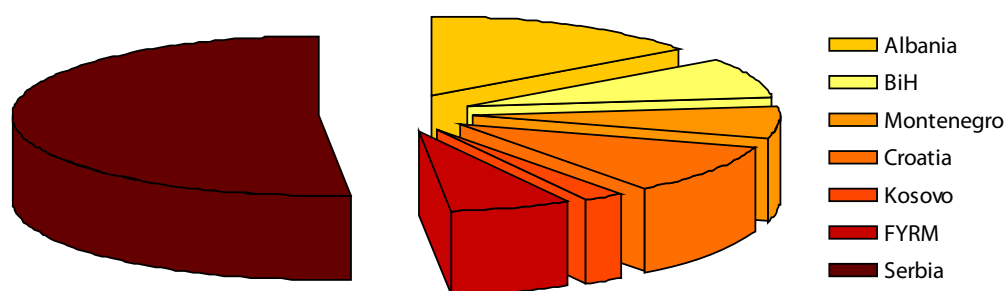
⁵⁵ European Commission/Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture, "Annex IV: Erasmus Mundus and Western Balkans & Turkey Window students by nationality and gender 2009/2010 (main, reserve list and non-selected list) alphabetic order of total applications", "Erasmus Mundus Students by Nationality and Gender from 2004-05 to 2008-09" last access: 03.02.2010, available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php

⁵⁶ It is important here to note, that Serbia was participating in Erasmus Mundus when Serbia and Montenegro were still one country, the data provided here is taking into consideration only those students that have participated since the dissolution of Serbia and Montenegro, with the participation year starting in 2007. It is not clear how many students from Serbia or Montenegro alone have participated, but the cumulative number for both countries is significantly lower than compared to their participation since dissolution.

⁵⁷ EC Directorate General for Education and Culture, *The EU contribution to the European Higher Education Area*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/higher/ehea_en.pdf

Image 1. Overview of WB Countries Students Participation in EM 2009/2010

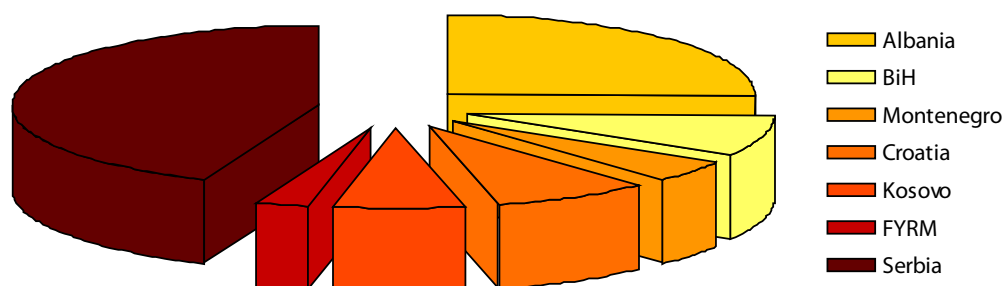
Western Balkans recieved student scholarships for the year 2009/10



Source: European Commission/Executive agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture⁵⁸

Image 2. Overview of WB Countries Students Participation in EM through 2010

Western Balkans recieved students scholarships by 2010



Source: European Commission/Executive agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture⁵⁹

FP7

As a more positive example of, BiH is since 2009 fully participating in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), which is financing Scientific Research programs in 10 fields⁶⁰. Within the FP7, as within other Community Programmes, amounts to be awarded are not predetermined on a country/project basis but are open to competition and therefore depend on the quality of the projects for which the funding is requested. Since entering

⁵⁸ European Commission/Executive agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture, *Annex IV: Erasmus Mundus and Western Balkans & Turkey Window students by nationality and gender 2009/2010 (main, reserve list and non-selected list) alphabetic order of total applications*, last access: 09.02.2010, available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/documents/statistics/em20092010_students2.pdf

⁵⁹ European Commission/Executive agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture, *Annex IV: Erasmus Mundus and Western Balkans & Turkey Window students by nationality and gender 2009/2010 (main, reserve list and non-selected list) alphabetic order of total applications*, *Erasmus Mundus Students by Nationality and Gender from 2004-05 to 2008-09* last access: 03.02.2010, available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/statistics_en.php

⁶⁰ National Contact Point for EU Framework Programmes in BiH, last access: 23.02.2010, available at: <http://www.ncp-fp.ba/en/cooperation.aspx>

the FP7 Programme, BiH was awarded 4 Projects⁶¹, although not as coordinators but as partners within the projects. However BiH has also been active in the earlier Framework Programmes, the FP5 and FP6, and it is estimated that BiH has managed to draw ca. 2.7 Million Euros⁶² through the former two Programmes. This demonstrates ability to develop its capacities to absorb funding via these programmes over time, having used the preceding framework programmes as preparation for full participation in FP7. This type of preparatory activities should be further utilized in the context of joining the other community programmes in the sphere of education. Specifically, the opportunities provided via the Tempus and Erasmus Mundus programmes, predecessors of sorts to the LLP and YiA, need to be fully utilized, thus helping build project cycle and management capacities necessary to take the next step in implementation of EU education funding.

One aspect easing BiH participation in the FP7 is the fact that this programme is centralized, the funds being managed by the European Commission. This will not be the case for LLP and YiA programmes, nor is it the case for the majority of EU funding. BiH's present performance in utilizing the instruments for Education that are currently open to it shows still lacking capacities. This needs to be amended if BiH is to build a positive image when it comes to its overall preparedness for tackling the complexities of the EU integration process.

3.2 Usage of BiH's Current Opportunities for Participating in the LLP and YiA Components

Under the current situation, with no MoU signed, BiH has no full access to the LLP and YiA programmes. However, as discussed earlier, there are certain components of the Programme that are open to non-EU non-participant countries and therefore, BiH present experience in using these should be taken into account. The following segment examines BiH's participation within the the Jean Monet Component of the LLP and the and Actions 2 and 3.1 of the YiA programme.

LLP: The Jean Monet Component

The Jean Monet activity within the Lifelong Learning Programme, the only component open to non participating countries, is an initiative established in 1990, and it is intended for all non-EU countries aiming to enhance education on European integration. It achieves that through different activities, such as giving out monetary awards to institutions with prominent professors on EU related teaching and research, and funding the continuation of his/her teaching and research; through providing funding for the establishment of new teaching modules – courses specifically designed to deal with European Integrations in diverse fields of studies, etc. The beneficiaries of this programme are academic institutions and full-time professors.

thus far, BiH educational institutions do not demonstrate recognition of the opportunity this programme provides. While BiH has never applied for an award via this programme⁶³, Croatia has been awarded 3 projects in 2008 alone, amounting to 110 250 Euros in financial assistance⁶⁴. Croatia's National Agency is playing an important role in providing information and assistance for Croatian beneficiaries' on opportunities to absorb funds that are currently open to Croatia.

Despite a declarative desire to move closer to the EU coming from all social spheres, **BiH universities are at this time still very much behind when it comes to specialized courses teaching about EU integrations**. Even when some exist on the curriculum, they are elective courses, which often results in them not being held, as they don't always manage to fulfil the student quota necessary to be economically efficient⁶⁵.

61 According to the data base available on the official National Contact Point for EU Framework Programmes in BiH web, BiH was awarded 4 projects. However, it is questionable how recent the information is, as most of the experts in this field judge that BiH's performance is very satisfactory. Last accessed 19.02.2010, available at: <http://www.ncp-fp.ba/en/activities.html#>

62 Amar Mirašdžija, MoCA Sector for Science and Culture, Interview February 4. 2010.

63 Jadranka Mihic, Delegation of the European Commission, Task Manager, Interviewed in August 2009

64 EC Audiovisual, Education & Culture Executive Agency - Selection Results, LLP – Jean Monet Programme Key Activity 1, Selection 2008, available at:>> <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/ajm/documents/ajm2007.pdf> <<

65 This conclusion was based on several interviews conducted in August of 2009, focusing on an overview of the current programmes/curriculums specifically devoted to European Integrations including: Prof. Valerija Šaula, University of Banja Luka; and Prof. Nezruk Ćurak, Prof. Vlado Azinović, University of Sarajevo.

This provides another argument for why it would be beneficial to make better use of this particular funding opportunity. At this point, it is unclear whether BiH Universities have sufficient knowledge and information about the opportunity to participate in this programme. **There is currently no institution that directly provides support and conducts promotional campaigns for participation in the Jean Monet Programme.** Without the existence of a national agency, the **alternative** is that the **currently existing institutions with understanding of EU programmes, experience in the establishment of curriculum and significant understanding of the project management cycle, such as the Tempus national office, work on acquainting potential beneficiaries with the Jean Monet scheme.**

YiA: Action 2. and 3.1

BiH has had some success in receiving projects funded via the Youth in Action programme, absorbing cca. 1 055 000 Euro During the 2007-2009 period. Two components of this programme are open to Western Balkan Countries - Action no 2, the European Volunteer Service⁶⁶, and the sub-action 3.1, on Cooperation with EU neighbouring countries under two activities: Youth Exchange, and Training and Networking⁶⁷. These are centralized components that do not the existence of a National Agency . In particular, they are open to the NGO sector. The applicants must have a partner organization in an EU member state in order to qualify for participation. Provided this is fulfilled, the WB courtiers can be grant holders of the activity.

A recent analysis conducted by EC shows that **BiH is performing well in the WB region when it comes to obtaining grants for projects awarded within the component 2.** It has been awarded 5 projects in 2007 and 4 projects in 2008 compared to Serbia and Croatia that have been awarded only one project in the same period. However, the leading countries in the component 3.1 are Macedonia and Serbia, having been awarded with twice as many projects as BiH. ⁶⁸ **The lack of information on for the opportunity to participate** is one reason for this lack of participation. As discussed earlier, due to the failed attempts to establish a state-level Youth Agency, there is currently no specialized institution which could take on a coordinating role in promoting participation in this programme.

As a possible alternative, the **Youth Commission** is currently the only existing body that is dealing with youth issues, though it has up to date received very negative reviews. However, since January 2010, the Commission is in new composition (a reduced number of commissioners) and its seat is now within the MoCA offices, which should secure better coordination. The work of the Commission has not yet properly started, and it is still establishing its internal capacities as well as **strategic goals for action.** One of its goals will certainly include **greater commitment in providing support to its users in accessing the Youth in Action Programme components currently open to BiH.**⁶⁹

Another issue that needs to be resolved to ensure efficient usage of YiA in BiH is the lack of visibility of the national focal point, selected by the EC external agency SALTO. SALTO is EC's external agency, composed of 8 Resource Centers, working on European priority areas when it comes to youth issues. In addition to organizing trainings and providing and linking partner organisations together, its role is to provide support to National agencies with in the framework of YiA as well as to coordinate the centralized components of the YiA Programme. In each country that does not have a National Agency for the YiA programmes, SALTO identifies a resource centre/organization to take over the role of focal point for these activities, tasked with distributing and providing programme information to potential beneficiaries. In the context of BiH, the organizations that volunteered to take on this role thus far were not judged to have sufficient capacities to serve as resource cen-

⁶⁶ The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is part of the Youth in Action Programme and highlights the importance of volunteering, thus providing students with a chance to voluntarily engage themselves in activities in foreign countries, and contribute to their personal development as well as contribute to the development of solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people within or outside of EU.

⁶⁷ This sub-action focuses on developing EU ties with partner countries, through (1) Youth Exchange, which aims to bring youth from minimum 2 countries together to exchange views and experiences on a specific topic, and (2) it provides opportunities for Training and Networking through development of quality projects which have been established through cooperation of youth from different countries.

⁶⁸ 31 projects had been awarded to BiH within the Action 3.1. in 2007 and 2008. Source: Bektas, Meliha. Analiza Programa "Mladi u akciji" u Bosni i Hercegovini, Delegation of the European commission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. Novembar 2009

⁶⁹ Mirjana Nikolic, MoCA, Youth Commission, Interview February 4. 2010.

tres.⁷⁰ The new Youth Commission is aiming to establish close connection with the next chosen focal point and work with them to strengthen their capacities to disseminate the information as well as provide certain guidance and possibly support in project writing to potential beneficiaries.⁷¹ This crucial task again emphasizes the **necessity for the Youth Commission to take a more active role in engaging the Youth organizations to participate in YiA via effective outreach campaign. In addition the Youth Commission needs to put efforts into becoming recognized as a legitimate leader in its field, through deepening the ties with youth actors, thus becoming more effective in timely responding to Youth needs, and providing assistance for achieving their goals and objectives.**

Considering the lack of coordination so far, the results of YiA efforts are rather positive in terms of funding absorbed and activities implemented. However, thus far, five organizations from 4 cities (Kljuc, Mostar, Sarajevo, and Derventa) have absorbed over 70% of the total amount awarded to projects from BiH.⁷² In total, 10 cities⁷³ that have participated since 2007. All participating organizations became familiar with YiA Programme via their partners in EU member states, demonstrating the benefits of establishing partnerships. The knowledge gained and opportunities utilized now need to be shared further, permitting new beneficiaries to join the schemes, learning valuable lessons from organizations already experienced in this process.⁷⁴ To successfully accomplish this requires efficient support provided to BiH Youth organization by the local resource centre, ensuring expansion of the geographical and organizational distribution of funds and opportunities.

⁷⁰ According to the EC analysis of BiH participation in YiA, this inefficiency, in addition to low capacity of the organizations to assume the role that is provided by this task, is caused by the diverse approaches in selection of the focal point organizations. Three organizations were selected in 2006, with the guiding criteria that they are territorially represented. Than in 2008 only one organization has been chosen, which created confusion within the Youth Sector itself. Bektas, Meliha. Analiza Programa "Mladi u akciji" u Bosni i Hercegovini, Delegation of the European commission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. Novembar 2009

⁷¹ Mirjana Nikolic, MoCA, Youth Commission, Interview Febuary 4. 2010.

⁷² Bektas, Meliha. Analiza Programa "Mladi u akciji" u Bosni i Hercegovini, Delegation of the European commission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. Novembar 2009

⁷³ In the order by most projects awarded: Kljuc, Mostar, Banja Luka, Derventa, Sarajevo, S.Most, Gradiska, Jajce, Brcko, Zavidovici, Ibid. pg.18

⁷⁴ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

With the ratification of the Framework Agreement between the European Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the general principles for the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Community Programmes, BiH has gained access to 32 Community Programmes⁷⁵. Within them, these programmes contain great financial potential that BiH is presently not fully utilizing. While accession to some of these programmes carries significant obligations, requiring both institutional and legislative reforms, as well as local financial backing for membership fees, other countries in the region are moving at a much faster pace towards accessing these Community Programmes, Croatia presently participating in 12, Serbia in 5, Macedonia in 4, and BiH currently only in one community programme, the FP7⁷⁶.

Most importantly, considering Bosnia and Herzegovina's long-term strategic goal, EU integration, the participation in the Community Programmes is an important reference for the aspiring county, through which it can gradually illustrate and build the capability and capacity to become a fully functional member state. In addition to aiding the gradual establishment of institutional and legislative frameworks in accordance with EU standards, the ability to cope with the competition-based decentralized programme framework presents a core pre-requisite for being able to make full-use of funds accessible once a country gains EU membership status.

The examination of the process of moving towards membership in two Community Programmes addressed in this paper, Youth in Action and Lifelong Learning, has illustrated both the challenges and the necessity for BiH institutions to work together on the fulfilment of obligations implied by these programmes and the integration process as such. Both programmes are instruments of EU educational and youth policies, reflecting the goals of the Lisbon Strategy - to shape Europe into knowledge based society. BiH endorsed these goals through signing the Bologna declaration, thus committing to integrate BiH's education system into the European Area of Higher Education. The accession to the LLP and YiA is a natural progression in this regard. Therefore, though it is currently not receiving guidance from Brussels on how to advance this process, given its overall low ratings in implementing baseline European reforms, BiH needs to maintain strategic focus, as the reforms in question are not something which can happen overnight but rather a result of concentrated long-standing efforts. BiH's low performance in absorbing funds currently available through other EU instruments for Education needs to be taken as a warning sign that greater priority should to be given to these opportunities - accentuating the country's pace towards the EU though more effective absorption of the funding open to it in its current, potential candidate country, status.

⁷⁵ If taking account of all the sub-actions/programmes within the larger frameworks.

⁷⁶ The Programmes in which the countries are participating are those for which the MoU has been signed between the beneficiary and European Commission. Sub actions, such as those illustrated for the LLP and YiA, that are open to participation regardless of the existence of the MoU are not taken into consideration here.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations for Joining Community Programmes

- **Conducting an in depth capacity assessment and developing BiH's strategic approach to joining Community Programmes**

Considering all the requirements related to the accession to each individual Programme, which slightly differ amongst each other, a **thorough assessment of country capacities should be conducted** - **creating a feasibility study** taking into account BiH development priorities and efforts needed for accession to a particular Programme. This in turn would provide space for strategic planning which would identify those programmes where participation is most feasible, most economic, and interesting in alignment with BiH strategic goals. Furthermore, many programmes provide the possibility for participation in individual sub-actions, rather than the Programme as a whole, which can reduce the cost of the entrance fee (such as for example the Erasmus, Sub-Programme of LLP most relevant for Higher Education). Ad-hoc planning should be avoided, because, in addition to the entrance fee, each Programme carries with itself the responsibility of the beneficiary country to cover the losses in case of financial irregularities in funds awarded via these Programmes. Furthermore, it needs to be ensured the potential beneficiaries have the necessary capacities to compete for funding on the EU level.

- **Building capacities in decentralized management of EU Funds**

Implementation of the Community Programmes is carried out in two different forms, dependent on the programme; **Centralized**, with EC's respective DG managing the implementation of the Programme ;; and **decentralized**, where the beneficiary Country resumes the responsibility for proper implementation of the funding coming from the EU. **The National Agencies are the independent bodies assuming responsibility for the decentralized management of the EU Community Funds.**

Given that some community programmes of interest to BiH require decentralized management capacities, the country needs to possess institutional and human resource infrastructure accommodating this need in order to qualify for full participation. This is a time-consuming task, as has been proven by the on-going process of establishment of a decentralized implementation system for the management of other EU funds (at the moment, primarily IPA), taking BiH substantially more time than it did other countries' in the region. The establishment of decentralized management capacities is an important indicator of BiH's ability to assume responsibilities of an EU member state. Therefore, this process needs to speed up if the country is to receive a good reference and further support in its attempts to join EU community programmes, as well as the community itself.

Getting back on track with the implementation of the Road Map and Action Plan for Participation of BiH in Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Community Programmes

- **Prioritizing financial support for Youth and Education**

Given the situation in the sphere of education in BiH, and particularly the numerous problems pertaining to the reform of the Higher Education, the slow implementation of the Bologna process, lack of connection and complementarity between educational programmes and labour market needs, low student and academic staff mobility, etc. Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes present themselves as instruments in alignment with the national strategic goals that seek to address these problems. The financial support for the education sector is currently limited to covering the basic operational cost, which are insufficient for the development of new curriculums, modernization of education, stipends for travelling aboard to study, etc. Furthermore, full utilization of opportunities offered by these programmes also complements BiH international obligations, in particular the integration of BiH Education into the European Area of Higher Education.

- **Starting with the implementation process early**

Taking into consideration the political, bureaucratic and administrative nature of BiH administration, considerably slowing down its Euro-integration process, it is important that BiH start the implementation

of the Road Map for Inclusion of BiH in the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action programmes early, in parallel to other base reforms on the path to European integrations, in order to accommodate losses of time imposed through a highly decentralized and fragmented administrative and political system.

- **Upgrading the Road Map**

Currently, the road map for participation in LLP and YiA addresses BiH's starting advantages, the high demand for participation in these programmes, and the high interest of foreign institutions to cooperate with BiH. However, it does not provide insight into the advantages/disadvantages of participation in the context of the technical requirements that need to be put in place and country readiness to implement them. The Road Map needs to include further assessment of the current capacities related to the fulfilment of the requirements established by the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action programmes. This in particular pertains to providing a feasibility assessment of BiH capacities to adjust the present legislative, institutional and financial frameworks to the programme requirements, providing clearer guidelines, than in the current document, for institutions responsible for this process.

- **Establishing the National Agency**

The process of establishment of a national agency in other South East European countries has shown to last anywhere between 2-3 years. In BiH, we can assume that it may take longer, as the first attempt of establishing a Youth Agency to manage YiA has failed due to inability to reach a consensus on the issue. Currently, there is no single recognizable institution that can offer information and support regarding the possibility for participation in the sub-actions of LLP and YiA that are, regardless of the inexistence of an official MoU, open to BiH. The efforts to establish a state level agency tasked with providing support to interested beneficiaries need to be resumed, if BiH is to fully utilize the benefits of accessible programmes. Taking into consideration the already overburdened BiH public administration as well as regional experiences, **it is advisable to govern both community programmes under one single Agency, avoiding overlap of responsibilities and reducing the cost of the establishment of additional administrative structures.**

Short Term Recommendations – what can be done now?

Work on better utilization of the currently available EU programmes and funds through increasing BiH participation in the accessible components of LLP and YiA, but also Tempus and Erasmus Mundus by:

- **Strengthening promotional efforts**

Making timely announcements of the call for proposals for the given projects, regularly distributing relevant programme information and making sure the information reaches out to a large amount of potential beneficiaries (ex. through networking with potential institutional beneficiaries, holding presentations at university faculties, high schools, academic and career fairs, etc.).

Further assessment of the promotional efforts currently carried out need to be made, and additional beneficiary support methods established, in order to increase BiH's participation. The national Tempus office has recently taken upon itself the promotion of the Erasmus Mundus programme. Such activities by stakeholder institutions need to be further developed.

The new Youth Commission needs to play a more active role in providing information on the Youth in Action components that are currently open to BiH. It should consult and involve the few successful BiH organizations that have been actively participating in the programmes in this process.

- **Establishing support mechanisms for organizations and beneficiaries that wish to participate in the programmes but do not possess sufficient capacities and knowledge for project drafting.** Until a National Agency is put in place to take over these responsibilities, the Youth Commission should establish internal capacities for distribution of information and for directing the beneficiaries toward the right address for support, such as SALTO and the already experienced Organizations in this field, but also through creation of training seminars/programmes and establishment of a comprehensive web page providing "how to" tips and frequently asked questions.

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- Establishing dialogue and cooperation with other policy research institutions, governments and civil society organizations in B&H and the wider region.

LEARNING BY DOING

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