



Education Support Program  
Open Society Fund Bosnia & Herzegovina

**Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

# **What do we teach our children?**

**SURVEYING ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS  
ABOUT VALUES IN CURRICULA AND TEXTBOOKS  
IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BIH**





**Education Support Program**  
Open Society Fund Bosnia & Herzegovina

The survey was jointly conducted by the Open Society Fund BH and the Centre for Policy Studies (CEPOS) in Sarajevo.

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### List of Abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEPOS	Centre for Policy Studies
CERD	Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ECRI	European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance
EFA	Education for All
F BiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FGD	Focus group/group discussion
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
HVO	Croatian Defence Council
N	Number
NAIT	National Identity Scale
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSF BiH	Open Society Fund BiH
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RS	Republika Srpska
SPSS	Statistical Program for Social Sciences
TV	Television
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America

# Summary

*I believe that the key issue is the interference of politics; schools should be depoliticised. We (students) understand one another quite well... Learning together with students of different ethnic backgrounds does not represent a problem for us students, rather it comes from politicians and the Ministry.<sup>1</sup>*

This Report is a result of survey of parents and students attitudes on the values in school curricula and textbooks in primary and secondary education in BiH. The Report represents the first attempt after the war in BiH to systematically survey and document opinions of parents and students as the end-users of the education system.

The aim of the survey was to identify student and parent viewpoints on (1) the basic principles promoted by the education system, and (2) the application of these principles within the **“national group” of subjects, i.e. in teaching history, geography, mother language/literature and religious instruction.**

The survey was jointly conducted by the Open Society Fund BiH and the Centre for Policy Studies (CEPOS) in Sarajevo. It combined the quantitative methods (a poll including students and parents) and qualitative research (focus groups with students and parents) from April 2006 to January 2007. The poll included 1080 students and 1056 parents throughout BiH, after which focus groups were organised - eight groups in three places: Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Vitez.

## Discrepancy between principles and practice

*It all comes down to teaching by the majority group in a given territory.*

(Dobož, parent, majority group)

*Everybody writes their own history here in Bosnia, which poses a problem.*

(Vitez, student, majority group)

*Every textbook today is a small landmine. It is a small powder keg.*

(Sarajevo, parent, majority group)

The research shows that students and parents support legal principles and reform promises, while at the same time holding that the level of their application in education practice, structure and content is not satisfactory. This specifically means that the end-users do not think that education in BiH prepares young people for a life in a multicultural society in the spirit of human rights and affiliation to BiH as their political community, as well as according to the principles of full citizen equality and participatory democracy.

The degree of dissatisfaction with the current education system can be said to be proportionate to the degree of support the respondents expressed for recommendations and the direction of change to the current education practice. The support expressed for individual recommendation varies depending on the region and ethnic make-up and the respondents' characteristics (particularly the degree of identification with one's own ethnic group). However, the results indicate that, in principle, respondents from different parts of BiH want the same changes to the education system, whereas the most even and consistent attitudes are expressed by members of a minority within a given territory.

A more detailed analysis of the results indicates that agreement with regard to the support for *general* principles does not necessarily imply agreement on their *specific* implementation in practice. This does not undervalue the importance and indicative force of the findings, but it does suggest that they should be contextualised while being interpreted.

## Marginalisation of the state

Despite the assumptions of parents, an affiliation awareness to Bosnia and Herzegovina is not being developed in students - only less than half the respondents (46%) believe that this goal is being implemented in education practice.

<sup>1</sup> Vitez, student, minority group

### Monoethnic education

Regardless of the institutional support expressed for BiH society as a multicultural one, studying the culture of one group is favoured in schools – most frequently that of the majority group in a given territory, which particularly affects students and parents belonging to minority groups. Almost half the respondents (46%) assess the BiH education system as monoethnic – *focused on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of one group*, without respecting the principle of common good, which in turn results in three separate education systems. One-third of the respondents believe that the knowledge of others acquired in school is not sufficient, while 22% of all the students point out that, in schools, other groups are mostly represented in a negative context.

### Discrimination

As much as one-fourth of the students included in this research and around one-third of parents think that discrimination on ethnic, religious and economic grounds is present in the BiH education system. The issue of most concern is segregation of students on ethnic grounds, the so-called, *“two schools under one roof”*. Most students polled do not support separation of students and separate teaching processes within one building: 65% believe that students of different ethnic background should be in the same classes and have the same subjects, while 23% believe that children of different ethnic background should be in the same class but have different “national group” subjects. In comparison with students and parents from the majority group in a given area, respondents belonging to minority groups<sup>2</sup> more frequently believe that discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds is present in the BiH education system.

Particularly prominent forms of discrimination of minorities on religious grounds result from the lack of opportunity to attend relevant religious instruction classes. Gender discrimination is not particularly prominent, but the results of focus groups suggest insufficiently developed recognition to gender issues in general, which questions the reliability of such attitudes.

### Lack of critical thinking and the spirit of collectivism

Preparing a young person for a life in a society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law requires that students develop critical thinking and analytical approaches, as well as promotion of the importance of the principle of citizenship against those of collectivism and individualism. However, only 37% of the students polled assess that their curricula and textbooks are based on these principles. In addition, education practice encourages and maintains acquisition of contents by pure memorisation and repetition of facts. The results suggest that stereotypes about their own people and other peoples are more present with students forming the majority and being educated following the curriculum of their own ethnic group. This leads to students’ identification with collective values and norms, which are represented as unquestionable and unchangeable.

### Recommendations

*We are still considered primitive because of the way we are taught about others. Let’s learn about what they have created, have they been useful to us or we to them. Can we learn this? Instead of mentioning violence right away and representing them as negative.* (Sarajevo, students, majority group)

As many as 43% of the respondents do not agree that “national group” textbooks should remain as they are now. Most of these respondents come from the Brčko District (75%), then from Bosniak areas, then Croat areas and, finally, areas with the Serb majority (32%). In all the areas with ethnic majorities in BiH, respondents belonging to minorities, more often than those belonging to majority groups, believe that the “national group” of subjects should be changed.

Specific recommendations for education system reform are the following:

- **Textbooks should primarily focus on BiH and only secondarily on each group individually**

<sup>2</sup> In this research the terms “minority” and “minority groups” is used for respondents who, in a given majority area, do not belong to the most numerous people in this area: they can be both the members of one of constitutive people in BH or members of national minorities

**or on neighbouring countries.** Most students and parents from all the ethnic-majority areas (54-75%) agree with this suggestion.

- **The contents of “national group” should be changed so as to place considerably more focus on members of all three groups and ethnic minorities, not only on one group alone.** The percentage of support expressed by parents and students for this proposal is 55-79%.
- **Textbooks should include more contents developing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH** - this recommendation is supported by 58-82% of all the respondents. Most students (71%) and parents (75%) polled from all areas also believe that, in schools, the diversity of people, cultures and religions in BiH should be represented as a value and merit.
- **Textbooks should include different views, should give different interpretations of the same events and should encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues.** Respondents from all the ethnic areas except the Brčko District believe that all the involved should agree on a common view with regard to the historical development of BiH and present it in textbooks (39-59%), or that textbooks should treat historical development respecting/offering different perspectives, i.e. perspectives of all the groups (25-44%).
- **BiH history textbooks should also cover the period from 1992 onwards.** Most respondents (49-73%) from all the areas with ethnic majorities (except the Brčko District) think that BiH history textbooks should also cover the period from 1992 onwards.
- **A single language policy should be agreed on, which should result in agreement on the name, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks.** The opinion that a single language policy should be agreed on, which should result in agreement on the name, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks is held for the most part by all the respondents (48-78%), while a smaller number do not agree with this change (3-25%).

- **In addition to religious instruction, a separate subject should be introduced into schools that would treat all the world religions in an objective and neutral way.** With regard to the relation of respondents towards religious instruction in schools in our country, most students and parents polled believe that schools should have subjects related to religious education. Most respondents are either in favour of both religious instruction (denominational instruction) and the teaching of all religions, “culture of religion” (28-42%), or in favour of religious instruction alone (24-40%).
- **The current division of jurisdictions for education should be reconsidered.** Most respondents believe that some jurisdiction for education should be placed at the state level (48-85%). This is supported by most respondents throughout BiH, whereas respondents from the Brčko District and Bosniak majority areas support it more often than others. The viewpoint that authorities for education should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels received more support from respondents in Croat majority areas than from others, and the viewpoint that education should be kept at the entity and cantonal levels received more support from students and parents in Serb majority areas than from others.

In order to acknowledge the recommendations of education end-users, institutions with educational responsibility should undertake the following steps:

- Harmonise basic policies in order to coordinate the three separate education systems;
- Review the current group of “national” subjects;
- Evaluate the level of implementation of the decision on the Common Core Curricula;
- Make textbook contents compatible with the applicable legislation and the textbook production guidelines;
- Transfer part of the education responsibilities to the state level.

# Introduction

The public education system is established and supported by the state, and is in part compulsory for all its citizens. Through different historical periods and in specific circumstances which certain societies found themselves in, this system has played different and sometimes controversial roles. The nature and character of education are of particular importance during turmoil and insecurity in society, when different interest groups and their intellectual and political elite, striving to achieve a long-term sustainability of a new social system and of their own system of values, are attempting to redefine the aims of the education system, both strictly educational and wider social ones. Thus, in a situation of inter-ethnic tension, particularly during and after armed conflicts, education can be used as a tool for prolonging or deepening the conflict in a society and promoting division and intolerance. Conversely, it can be put to use in terms of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the society after conflict, where it can act as a catalyst in terms of new development for the community. This dual nature of education - constructive and destructive - in societies having undergone conflicts based on ethnic division is characterised as the *"two faces of education"*.<sup>3</sup>

The project entitled **"EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: WHAT DO WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN?"**, with *Survey of Parents and Students Attitudes* and *Review of "National Subject" Curriculum and Textbooks* as its foundation, examines the elements of the dual nature of education in BiH ten years after the war that divided the country, and its education system, on ethnic grounds. It aims to identify the degree to which constructive education policies (prescribed by law and reform documents) are present in education practices, and to identify the implications of the dual role of education - constructive and destructive - for BiH society and its citizens.

## Constructive or destructive education

Education practice can work to support the student's progress and development of their specific skills and

abilities, or to paralyse them. Similarly, depending on whether it is dominated by constructive or destructive orientations, education can be directed toward the reconstruction of society, confronting traumatic events from the recent past, or, toward politicisation of identity, which results in a negative treatment of ethnic diversity and cultural differences and their transformation into a basis for xenophobia and new conflict.

In the long run, the combination of economic problems, inefficient administration and political strategies generate a feeling of a group's vulnerability. This, combined with destructive education practice, can instigate distrust, ethnic intolerance and, eventually, violence among parties that have been in conflict. With destructive tendencies prevailing, teachers are often forced to follow a particular curriculum or use textbooks homogenising their group and presenting others as a threat and danger.

Conversely, through commitment to education serving the reconstruction of society, constructive education practice can help maintain long-term peace in society. This practice implies commitment to the identification and application of education contents encouraging the student to understand themselves and others, relating teaching and learning to the student's own values, and building a school community promoting pluralism and universal human values. In this framework, public education is seen as an investment of benefit not only to students but to the whole society.

The relation between conflict and education is officially recognised in a global education reform document entitled, *Education for All*,<sup>4</sup> which states that this relation is manifested, on one hand, by a direct influence that conflict has on education for as long as it lasts and where the teaching process is often interrupted or performed in difficult conditions; on the other hand, it is manifested in the influence of education on the development, maintaining and formal legitimisation of a conflict or, conversely, in overcoming the conflict and in restoration of social relations. It should be

<sup>3</sup> Bush and Saltarelli (2000).

<sup>4</sup> *Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*, World Education Forum, Dakar 2000.

added that the influence on education often continues even after the conflict in terms of attitudes and values that serve as a basis for education contents and that are conditioned by the conflict.

Thus, from 1992 to 1995, the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina was largely conditioned by war activities, which resulted in many obstacles to the teaching process; loss of teaching staff and, occasionally, interruption of the teaching process and work of the schools. After the war, the General Framework Agreement for Peace in BiH, with the BiH Constitution as its integral part, provided a basis for establishing the rule of law and building in it all important conventions, declarations and annexes guaranteeing human rights. However, different analyses of the BiH education system by domestic institutions and international organisations in the post-war period<sup>5</sup> show that these requirements are not sufficiently met within education structures, processes and content. In addition, such analyses indicate an internal division of education on ethnic principles resulting in the parallel operation of three separate education systems. This is also evident from the unfortunate terms used in this study as well - *majority* and *minority*, which are not an arbitrary invention for the purpose of the study but a reflection of a deep-rooted education practice and relations among participants in the education process. Each group is trying to provide symbolic content for maintaining singular identities of their constituent group<sup>6</sup>, and to emphasise differences and discourage learning about others. Diverse literary heritage is reduced to an ethnic corpus which authors belong to and selective national histories are generated through the so-called “*national group*” of subjects, better known as the Bosnian, Serb and Croat curricula including history, geography, mother language/literature and religious instruction. A report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development<sup>7</sup> on education in Bosnia and Herzegovina states that “in BiH, the main function of the curriculum (particularly with history and language) is of a political nature. The curriculum is mainly used to support nationalistic positions and consolidation of power.” Thus education becomes a mechanism for legitimis-

ing ethnic divisions, which a study by the European Centre for Minority Rights<sup>8</sup> characterises as “a devised strategy of nationalistic politicians in which they use policies of identity and fear to prolong the war fought with other means, despite the Peace Agreement.”

### Discrepancy between legislation and practice?

In order to overcome this situation, during 2002 and 2003, the help of international organisations (OHR, OSCE, European Commission, Council of Europe, etc.) was used to create a legal framework for establishing constructive education practices for the purpose of reconstructing and rebuilding society. The strategic documents for education reform adopted in 2002<sup>9</sup> and the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education adopted in 2003 focus on human rights, equal opportunities for everyone and interculturalism. The first of five promises in the, “Message to BiH Citizens - Education Reform” explicitly states: “*We (the education ministers) will provide that all children have access to high-quality education in integrated multicultural schools, education free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination, and education respecting the rights of everyone.*”

In accordance with this, the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education, among other things, defines the following aims of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- Raise awareness of the affiliation to the state of BiH; facilitate learning about one’s own cultural identity, language and tradition in accordance with civilisation achievements and learning about others acknowledging differences and cultivating mutual understanding and solidarity among all the people, ethnic groups and communities in BiH;
- Promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and prepare each individual for a life in a society based on the principles of democracy and rule of law.

The Framework Law (Article 43) additionally defines the introduction of *Common Core Curricula* in order to provide for the harmonisation of different curricula and standards of quality in all schools and at all levels of education in BiH.

<sup>5</sup> The full list of cited documents can be found in *Sources*.

<sup>6</sup> The BiH Constitution defines three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats.

<sup>7</sup> OECD, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Poruka građanima Bosne i Hercegovine: *Reforma obrazovanja, 2002*.

Although these were important steps for providing a legal framework and strategic plan for the education system reform, it is not certain whether these education policies have found their place in education practice. Is the education system, with its twelve administrative units,<sup>10</sup> designed so as to raise awareness of the affiliation to the state of BiH; to facilitate learning about oneself and others to encourage mutual understanding and solidarity among citizens; to promote human rights and prepare the individual for a life in a democratic society; and to provide for high-quality education free from any form of discrimination for every child and at all levels?

Therefore, the project **“EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: WHAT DO WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN?”** aims at examining the following:

- The extent to which the BiH education system is compatible with the adopted principles and aims defined in the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education and Education System Reform Strategy; and
- The extent to which the education system contributes to the integration of the society, democratisation processes and the establishment of the rule of law, and, conversely, to what extent it is used as an instrument for segregation, separation and maintaining and/or instigating tensions and hostility within the country.

This Project is part of the entire effort of the Open Society Fund BiH to promote education policies and practices that will facilitate sustainable development of BiH society based on principles of tolerance and acknowledging the pluralist nature of the cultural and historical heritage of BiH.

### About the project

The project was launched in January 2006 with two main components. In addition to the *Survey of Parents and Students Attitudes* which will be discussed in the following chapters, there was also the *Review of Curricula and Textbooks*, the results of which are published in a separate document. This Review

examines how the basic premises and principles of the law on education are manifested in curricula and textbooks for the group **“national group” of subjects**.

Textbooks can contribute considerably to raising awareness of universal human values with students or can, conversely, deepen authoritarian, uncritical attitudes in contrast to education for open society, since a curriculum is never simply an amount of knowledge which is, in some way, present in texts and classrooms in a country. It is always part of *selective* knowledge, a result of someone’s selection, a vision of a particular group of legitimate knowledge (Apple, 1996:22). Our starting point is that facts which students acquire about their culture, language and history play an important role in shaping their entire view of life and their relation to themselves and to others, and that the contents and values promoted in the education system through “national group” subjects have important implications for the entire society. This is why the contents of the curricula and textbooks are taken as the subject of the research in this part of the Project.

The conceptual framework within which the Project is developed rests on the basic principles of education for an open society. The term **open society** refers to “a society based on the recognition that nobody has a monopoly on the truth, that different people have different views and interests, and that there is a need for institutions to protect the rights of all people to allow them to live together in peace. Broadly speaking, an open society is characterized by a reliance on the rule of law, the existence of a democratically elected government, a diverse and vigorous civil society, and respect for minorities and minority opinions.”<sup>11</sup>

The aim of education in an open society and for an open society is the optimum development of potential and the encouragement of the student’s individuality. Education for a life in an open society is based on the following principles:

<sup>10</sup> The main responsibilities for education in BiH are with the cantons (10 cantons in the FBiH), Republika Srpska and the Brčko District.

<sup>11</sup> Open Society Fund (www.soros.org).

1. *Education as the common good*: high-quality education places the student and their needs in the center and aspires to promote the whole society in the long run;
2. *Interculturalism*: education contents and teaching methods encourage students to fully understand themselves and others, to develop a sense of solidarity with other people and to respect pluralist society;<sup>12</sup>
3. *Social justice*: it implies high-quality education for everyone, acknowledging different educational needs, particularly the needs of marginalised, vulnerable and deprived groups in society;
4. *Respecting human rights*: education institutions guarantee both group and individual rights of all members of the society and, through the integration process (as opposed to the segregation or assimilation process), they promote universal values and rich diversity.

the importance of such a cross-section should not be measured against the criteria of comprehensiveness but should be taken as a benchmark for further research.

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<sup>12</sup> Kodelja i Bassler (2004).

This report presents the results of research that starts from the principles of education for a life in open society as they are defined in BiH legislation and strategic documents. It examines the dual role of education in current BiH society and attempts to recognise and point out its constructive and destructive elements as they are seen by the end-users of the system – students and parents.

Before presenting the project and its results, however, it should be noted that the conclusions of research should be drawn *cum grano salis* and with due caution. No matter how sophisticated scientific methods may be and how reliable tests for verifying scientific hypotheses may be, research is done at a certain moment and under certain circumstances of social and political reality, not in a political vacuum. This moment and these circumstances, particularly in societies in turmoil such as the BiH society, cannot entirely define attitudes of respondents but can, however, influence them. Therefore, it is difficult to say to what extent these responses are a reaction to the moment and to what extent they are derived from certain fundamental and seldom changed personal principles. Still,

# Surveying attitudes on values in curricula and textbooks

This Report is a result of a survey among parents and students on values in the curricula and textbooks contained in “national group” subjects in primary and secondary education in BiH. It represents the first attempt after the war in BiH to systematically survey and document opinions of parents and students as the end-user in the education system. Namely, in previous analyses of the education reform process their voice was seldom heard. This survey, therefore, focuses on the needs of students and their parents and attempts to establish to what extent the things that relevant institutions proclaim and do in practice correspond with what students and parents want. In other words, the main issue here is to what degree the applicable legislation and the principles it is based on are implemented in the current education system and to what degree this system can meet the needs of students and parents.

The survey was jointly conducted by the Open Society Fund BiH and the Centre for Policy Studies (CEPOS) in Sarajevo. It combined the methods of quantitative (a poll including students and parents) and qualitative research (focus groups with students and parents) in the period from April 2006 to January 2007. The poll included 1080 students and 1056 parents throughout BiH, after which focus groups were organised - eight groups in three places: Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Vitez.

The report is structured to follow the survey methodology and aims, and it presents the results illustrating opinions of students and parents on the following issues:

- (1) To what degree the principles from the education legislation and reform are applied in practice;
- (2) To what degree they are present in the curricula and textbooks; and

- (3) To what degree students and parents support these education principles and the current education policy.

The results are given through differences and similarities between the opinions of students and parents, respondents from certain majority areas,<sup>13</sup> majorities and minorities, and, where the analysis required, similarities and differences in opinions of students and parents of different ethnic background, as well as students being taught following different curricula.<sup>14</sup>

The report has five chapters. The first chapter describes the research methodology, the main aims, the way the indicators and instruments are developed and the way the sample structure is defined. It also gives a description of the poll and focus-group work, as well as of the data processing and analysis.

The second chapter gives the main findings of the survey, which are presented according to the following principles:

1. Raising awareness of the affiliation to the state of BiH;
2. Education for a life in a multicultural society;
3. Preparing the individual to live in a society based on the principle of participatory democracy and the rule of law; and
4. Providing for high-quality education free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination.

The end of this chapter brings opinions of students and parents about the recommendations and directions for changing the curricula and textbooks for the “national group” of subjects.

The third chapter discusses the most important conclusions resulting from the survey findings and proposes the steps to be taken by education officials, teachers, textbook authors and other participants in the education process in order to overcome the current situation.

The fourth chapter presents a detailed analysis of the results based on the methodology which first

<sup>13</sup> Majority areas imply parts of BiH where one of the three constituent peoples outnumbers the other two.

<sup>14</sup> The variables used in this survey are explained in detail in Chapter 4 (Result Analysis).

examines the opinions of parents and students about the four education principles and establishes their presence in practice. It starts with the introductory sections of the Questionnaire and Guide (general assessment of education in BiH), then with the results related to each of the four principles and, finally, with student and parent opinions on the need for and direction of changes in curricula and textbooks.

## Survey objectives

The survey among parents and students on values in the curricula and textbooks for “national group” subjects in primary and secondary education in BiH aims at establishing the following:

- (1) The degree to which students and parents as end-users within the education system agree with the principles and values proclaimed by the legislation and education reform;
- (2) The degree to which they believe these principles to be present in education practice; and
- (3) Their opinion on possible changes in the curricula and textbooks.

More precisely, our aim is to establish student and parent opinions on (1) the basic principles promoted by the education system, and (2) the way these principles are applied to **“national group” subjects, i.e. history, geography, mother language/literature and religious instruction.**

Starting from the idea of education for open society, this survey took as its subject the following principles and values which are prescribed by the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education and which the education authorities committed to within the Education Reform Strategic Document:

- The education system should raise awareness of the affiliation to the state of BiH (Framework Law on Education, Article 3);
- The education system should provide for learning about one’s own cultural identity, language and tradition in a way which corresponds with civilisa-

tion achievements, as well as learning about others acknowledging differences and cultivating mutual understanding and solidarity among all the peoples, ethnic groups and communities in BiH (Framework Law on Education, Article 3);

- The education system should promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and should prepare each individual to live in a society based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law (Framework Law on Education, Article 3);
- The education system should provide every child with high-quality education in integrated multicultural schools at all the levels, which is free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination (Promise 1, Education Reform).

## Principles and indicators

The principles supporting an orientation to education for open society in a specific BiH context were selected from the Framework Law and Education Reform Strategy. The principles and the contents of one part of “national group” textbooks were used to define relevant indicators serving as a basis for compiling questions included in the student and parent questionnaire (Table 1).

## Structure of the survey

The survey consists of two components - the quantitative and the qualitative one. The quantitative research included a poll among secondary school students and parents with children in senior grades of primary school and/or in secondary school. This was followed by qualitative research consisting of focus groups/ group discussions with the same categories of population, the aim of which was verification and a detailed analysis of the data collected in the poll.

Namely, researchers agree that, in principle, the most efficient design for social research is the one including different methodological approaches complementing

Table 1  
Principles and indicators  
used in the survey

<p><b>Principle 1: The education system raises awareness of the affiliation to the state of BiH</b></p> <p>The state insignia are present in schools (flag, coat of arms, etc.)</p> <p>The anthem, state constitution, formation and development of BiH are taught in school</p> <p>The usage of both alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic) is present in schools</p> <p>Schools are as important in raising awareness of the affiliation to BiH as other social factors are</p>
<p><b>Principle 2: Education for a life in a multicultural society</b></p> <p>The teaching process in schools is directed towards studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of all constituent groups in BiH</p> <p>Curricula and textbooks include contents encouraging understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people</p> <p>The diversity of people, cultures and religions in BiH is presented as an advantage and a merit, not as a problem (the view that cultural diversity in the country is problematic)</p> <p>Positive values and traits are presented as universal values typical of people in general, instead of being attributed to one BiH group exclusively (respect for common cultural heritage of all mankind as opposed to the principle of “superior culture”)</p> <p>Historical development of BiH is presented in schools through pointing contributions of all groups, instead of pointing out the role of only one</p> <p>An ethnic identity is defined on the principle of inclusiveness, not exclusiveness, perception of danger and hostility</p>
<p><b>Principle 3: Education for a life in a society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law</b></p> <p>Curricula and textbooks are designed to encourage critical thinking and allow students to draw their own conclusions about the contents presented</p> <p>The view that differences in opinion are desirable is encouraged as opposed to the view that they are undesirable since they have a negative influence on ethnic unity</p> <p>Textbooks do not support stereotypical presentations of individuals or groups</p> <p>Education encourages understanding and respect for both the individual and the collective</p> <p>Textbooks do not glorify death or emphasize the inevitability of war in general; nor do they take martyrdom and the ability to die for one’s country as the key criteria for patriotism</p>
<p><b>Principle 4: The education system should provide every child with high-quality education in integrated schools, free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination</b></p> <p>Discrimination on ethnic grounds is not taking place in schools</p> <p>Discrimination on religious grounds is not taking place in schools</p> <p>Discrimination on economic grounds is not taking place in schools</p> <p>Discrimination on gender and political grounds is not taking place in schools</p>

one another - primarily qualitative and quantitative research methods. When a subject is insufficiently researched with regard to its economic, social and psychological dimensions, the qualitative approach, primarily focus groups and deep interviews, offers a better insight into the overall background of opinions, viewpoints, reasons and motivation of target groups with regard to topics being researched. In addition, focus groups and deep interviews are an efficient way to test initial hypotheses and premises related to the interpretation of data collected through quantitative research. Acknowledging this, the survey among students

and parents on values in the curricula and textbooks contains both quantitative and qualitative components.

**Background information on the poll**

For the purpose of this survey, CEPOS and OSF BiH engaged Prism Research, a professional agency for social, media and marketing research. In April 2006, the agency conducted a pilot survey with 90 respondents in five towns in BiH (Sarajevo, Kiseljak, Mostar, Banja Luka, Pale). The data collected during and after the pilot poll were used to modify the questionnaires and draft their final version. Then, in May and June 2006,

Polling period	25 May 2006 – 20 June 2006
Data collection method	Interviews within the poll
Instruments	Parent Questionnaire and Student Questionnaire
Population polled	BiH citizens - high-school students and parents with children in senior primary-school grades and in high school
Sample size	1020 students and 1036 parents
Sample	Quota sample

Table 2  
Basic poll information

	TOTAL				Majority				Minority			
	Students		Parents		Students		Parents		Students		Parents	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bosniak majority area	337	33,0	338	32,6	225	35,2	219	33,3	108	35,8	117	38,0
Brčko District	60	5,9	61	5,9								
Croat majority area	308	30,2	311	30,0	208	32,6	211	32,1	97	32,1	96	31,2
Serb majority area	315	30,9	326	31,5	206	32,2	227	34,6	97	32,1	95	30,8
TOTAL	1020	100	1036	100	639	100	657	100	302	100	308	100

Table 3  
Sample structure

there followed the field segment of the quantitative component of the Survey among parents and students on values in the curricula and textbooks for “national group” subjects in primary and secondary education in BiH. The field segment consisted of a poll among secondary school students and parents with children in senior grades of primary school and/or in secondary school throughout BiH. The basic information related to the poll is given in Table 2.

Considering the survey objectives and the planned data analysis, the survey was based on a quota sample

geographically composed to be representative of all the three areas in BiH where one majority group exists, as well as the Brčko District, and representative of the minority groups in all three areas (see Table 3).

Thus the result analysis emphasises differences and similarities between opinions and viewpoints of students and parents in each of the three majority areas in BiH and the Brčko District, as well as between members of the majority and minority peoples. This is the reason to have such result presentation - these were the main variables in the result analysis.

	Parents, majority members	Students, majority members	Students, minority members	Total
Banja Luka	1	1	1	3
Sarajevo	1	1	1	3
Vitez		1	1	2
Total	2	3	3	8

Table 4  
Focus group overview by locations and participant characteristics

### Focus group basic information

From 21 January to 2 February 2007, eight focus groups were organised within the survey. The groups were set up in three towns in three majority areas in BiH. Their participants were high-school students members of the majority group in the territory where the group discussion was held, members of the groups not representing the majority in the said territory (members of the minority groups), and parent members of the majority group in this territory whose children were in senior primary-school grades or in high school. A specification of the focus groups held is given in Table 4.

The participant structure of the student focus groups was balanced with regard to sex, school and grade of the students, while the focus groups of parents were adequately representative of sex, education, occupation and their children's age (primary or secondary school).

Each of the eight group discussions had ten participants (80 in total). The participants were recruited through the above agency, Prism Research, whose pollsters recruited the group discussion participants. They were recruited by methods usually used for such purposes, with a compulsory participant selection questionnaire as a specific eliminatory questionnaire with filter questions.

### Data collection instruments

Three main instruments were used in the survey: the Student Questionnaire and the Parent Questionnaire used for polling, and the Discussion Guide used for focus group discussions.

The student and parent questionnaires were developed on the basis of the above principles and indicators, tested through pilot research and then finalised and used as an instrument for collecting data on the opinions of students and parents about the values in BiH primary and secondary school curricula and textbooks. Both questionnaires had the same struc-

ture: an introductory section, a section related to individual principles, a recommendation section and a section related to socio-demographic variables.

The Discussion Guide covered topics and issues which, as established during a quantitative data analysis (collected through the poll), required additional illustration by means of qualitative information.

### Data processing and analysis

The entire process of data input and processing was done in Sarajevo. After their input, the data was transferred and analysed applying the SPSS programme (*Statistical Program for Social Sciences*), which was also used for data filtering, logical control and the tabulated results used in this report.

With respect to the survey objectives and the sample size, the cross-tabular overviews of student and parent polling in Annex 2 present the results by the following categories:

- Total,
- Ethnic majority areas,
- Respondent category – majority/minority,
- Respondents' ethnic background.

The focus group discussions were audio taped and the resulting transcripts, together with moderators' and co-moderators' comments and impressions, represented the material for writing this report.



## Main findings

**As much as 80% of students belonging to a minority and believing that the education system does not promote the awareness of affiliation to BiH find it to be inappropriate. Such attitude is evident from the following students' statements:**

***This way education is used to further dissolve unity in the state.***

(Modriča, minority)

***BiH is thus being disunited.***

(Mostar South, minority)

***Education is focused on the majority people only.***

(Livno, minority)

The survey among parents and students on values in the curricula and textbooks for the "national group" of subjects in BiH shows that students and parents support the legal principles and reform promises, while at the same time holding that the level of their application in education practice, structures and contents is not satisfactory.

Despite parents' assumptions, the awareness of affiliation to BiH is not being developed with students. Regardless of the express institutional support to BiH society as a multicultural one, schools focus on studying the culture of one group only, most frequently that of the majority in a given area, which particularly affects minority students and parents. Moreover, approximately one quarter of the students and one-third of the parents included in the survey think that ethnic, religious and economic discrimination is present in the BiH education system. Of particular concern is the issue of segregation of students on ethnic grounds. Neither the curriculum nor the teaching process is encouraging development of critical and analytical thinking with students to prepare them for the citizen role in a society based on participatory democracy.

The degree of dissatisfaction with the current education system can be said to be in proportion to the degree of support the respondents expressed for recommendations and directions for changing the current education practice. The support for particular recommendations varies depending on the majority area and respondent categories, where the determining elements are the affiliation to a minority or a majority group and the degree of ethnic group identification, while there is almost no difference in attitudes of different gender groups. However, according to the results, it could be concluded that respondents from different parts of BiH want the same changes to be made in the education system, where the most even and most consistent attitudes are those of minority

ethnic groups. A more detailed analysis of the results indicates that agreement with regard to the support for *general* principles does not necessarily imply agreement on their *specific* implementation in practice, since views on the forms and directions of changes differ from area to area.

### **Principle 1: Raising awareness of affiliation to the state of BiH**

Even though the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education (Article 3) defines that one of the principal aims of education in BiH is to raise students' awareness of their affiliation to the state of BiH, only somewhat less than half the respondents (46%) believe that this aim is being implemented in education practice. In principle, less frequently than their parents, students from all areas believe that the education system promotes the feeling of belonging to BiH. Considering that they are directly aware of teaching contents and the work of schools in general, the analysis indicates that the education system and everyday education practice do not promote the affiliation to BiH as much as parents expect them to. This attitude also differs from one majority area to another - it is much more present in Bosniak majority areas and the Brčko District in comparison with Croat and Serb majority areas, where only every third student thinks that their school promotes the affiliation to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The survey results relating to the presence of state insignia, anthem and both alphabets in schools additionally indicate that the application of this provision is utterly unharmonised in different BiH areas.

According to the respondents, the state flag and coat of arms are present in less than half of BiH secondary schools: in 95% of the cases in the Brčko District, 69% in the Bosniak majority area, and only 25% and 16% in the Croat and Serb majority areas. The results with regard to curricula are similar – the state insignia are present in every fourth school following the Croat curriculum and only in every eight school following the Serb curriculum. Similarly, 33% of high-school students following the Bosnian curriculum stated that

they had had the opportunity to hear the BiH anthem in school, which also applies to 17% of students studying according to the Croat curriculum and 6% of students following the Serb curriculum.

Currently, only 17% of all the students included in the survey equally use both alphabets in high school. Although Article 7 of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH stipulates that “languages of the constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be used in all schools in accordance with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” and that “all students shall study the official alphabets of Bosnia and Herzegovina in school,” this article is differently defined in entity and cantonal legislation subordinate to the Framework Law. This can be confirmed by the findings of this survey, according to which 90% high-school students following the Croat curriculum and 70% following the Bosnian curriculum use only the Latin alphabet in school. The situation is much more favourable in schools following the Serb curriculum, where students use both alphabets to a greater extent (75%).

It can be concluded that the provision relating to raising awareness of the affiliation to the state of BiH is insufficiently applied within the BiH education system. In addition, in cases when it is applied, its application is neither complete nor consistent. For instance, although schools following the Bosnian curriculum raise the above awareness mainly through emphasising the state insignia and anthem, only a small number of these is consistently applying Article 7 of the Framework Law on Education relating to studying both alphabets.

### **Principle2: Education for life in a multicultural society**

Even though the Framework Law stipulates that one of the education aims is to teach students about their own cultural identity, language and tradition in accordance with civilisation achievements, as well as to teach them about others in a way that acknowledges differences and develops mutual tolerance and solidarity, education practice often reduces this provision to studying the tradition of one group only, without

respecting the principle of common good, which in turn results in three separate education systems.

Thus, almost half the respondents (46%) think that **the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is monoethnic** - *exclusively focused on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of one people*. This attitude is most prominent in the Croat majority area (where 60% of the respondents sees the BiH education system in this way), while it is the least frequent in the Brčko District – held by only 8% of the respondents. One-third of the respondents believe that the amount of knowledge about others acquired in school is not sufficient; this trend is present in all the areas. Some 22% of all the students say that, in school, other groups are mainly presented in a negative context. Minorities in all the areas more frequently think that the system is monoethnic and more frequently have a negative attitude towards such an orientation. Considering that the education system is assessed as focused on one group only, parents belonging to minority groups often state that their children are not given sufficient knowledge about the group they belong to.

This coincides with the attitude of most respondents agreeing that curricula and textbooks should include more contents developing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the groups in BiH. In addition, most respondent students (71%) and parents (75%) in all the areas believe that the diversity of peoples, cultures and religions in BiH should be presented as a merit and advantage in school.

Although the data indicate uneven support for aspects of education for a life in a multicultural society (studying cultural identity, language and tradition of all people in BiH; encouraging understanding, tolerance and solidarity; recognition of group contributions to historical development; group identity developed on inclusiveness) in different BiH areas, in each region most respondents agree with the provisions governing these aspects and support their application in BiH schools.

***It all comes down to studying one people representing the majority in the area where the child goes to school.***

(Parent, Dobož, member of the majority)

***The major problem are schools separated for Croats and Bosniaks.***

(High-school student, first grade, Vitez, minority member)

***I am Bosniak but must study from Croat textbooks.*** (High-school student, second grade, Čapljina, minority member)

Differences between respondents representing the majority or minority people in a given area relate to the thesis that (1) the cultural identities, languages and traditions of all the peoples in BiH are equally good and valuable; (2) the teaching process should include contents encouraging understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples in BiH; and (3) group identity should be developed on inclusiveness.

Thus, students and parents belonging to the majority in the Croat majority areas, more frequently than the respective minorities, believe that the current education system teaches that the cultural identities, languages and traditions of all the peoples in BiH are equally good and valuable, and, less frequently than the respective minorities, state that the teaching process should include more contents encouraging understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples in BiH. More frequently than the minorities, respondents of Croat background in the Croat majority areas find it justified for textbooks to emphasise the vulnerability of one group.

The findings indicate that the support for particular aspects of education for a life in a multicultural society is less frequently expressed by respondents with a high degree of ethnic identity.<sup>15</sup> Respondents with prominent and exclusive ethnic affiliation often believe that, in schools, the diversity of peoples, cultures and religions in BiH should be treated as a disadvantage and a potential source of problems. In addition, respondents with a prominent feeling of loyalty to their ethnic group, prominent ethnic affiliation and exclusive ethnic attachment often agree with the contents emphasising the contribution and vulnerability of one people in BiH textbooks.

In addition to unequivocal support for relevant legal provisions, the results also indicate that parents apply double standards when expressing their attitudes towards the general aspects of this education principle and when assessing specific contents relating to the group they belong to. Thus, although only a small number of parents stated that, generally speaking,

they agreed that textbooks emphasised a greater contribution of one group, a further analysis indicates that their opinion is somewhat different with regard to a specific example of emphasising a greater contribution of their own group/other groups in BiH. Namely, 52% of respondents of Serb ethnic background agree with the fact that textbooks for BiH students contain the statement that, *“from the arrival of the Slavonic people to some thirty years ago, the BiH geographical space was populated by a majority Serb population”*, conversely, within a general question, only 9% agreed with the statement that textbooks emphasised a greater contribution of one group. Furthermore, 67% of parents of Bosniak background support the presence of the statement that, *“Muslims are indigenous population in this country and have firmly protected BiH from external attacks and internal attempts of its destruction for centuries”*, while only 8% supported this statement with regard to the general principle. Some 67% of Croat parents agree with the statement that, *“Croats are the oldest witnesses to Bosnian history”*, 14% of them within the general question.

### **Principle 3: Education for a life in a society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law**

In order to prepare the individual for living in a society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law, it is necessary to develop in students the skills of critical thinking and analytical approach based on multiple angles of perceiving the social reality, as well as to promote the importance of citizenship. However, only 37% of the students polled think that their curricula and textbooks are developed in this way. This is also supported by the results indicating the presence of stereotypes both in textbook contents and in students' attitudes, comparatively insufficient awareness of the need to emphasise the principle of citizenship and students' attitudes towards treating differences in opinion through teaching contents.

More often than others, students following the Croat curriculum think that the curriculum and textbooks are not developed so as to encourage critical thinking and give students the opportunity to make their own

<sup>15</sup> According to the National Identity Scheme - *NAIT* (Čorkalo and Kamenov, 1998).

conclusions about contents presented. More often than others, students following the Bosnian curriculum believe that the curriculum and textbooks are designed so as to encourage critical thinking. As opposed to this, there are no significant differences in attitudes of students following different curricula with regard to the way in which schools should treat differences in opinion: 43% of students believe that, in school, differences in opinion should be treated as **desirable**, 41% that differences in opinion are **acceptable**, and 12% that differences in opinion are **undesirable**.

It follows from the above that the education system in BiH is set so as to offer students a ready-made categorial apparatus for understanding themselves and others, which is also supported by the dominant method of acquisition through pure memorising and repetition of facts. This leads to the identification of students with collective values and norms, which are represented as unquestionable and unchangeable. This is also confirmed by the findings indicating that the awareness of the need to develop citizenship is rather low. Namely, respondents in all the majority areas dominantly hold that it is necessary to equally *emphasise both the importance of the individual citizen and the importance of affiliation to a particular group*, while only parents from the Brčko District realise, in most cases, that it is necessary to emphasise the importance of the individual citizen. This attitude is less present in other areas (between 1% and 23%).

Both students and parents agree that textbook devote a lot of space to armed conflicts and wars in general while studying national and world history. At the same time, the results relating to specific examples of presenting history as a succession of conflicts serving the interests of certain groups in certain historical periods indicate that there is insufficient awareness of the ultimate consequence of such a presentation of history, i.e. legitimising the use of weapons.

Differences in opinion of respondents belonging to a minority or a majority group in a given area are present inasmuch as minority students and parents are more

critical of the presence of contents relating to armed conflicts and wars in general in BiH textbooks. It is interesting to note that this is one of the rare cases where attitudes of male and female students are different, i.e. female students are more critical of such contents.

The presence of stereotypes in textbooks and students' attitudes is particularly dangerous in a society such as BiH, since differentiating between "us" and "them" by adopting stereotypical images of historical roles, political orientations and, generally, the position of a group in "a higher order of things" upholds the process of *differentiation of the constituent peoples in BiH*. Looking at characteristics of a particular group through stereotypes develops the attitude that "our" and "their" characteristics are significantly or completely different and are not overlapping whatsoever.<sup>16</sup> Since they offer a ready-made categorial apparatus for understanding oneself and others and since they encourage students to identify with collective values and norms, stereotypes also serve to justify actions taken by members of one's own group in the name of this group, as well as to preserve a positive image of one's own group and the absence of critical historical consciousness.

The survey results suggest that both auto- and hetero-stereotypes of one's own people are, in principle, more present with students representing the majority and following "their own" curriculum. Minority students following a majority curriculum have fewer stereotypes about their own people and express more support for certain stereotypes of the majority people than their majority counterparts. This leads to the conclusion that, without reducing the importance of the media, family and environment in general, textbooks have a significant influence on shaping stereotypical presentations of "us" and "them".

Such a textbook concept directly collides with legal principles upholding the encouragement of students' analytical and interpretative skills, a multiperspectivity approach to studying historical events and preparation of the individual for a life in pluralist society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law.

<sup>16</sup> Kecmanović (2005).

<sup>19</sup> Poruka građanima BiH: *Reforma obrazovanja* (2002).

<sup>20</sup> Tačka 2.

***I think the key to everything is the interference of politics, schools should be depoliticised. We (students) understand one another well and an excellent example showing that students do not support these two schools under one roof is that Croat students follow the Bosnian curriculum and, similarly, Bosniak students go to economics high school (following the Croat curriculum) as they live nearby and their parents approve of it. I think this is not an issue for us students, it rather comes from politicians and ministries.***  
(FGD Vitez, minority student)

**Principle 4: The education system provides every child with high-quality education free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination in integrated and multicultural schools**

In the first promise of the Education Reform,<sup>17</sup> BiH authorities committed to provide every child with high-quality education free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination in integrated and multicultural schools. However, one-fourth of students and around one-third of parents included in the survey think that discrimination on ethnic, religious and economic grounds is present in the BiH education system.

Even though the Interim Agreement on Meeting Special Needs and Rights of Children Returnees<sup>18</sup> offers an opportunity for students (and their parents) to follow a curriculum of their own choice, the survey shows that this right is mainly exercised by members of the majority people in a given area. In contrast, only every fourth minority student follows the appropriate curriculum. Though it may seem at a first glance that Bosniak students living in the Croat majority area are in the most favourable position (as almost half of them follow the Bosnian curriculum), it should be noted that this is a consequence of a specific form of segregation of children on ethnic grounds known as “two schools under one roof”, whose elimination BiH committed to (accessing) the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>19</sup> Aside from Bosniaks in the Croat majority area, other children representing a minority in a given area exercise their legal right to education in accordance with their ethnic affiliation to a considerably lesser degree (9% – 26%).

According to students and parents polled, religious education, introduced into the BiH education system during the war, is mainly present within the subject, “religious instruction”. Namely, in all the majority areas, this subject is present more than the subject called, “culture of religions”, another subject teaching religion which, unlike religious instruction, does not give specific religious instruction but teaches *about*

different cultures and religions and their historical development. Religious instruction is most present in schools following the Croat curriculum, followed by the Bosnian curriculum, while the Serb curriculum places religious instruction in primary school only. In addition, the findings show that the attendance at religious instruction classes is different with high-school students belonging to the majority and minority peoples in a given area. In the Bosniak and Croat majority areas, majorities attend religious instruction classes more often than minorities, while in the Serb majority area there is no religious instruction in secondary schools.

In comparison with students and parents representing the majority in a given area, respondents belonging to minorities more frequently believe that discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds is present in the BiH education system. However, although this is a general tendency, the difference in opinion between minority students and parents and majority ones is significant only in the Croat majority area. There is no significant difference in assessing the presence of economic discrimination between members of majority and minority peoples.

The findings of this survey indicate the presence of different forms of ethnic and religious discrimination against members of minority peoples in a given area - from explicit discrimination denying equal opportunities and conditions for high-quality education to implicit accusations based on stereotypical perception of traits and the role of a minority people in different historical events.

A separate case of discrimination on ethnic grounds is evident in the concept of so-called “two schools under one roof” which, despite explicit requests made by different international bodies monitoring the implementation of human rights declarations, are still present in the BiH education system. The survey shows that most students polled do not support separation of students and separate teaching processes in the same school. Indeed, 65% of them believe that students of different nationalities should attend the

<sup>17</sup> Message to citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Education Reform (2002).

<sup>18</sup> Item 2.

<sup>19</sup> Official Gazette of Republic of BiH, 25/93.

same classes and that all their subjects should be the same, while most of the remaining students (23%) think that children of different nationalities should be in the same class but attend separate lectures relating to the national group subjects. Although the attitude that students of different nationalities should not be in the same class – which is the case with “*two schools under one roof*” – is more present with students following the Croat and Serb curricula, it should be noted that only a small number of students support this view (Croat curriculum 10%, Serb 9% and Bosnian 4%).

Particularly prominent forms of discrimination on religious grounds are related to the ability to attend religious instruction classes. As stated in the 2004 Human Rights Report for BiH and confirmed by the results of this survey: “In principle, schools in BiH offer religious education only to students belonging to the majority religion in a given area. There are also cases of discrimination on religious grounds where, although attending religious instruction is a matter of choice, parents are still under pressure to consent and allow their children to attend religious instruction classes”.<sup>20</sup>

Respondents do not particularly point out gender discrimination, but it can be concluded from focus group discussions that gender sensitivity is not sufficiently developed, so that it is difficult to say, on the basis of these findings, whether such discrimination is not present or it passes unnoticed.

It can be concluded from the results that discrimination is present in the BiH education system and that not all children have legally guaranteed access to high-quality education free from all forms of discrimination. Although respondents point to other forms of discrimination as well, they most frequently warn against ethnic and religious discrimination against minority groups. Considering that it is not certain if schools can provide adequate curricula for minorities, it should be examined whether this provision can be applied in the current education system in BiH and whether the concept and practice of “national group” subjects should be modified or abandoned altogether.

### **Respondents’ attitudes about the need for and the way of changing the curricula and textbooks for “national subjects”**

The findings of this survey indicate that one-third of students and parents believe that “national group” subject textbooks should remain as they are. In contrast, 43% of the respondents do not agree with maintaining the current situation – mainly respondents from the Brčko District (75%), followed by respondents from the Bosniak area, then the Croat area and, finally, from the Serb majority area (32%). In all the ethnic majority areas in BiH there is a trend according to which respondents belonging to minority groups, more frequently than those belonging to the majority, think that the contents of “national group” textbooks should be changed.

Respondents support the recommendations and directions for changing current education practice, which also illustrates their attitude about the need to apply relevant legal principles and incorporate them into the education system. Although their support for individual recommendations varies depending on the majority area and respondent category, the results indicate that, in principle, respondents from different parts of BiH want the same changes to the education system. Considering the fact that the support for general principles could not have been tested on specific examples in this part of the survey, as it was done with attitudes about the current education system indicating significant differences between respondents’ principles and their implementation, these results should rather be interpreted as indicative of general trends and guidelines, and less as pragmatic solutions.

The desired changes are the following:

- Textbooks should, in the first place, teach about BiH and only then about each group individually or about neighbouring countries;
- The contents of “national group” textbooks should be changed to focus more on members of all three peoples and of ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone;
- Textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH;

<sup>20</sup> US State Department, 2004 Human Rights Report for BiH; the Report can be accessed on [www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41673.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41673.htm)

- Textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues;
- The current treatment of BiH historical development should be changed in the following ways:
  1. To reach agreement on a common view of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks, and/or
  2. To give all the groups' perspectives while treating BiH historical development in textbooks;
- BiH history textbooks should also treat the period since 1992;
- There should be a single language policy resulting in agreement about the name of the language, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks;
- In addition to religious instruction, there should also be a subject in schools teaching about all world religion in an objective and neutral way;
- The current distribution of jurisdictions for education should be reviewed.

### **Textbooks should, in the first place, teach about BiH and only then about each group individually or about neighbouring countries**

Most students and parents in all the majority areas (54-75%) agree that textbooks should **primarily teach about BiH** and only then about each group individually or about neighbouring countries. This recommendation is mostly supported by respondents from the Bosniak majority area, while respondents of the Serb and Croat ethnic backgrounds tend to support this concept if they are in a minority position.

What is also compatible with these findings are the data relating to the selection of starting points for studying geography and history in primary and secondary schools in BiH. Namely, the results indicate that a majority of all the respondents think that the main starting point for studying geography and history in BiH should be **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. However, unlike geography - where this response is the most frequent

one in all the areas, the attitude that BiH should represent the starting point for studying history is not the most frequent one in the Serb majority area where the option "historical events related to the people you belong to" is supported slightly less than the first one. This is also the second most supported option in the Croat majority area too, although this area can be said to be dominated by the opinion that BiH should represent the main framework for studying BiH history. The attitude that BiH should be the starting point for studying both geography and history is more frequently supported by the minorities than by the majority in a given area, though it is most frequently held by respondents of all ethnic backgrounds.

### **The contents of "national subject" textbooks should be changed to focus more on members of all three groups and of ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone**

Most respondents (55-79%) support the recommendation that the contents of "national subject" textbooks should be changed **so as to focus significantly more on members of all three groups and on ethnic minorities** instead of on one group alone. This recommendation receives more support from respondents in the Bosniak majority area and the Brčko District than respondents in the Croat and Serb majority areas. Changes to the contents of "national subject" textbooks to focus significantly more on members of all three groups and of ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone are much more supported by minority students and parents than those representing the majority in a given area.

### **Textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH**

Most of all the respondents (58-82%) state that the curricula and textbooks **should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH**. A smaller number of respondents (8-32%) think that the amount of such contents should be kept at the current level, while only 3% of them think that there should

be less such contents than there is now, whereas this attitude varies from area to area 0-10%. Although the need for such a change is supported by most respondents in all the areas, it receives somewhat stronger support from students in the Bosniak, Croat and Serb majority areas than in the Brčko District, and from parents in the Bosniak majority area more than those in other parts of BiH. In comparison with majority respondents in the same area, minority respondents more frequently believe that the amount of contents developing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH should be *significantly* increased. It should be noted that this attitude is more frequently supported by female students than by male students.

### **Textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues**

The proposal that “national subject” textbooks **should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues** is supported by somewhat less than half of all the respondents (41-61%). A minor part of the remaining respondents (8-29%) is opposed to such approach, while most of them do not have a definitive attitude, can not answer or do not know the answer to this question (30-45%). It should be noted that the support for the implementation of this recommendation does not imply statistically significant differences among students from different areas, with Brčko District parents expressing the strongest support for this idea and Serb majority area parents offering the weakest support for it. Minority respondents express stronger support for a multiperspectivity approach to the teaching process, while majority respondents are more frequently opposed to it. Within the focus groups, students and parents stated that the most common reason for not supporting this approach was their fear of the interpretation of seeing those “others” and their fear that children who had not been encouraged to have an analytical

approach to textbook contents would not know “what to think”. Respondents resist the introduction of new interactive methods into the teaching process, stating that schools should teach objective facts, without asking questions, relativising or discussing presented contents.

### **The current treatment of BiH historical development should be changed**

When asked about the way textbooks should treat the historical development of BiH, respondents from all the ethnic areas, but not from the Brčko District, most frequently think that it is necessary to **reach agreement on a common view** of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks (39-59%), or that textbooks should treat BiH historical development **acknowledging/presenting different perspectives**, i.e. giving all perspectives (25-44%). In the Brčko District, 27% of students and 41% of parents support the currently dominant practice of **offering the perspective of one group only**, the group whose “national group” of subjects history falls within, which is in turn supported by only a small number of respondents from other BiH areas (7-12%).

The attitude that agreement should necessarily be reached among all the constituents on a common view of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks, is most frequently held by respondents in the Serb majority area. The attitude that textbooks should treat BiH historical development giving perspectives of all the peoples is more frequently held by respondents in the Bosniak and parents in the Croat majority area. Minority and majority respondents equally support these two recommendations.

### **BiH history textbooks should also treat the period since 1992**

Most respondents (49-73%) in all the ethnic majority areas (except the Brčko District) think that textbooks on BiH history should also treat the period since 1992 to the present day. Disagreement with the current practice is most frequently present with students and parents in the Bosniak majority area.

*Everyone is writing their own history in Bosnia and that is the problem.*  
(FGD Vitez, student, majority)

Most of the Brčko District respondents (72%) support the current practice within which, except for mentioning fundamental historical points, textbooks do not treat this historical period. This attitude is significantly less present in the remaining areas (20-43%), where it is most frequently held by respondents belonging to minority ethnic groups.

**There should be a single language policy resulting in agreement about the name of the language, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks**

The attitude that there should be a single language policy resulting in **agreement about the name of the language, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks** is held by most of all the respondents (48-78%), while a smaller number do not agree with the proposed change (3-25%). The idea about reaching agreement on a single language policy is most often supported by respondents in the Brčko District and Bosniak majority area. Respondents of Bosniak background, regardless of their area, in more than half the cases support the proposal for reaching agreement on a single language policy, while Croat and Serb respondents support it to a greater extent if they are in the minority position.

There is another element in favour of the attitude that there should be a single language policy – reaching agreement on the name, grammar and use of the language, i.e. the fact that only 21% of students and 22% of parents throughout BiH agree with the current practice of studying only the literature of the people children belong to. Although not significant, the support for such a practice is more present with students in the Croat and Serb majority areas than those in the Bosniak majority area. This is also as well as with parents in the Croat area more than parents in the Bosniak and Serb majority areas. Most Brčko District parents remain neutral with regard to this issue.

**Children should learn all three official languages in school, not only one**

Most respondents (23-52%) do not agree with this idea. Agreement is somewhat broader in the Brčko

District, whereas in all the majority areas most students and parents oppose such a solution of the “language issue” in BiH. However, while most respondents belonging to minorities and those representing the majority differ, conditionally speaking, *only* in the degree of their support for changes they favour or oppose, these categories of respondents have completely opposite attitudes when it comes to the proposal that all children in BiH should learn all three official languages in school – minority respondents more frequently support while majority ones oppose such change of the language policy.

**In addition to religious instruction, there should also be a subject in schools teaching about all world religion in an objective and neutral way**

With regard to respondents’ attitudes about religious education in schools, most students and parents polled believe that schools should have subjects related to religious education. Respondents express the strongest support for the following options:

- Schools should include both religious instruction (denominational instruction) and a subject teaching about all religions (e.g. culture of religions) (28-42%);
- Schools should include religious instruction only (24-40%).

Respondents belonging to the majority people and those belonging to the minority have different attitudes with regard to religious education in schools. Majority students and parents more often support religious instruction in schools (whether this subject is alone or together with culture of religions), while minority students and parents more often do not want to have it in schools (whether they think that religious education should be included only within culture of religions or that neither subject should be included in the teaching process).

The attitude that schools should offer only religious instruction is most frequently held by respondents in the Croat majority area, while the attitude that schools should offer both religious instruction and a subject teaching about all religions is most frequently sup-

ported by respondents in the Bosniak majority area. Most respondents (56-76%) who believe that schools should include religious instruction (whether as the only religious education subject or together with culture of religions) think that it should be offered as an optional course. This opinion is more frequent with respondents representing a minority ethnic group in a given area.

### Proposed changes in education responsibilities

In the Functional Overview of Education Sector, 2005, within the EU CARDS Programme, it was stated that, at present, Bosnia and Herzegovina has no institutions required for planning, monitoring and managing a sustainable and coherent education system, nor does it have institutions that might provide for fairness and equal access to education.<sup>21</sup> The Overview further points at the non-viability of an asymmetric decentralisation principle where, in one entity (the Federation of BiH), education is decentralised and all the education responsibilities are at the cantonal level and, in the other entity (Republika Srpska), education management is completely centralised and all the responsibilities are at the entity level. These findings indicate the need to place part of the education authority at the state level, since it plays a crucial role in “ensuring protection of education and minority rights which, in turn, contributes to social cohesion.”<sup>22</sup> Respondents in all the areas agree with the need to place part of this authority at the state level, expressing stronger support for the attitude that education should fall within the state-level competence than for other proposed changes with regard to the transfer of responsibilities.

A small number of respondents (8-27%) included in the survey support the current distribution of education responsibilities. Namely, the above percentage of parents and students in BiH think that education should remain exclusively at the entity and cantonal levels, while approximately the same number (7-25%) hold that education responsibilities should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels. As opposed to this, most respondents believe that **education should be placed at the state level** (48-85%).

A majority of respondents throughout BiH support this attitude, with Brčko District respondents and those from the Bosniak majority area expressing stronger support than others. The attitude that education responsibilities should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels is more frequently supported by respondents in the Croat majority areas than by other respondents. The attitude that education responsibilities should remain exclusively at the entity and cantonal levels is more frequently supported by students and parents in the Serb majority area.

If they represent minorities, respondents more frequently support the attitude that education should fall within the state authority. An exception to this is the Bosniak majority area, where there are no significant differences between minority and Bosniak respondents with regard to the distribution of education responsibilities.

<sup>21</sup> *Functional overview of education sector in BiH, EU CARDS programme, 2005, p. 9.*

<sup>22</sup> *Minority Rights International, Education in Multi-Ethnic Societies of Central and Eastern Europe, at <http://minorityrights.org>.*

## Conclusions and recommendations

The survey aims at establishing the degree to which the principles and values defined in the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education and the Education Reform Strategy are present in education practice, as well as how end-users assess and see the role of the education system in the development of BiH society. The conceptual framework of the survey is the concept of education as a form of preparation for living in an open society.

The survey findings indicate that relevant provisions are not consistently applied in practice and that the prevailing attitude is that the education system is not contributing to the integration of BiH society, to democratisation processes and the rule of law. The survey has also established that the demands of education system end-users are in accordance with legal provisions, as well as that end-users believe that the **current education practice should change** so as to include new contents, structures and processes in BiH schools.

In general, differences between students' and parents' attitudes are not significant – parents are more inclined to give a higher grade to the current education practice but are, also, more often in favour of certain changes in accordance with the legal framework and education for an open society. The differences are, however, more notable with respect to attitudes of respondents from different areas in BiH.

Summarising the analysis with respect to this variable, it can be said that respondents from the Bosniak majority area and the Brčko District, more often than others, point out the presence of the state insignia in schools, believe that the current education system raises awareness of the affiliation to the state of BiH and includes contents relating to the cultural identity

of all the peoples in BiH, and support the attitude that the current education practice should be changed. A number of these respondents also support the attitude that textbooks should primarily focus on BiH and that the state should represent a starting point for studying history and geography in schools, that the contents of national subject textbooks should be changed to put much more focus on all three groups and national minorities, that a single language policy should be agreed on, and that the responsibilities for education in BiH should be placed at the state level.

On the other hand, respondents from the Croat majority area predominantly believe that ethnic and religious discrimination is present in the BiH education system, that textbooks are not developed to encourage critical thinking, and that religious education should be present in public schools through the subject entitled "Religious Instruction".

Respondents in the Serb majority area most frequently state that, according to the current practice, both official alphabets are used in schools, and point out the need to reach agreement on a common view of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks.

Although the results indicate uneven support in different BiH areas for aspects of education for a multicultural society, it should be noted that most respondents in every area agree with the relevant legal provisions and support their application in BiH schools.

The survey results indicate significant differences between the attitudes of respondents belonging to the majority group and those belonging to a minority group in a given area in BiH. Students and parents belonging to minorities more frequently believe that the current education system is monoethnic, that minority students do not receive sufficient knowledge about the cultural identity of their own people, and that ethnic and religious discrimination is present in BiH schools. They also more frequently support the following proposals: the contents of "national group"

textbooks should be changed to put significantly more focus on members of all three groups and ethnic minorities; textbooks should include different opinions, offer several interpretations of the same event and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues; history textbooks should not devote too much space to armed conflicts and wars; a single language policy should be agreed on; in school, children should learn all three official languages in BiH; and the education responsibilities should be placed at the state level.

Differences in opinion between members of minority and majority groups are understandable if, as shown by this survey, one takes into consideration that the position of minorities within the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is, on the one hand, determined by the segregation policy preventing children of different ethnic background from attending the same classes and, on the other hand, the assimilation policy according to which all students, regardless of their ethnic affiliation, should follow the majority's curriculum.

Although there are differences as to the *degree* of agreement, the survey results, however, clearly illustrate support on the part of direct users of the education system for changes and recommendations for the promotion of curricula and textbooks which would contribute to the development of "tolerance, equality, human rights and peace in the ethnically diverse society." OECD (2001)

In addition, all the respondents warn against the following phenomena which require urgent changes to the current education practice:

1. In time, discrimination and segregation in schools begin to be perceived not as phenomena threatening both individual human rights and the society as a whole, but as a usual and predominant relation towards those who are "different" and few in numbers. As stated by a participant of the Sarajevo majority focus group:

*To be clear, I didn't say that discrimination should be tolerated. But I did say that it had*

*become a matter of routine. It means that no one in schools minds it now. It has become a common thing.*

2. The contents and concept of curricula and textbooks in BiH are often used as a form of legitimisation of "knowledge", interpreted both scientifically and neutrally, to lead students to uncritically adopt views leading to a linguistic, historical and cultural division on ethnic grounds. A parent in the Sarajevo group warns:

*Let's start from the visual aspect, just look at the textbooks, the colours on their covers, you need not go beyond this. You can immediately tell which textbooks are for Croat children, which for Bosniak children, which for Serb children. This will do, you need not go further through the textbook. This alone directs children which textbook to use.*

3. The contents and concept of curricula and textbooks not infrequently promote collective values as opposed to individual/civic ones, encourage ethnic homogenisation and adoption of a uniform attitude based on stereotypes about one's own and other groups in order to maintain the current social, economic and political situation. This is a description given by participants of the Sarajevo parent group:

*Every textbook today is a small landmine. It is a small powder keg.*

*But there is a small group benefiting from such situation. Nobody can touch them, they are accountable to no one.*

*And these textbooks shape and form our children.*

It can be concluded from the above that, unfortunately, the contents and values of the BiH education system are still used as a mechanism for legitimising the ethnic division and maintaining the social, economic and political system created during the war. Textbooks for "national subjects" are not designed to encourage critical thinking, dialogue and debate; they are burdened with exaggerated focusing on war issues,

which is often followed by glorification of militarism and martyrdom as supreme forms of patriotism, and which often result in group stereotypes and prejudice. Even though they have officially assumed the obligation, the education authorities have not demonstrated their readiness and full accountability with regard to reforming the education system pursuant to the proclaimed principles of education for an open society. In the long run, such education practice is destructive for the whole BiH society, as well as for individual ethnic groups, whose members will thus base their main identity on their affiliation to a self-contained community isolated from others, without the basic conditions for their full participation in a democratic society.

### Survey recommendations

Considering the fact that relevant legislation was adopted as far back as 2003 and that a majority of students and parents support the changes defined by this legislation, it can be concluded that education officials and political structures in government have no excuse for not enforcing the law and promises they committed themselves to. However, for these changes to be made in a society divided on ethnic grounds, relevant and adequate legislation should also be supported by an increased awareness of short-term and long-term consequences of the current practice and, accordingly, a more active participation on the part of both the education and wider community in processes enabling education to help the reconstruction and redevelopment of BiH society. In these terms, it is necessary to:

- **Transfer part of education responsibilities to the state level;**
- **Reach agreement on fundamental policies that would harmonise three separate education systems;**
- **Review the “national group” of subjects;**
- **Evaluate the level of implementation of the decision on the Common Core Curricula;**
- **Harmonise textbook contents with legislation and the Textbook Production Guidelines.**

While undertaking these activities, one should have in mind the specific limitations shown by the survey results related to certain passivity on the part of direct users and participants in the education system. This refers to parents and students, as well as to teachers. Namely, the survey results indicate that, apart from undeveloped capacities and a willingness to make changes, these categories also have specific features that can slow down the education reform process and should be taken into consideration when planning future activities meant to encourage participation.

A potential obstacle with parents is their “disorientation” within the current situation. This education system is significantly different from the one they went through, most parents are not familiar with new teaching trends and, facing basic survival problems, they do not have not got enough time to take part in the education process of their children. A Banja Luka focus group participant describes it in the following way:

*It is not as it used to be when I went to school, everything is different, I simply don't know. Children are not as children used to be, students are not as students used to be, everything is different. Teaching material is not as our material was and it seems to me that their knowledge is not as our knowledge used to be.*

In addition, a general social apathy reflects in the parents' attitude that, though a change is necessary, “common people” have no power to make it and cannot do anything until “something changes”, “until something is acquired”, “until some order is introduced in the area”, “until people realise this is not right”...

The survey also shows that students feel that requirements imposed on them by the education system reflect certain hypocrisy of the society: schools and teachers do not encourage new approaches, critical thinking and individualism in the teaching process and, at the same time, request their students to assume

a more active role in curricular and extracurricular activities:

*They keep telling us –just be silent, you are here for four years, you'll graduate, leave; when we fail to do something – you are young, you should bring changes. (FGD Vitez, minority students)*

In addition to a formal body of school knowledge, the current situation is also maintained through the teaching practice itself. According to the survey results, this is reflected in resistance by teachers to changes (e.g. the introduction of interactive teaching), in examples of discrimination against students, ideological views and low professional ethics. Therefore, in addition to curricula and textbooks, it is important to point out the role of schools and teaching staff in developing democratic and high-quality education for all students. Namely, curricula promoting tolerance will have little effect if they are part of an education system which is essentially intolerant.

Finally, though, it should be noted that divisions and animosities in society cannot be expected to be solved through education only, without adequate political, economic and social measures upheld by all the citizens in the society, taking responsibility for the common good.

## Result analysis

This chapter offers a detailed overview of the survey results by main variables: students-parents, three majority areas in BiH, majorities-minorities. Additional variables are: the curriculum and the respondent's ethnic background.

The analysis of the results is based on these variables, since the authors wanted to examine differences and similarities between students' and parents' attitudes, attitudes of respondents from different ethnic majority areas in BiH, and between attitudes of members of minority peoples and of majority peoples, since the focus of this survey is the "national group" of subjects. When it served the purpose of this research, the authors additionally treated the variables of curricula and respondents' ethnic background.

The analysis first treats the introductory sections of the Questionnaire and Guide (General Assessment of Education in BiH), then the results relating to each of the four principles, following which it presents the attitudes of students and parents about the need for and directions of changes in curricula and textbooks. The questions are formed on the basis of a preliminary analysis of primary sources, i.e. secondary and primary school textbooks, which identified the dominant content and presentation tendencies in comparison with the principles defined by official documents in this field, as well as the principles of education for an open society.

The analysis is structured so as to first present the results relating to all students and parents (variable: *total*), where it should be borne in mind that this total, due to a specifically designed sample, cannot be interpreted as a representative opinion of students and parents from Bosnia and Herzegovina but, rather, as a sum of representative opinions of students and parents from different majority areas in BiH.

This is followed by a presentation of results obtained in individual ethnic majority areas in BiH and the Brčko District (variable: *majority areas*). The ethnic majority areas in BiH imply parts where one of the three constituent peoples represents the most numerous people. Thus, the Bosniak majority areas includes the following: Sarajevo Canton, Podrinje Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton and parts of the Central Bosnia and Herzegovina-Neretva cantons with Bosniaks as the most numerous people; the Croat majority areas includes: Posavina Canton, West Herzegovina Canton, Canton 10 and parts of the Central Bosnia and Herzegovina-Neretva cantons with Croats as the most numerous people; the Serb majority area implies Republika Srpska.<sup>23</sup> The Brčko District is treated as a separate area.

The results are then presented on the basis of whether they are obtained from respondents who belong to the most populous people in their area or to people less numerous in the said area. For the purpose of this survey, this variable is called *majority/minority*, where the "majority" (members of the majority peoples) is understood to mean respondents who, in a given ethnic majority area, belong to the most numerous group in this area. The "minority" (members of minority ethnic group) is understood to mean respondents who, in a given majority area, do not belong to the most numerous people in this area. (Therefore, in the area with the Bosniak ethnic majority, members of the minority peoples imply all the respondents who are not Bosniak, in the area with the Croat ethnic majority, members of the minority group imply all the respondents who are not Croat, in the area with the Serb ethnic majority, members of the minority groups imply all the respondents who are not Serb.) Respondents living in the Brčko District territory are not classified by the majority/minority variable.

Although the above structure of results presentation is dominant in this part of the report, where the context of the survey requires, it is expanded by adding the following variables: the *curriculum* and the *respondent's ethnic background*. Where it is more useful for the

<sup>23</sup> Annex 1 gives a map with a geographic presentation of the ethnic majority areas in BiH.

results analysis, the majority area variable is replaced with the curriculum variable. This variable is used only for the analysis of student attitudes and it implies the curriculum they follow. As the curricula are different with regard to their “national group” subjects, the usual terms: “Bosnian”, “Serb” and “Croat” curriculum are used for the purpose of this survey.

Furthermore, in addition to the above variables, where the result analysis so requires, the results are treated and presented with respect to the remaining socio-demographic variables in those parts of the report where they help understand/interpret the data collected.

It should be noted that, throughout the Report, only statistically significant differences between comparing variables are mentioned, where the statistically significant difference implies a difference with which the probability of its having been obtained accidentally is 5% or less than 5%, i.e. if  $p \leq 0,05$ . If a difference with a higher probability is mentioned in the report, it is accompanied by a corresponding note.

The term *respondents* for the purpose of this report covers both categories polled, i.e. it implies both students and parents. When the results presented refer to one category only, it is duly stated in the text.

While analysing the results, the options “very good” and “mostly good” are merged in the category “good”, while the options “very bad” and “mostly bad” are merged in the category “bad”. Furthermore, the options “entirely” and “partly” are merged in the category “yes”, and the options, “to a lesser degree” and “not at all”, into the category “no”. The options “I do not know” and “I do not want to give an answer” are merged into the category “no answer”. Both cases include the possibility of seeing the percentage of the original answers from the graphs presenting the results.

<sup>24</sup> Council of Europe (1999) *Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina Management, Financing and Administration*; UNESCO (2000) *Education for All (EFA) Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina*; OECD (2001) *Topical overview of ethnic policies in education: Bosnia and Herzegovina*; UNDP BiH (2003) *Human Development Report - Millenium Development Goals - BiH 2003*; ECRI (2004) *European Commission against Rasism and Intolerance: Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina*; European Commission (2005) *Functional overview of education sector in BiH, EU CARDS programme of assistance to BiH*;

<sup>25</sup> International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) (2006) *NGO Report on implementation of measures and activities within the BiH Mid-term development strategy and rights in the field of education, social protection and environment*.

## Education system general assessment

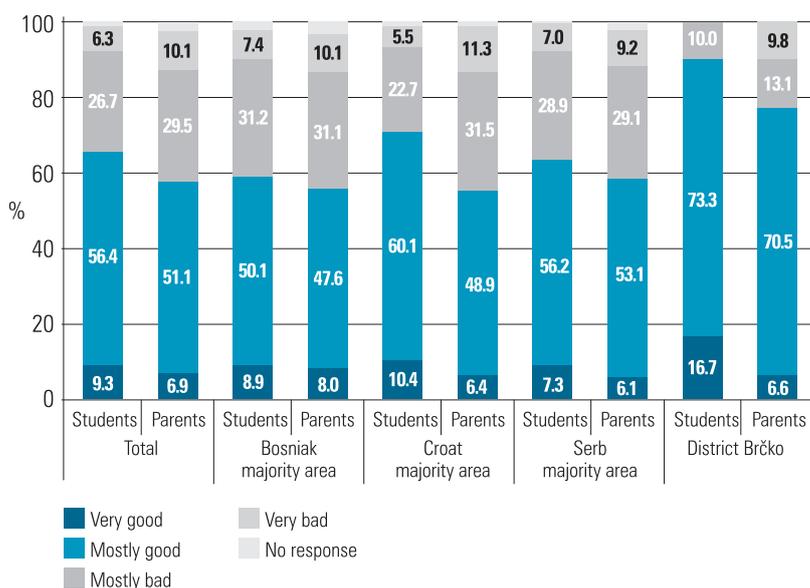
Numerous analyses of the education system made by international organisations (European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO, OECD, UNDP, OSCE and others)<sup>24</sup> conclude that the quality of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very bad when compared against international standards and criteria. Such analyses also indicate certain specific problems such as fragmentation and uneconomical structure of the system, its division and segregation on ethnic grounds, non-standardised monitoring of students' results and a low level of coordination among education institutions at all levels. In the Mid-term Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP), BiH institutions also realised these problems and established measures for their elimination, together with a number of activities to be taken in order to promote the education system. However, the Report on Independent Monitoring Implementation of PRSP measures and activities, made by international organisations during 2005 and 2006, indicates that most of these measures have not yet been implemented and that some measures are completely "frozen under the influence of current politics and the insistence of structures within the government on ethnic interests." The report also states that there are no mechanisms or structures required for efficient functioning of the public education system.<sup>25</sup>

This survey shows that, when asked "How would you assess the current situation of the education system in our country", two-thirds of the students polled (66%) and more than half of the parents (58%) replied that **the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is good**. Brčko District students have a better opinion of the BiH education system than other respondents, while students going to school in the Bosniak majority area have the most negative perception of it, but the difference is significant only in relation to students from the Croat majority areas and the District. Similarly, Brčko District parents are more inclined to give the system a better mark than parents living in other areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the difference is not statistically significant (see Figure 1). There are no significant differences in BiH education situation assessments between students and parents representing the majority in a given area and students and parents representing minorities in the same area.

Focus group discussions show that students and parents who believe the system is good mainly base their assessment on the large number of courses and the amount of teaching material our system implies. The examples they use to illustrate its quality come down to the good success of students abroad and diverse information students acquire through school. As expressed by a Sarajevo parent group participant, "Our system is comprehensive rather than good."

Further analysis shows that *the education level of parents* is a variable significantly influencing the assessment of the BiH education system quality – parents with a lower degree of education and students coming from such families are more inclined to give the system a positive mark. This confirms the assumption that the reasons behind comparative disparity between assessments of the BiH education system in the above studies and those of students and parents are also caused by a negative influence of the general socioeconomic situation in the country and a lack of knowledge in terms of contemporary standards in the field of education of children and youth. This results in low requirements on the part of students and parents with regard to the quality of education.

Figure 1  
**How would you assess the current education system in our country?**



Thus, one-third of students and a somewhat higher percentage of parents (40%) believe that **the education system in our country is bad**. In addition to educated parents, students coming from families with a higher level of education also express greater dissatisfaction with the current situation of the BiH education system. Respondents frequently state that they are dissatisfied with *the extensive teaching material and poor conditions and equipment in schools*. Participants in focus group discussions additionally pointed out that a poor quality of textbooks represented one of the main problems in our education system. Apart from these, they stated a number of other reasons resulting from the current socio-political circumstances: *a division of the education system in the country and, related to this, separation of children of different ethnic backgrounds within one school*. In this context, respondents also mention *a lack of single set of textbooks at the BiH level and the mono-ethnic characteristics of textbooks currently in use*.

### “National group” subjects and religious education

In the post-war period, the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is, in addition to its fragmentation, and the transfer of responsibilities to lower administrative levels, characterised by a division into three separate systems based on ethnic affiliation. **This division is particularly prominent in the field of liberal arts: history, geography, mother language, literature and culture. These are classified as the national group of subjects but are also known as the Bosnian, Croat and Serb curricula.** In order to overcome such a situation, the 2003 Framework Law on Education stipulated the common core curricula for primary and secondary school, and their implementation for the academic year 2003/04.<sup>26</sup> The adoption of the common core curricula was to provide a minimum of common contents for all children in BiH, to harmonise the existing education systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to result in better mobility of students, which was of particular importance for

student returnees. However, the degree of actual implementation of this provision can be questioned. Thus, the final report of March 2006 of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)<sup>27</sup> stated the following:

*The Committee seriously requests BiH to, as soon as possible, apply in all the schools in the BiH territory the contemporary common core curricula, which meets cultural needs of different ethnic groups in BiH.*

The Interim Agreement on Meeting Special Needs and Rights of Children Returnees<sup>28</sup> provides students with the opportunity to follow a curriculum of their own choice. However, the survey results indicate that there is a huge difference in practice in the implementation

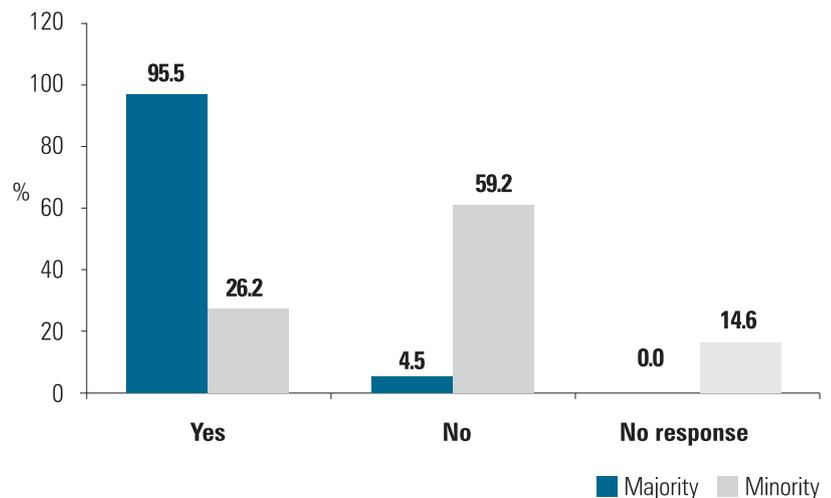


Figure 2  
Presence of a corresponding national group of subjects with students

of this right between majority and minority students in a given area. Namely, majority students almost entirely follow a corresponding curriculum, which applies to only every fourth minority student in a given area (see Figure 2).

The data indicate that Bosniak students living in the Croat majority area more frequently have the corresponding “national group” of subjects. Namely, almost half the Bosniaks in the Croat majority area (47%) can exercise their right to education in accordance with their ethnic affiliation. It should be noted, however, that this is a consequence of a specific problem of

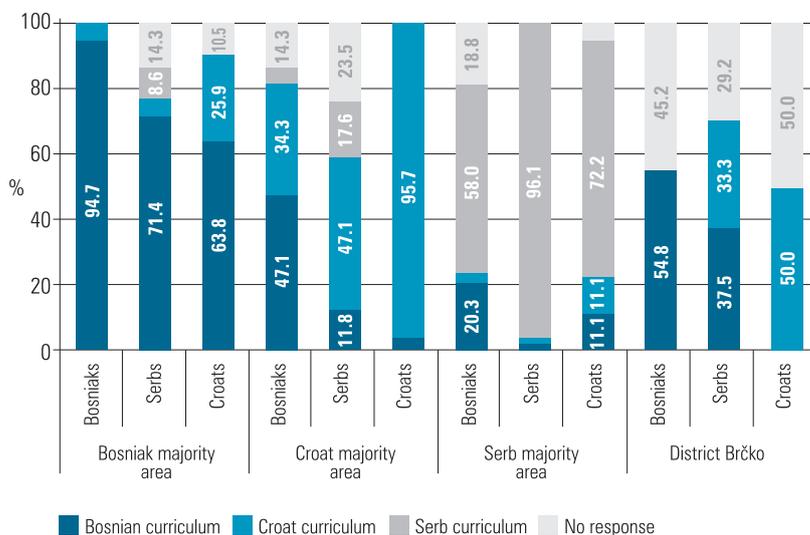
<sup>26</sup> Article 44.

<sup>27</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (2006) *The Report on the Implementation of the Convention: Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

<sup>28</sup> Item 2.

ethnic segregation of children – “two schools under one roof” - where students attend all the classes separately and are even separated during extracurricular activities. Unlike this, only one-fifth of Bosniak students in the RS (20%) follow the Bosnian curriculum. One quarter of Croat students in the Bosniak majority area (26%) follow the Croat curriculum, which applies to only one-tenth of Croat students in the Serb majority area (11%). Serb students in the Croat majority area mainly attend “adequate classes” in 18% of the cases, and their number amounts to only 9% in the Bosniak majority area (see Figure 3).

Figure 3  
Which curriculum do you follow?



The focus group results confirm that, unless they go to “two schools under one roof”, minorities are seldom able to attend corresponding religious instruction. Minority students point out that their choice is usually restricted to attending the majority religious instruction or to not attending such classes at all.

### Religious education in schools

Article 9 of the Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education<sup>29</sup> guarantees the right of religious education to all students in BiH and defines the role of schools in promoting and protecting religious

freedoms, tolerance and dialogue in BiH. Religious instruction (denominational instruction) was introduced in BiH primary and secondary schools as an optional course during the war. In addition to this course, the subject called “culture of religions” was introduced in a small number of secondary schools as of 2002. It should be noted that this subject is undergoing a pilot phase in a limited number of schools. This is an initiative<sup>30</sup> for introducing a new subject that would employ a non-denominational method to teach about a range of world cultures and religions and encourage critical thinking and reflection with students, thus preparing them to live in a multi-religious society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law.

When asked whether they attend religious instruction classes or “culture of religions” in school or have neither of these courses, 44% of students said they attended religious instruction in school and 5% of them said they attended culture of religions. Half of the high-school students do not attend either religious instruction or culture of religions in school. However, an analysis of the results with respect to the curriculum followed in schools indicates that there are significant differences in this regard. Thus, students following the Croat curriculum most frequently attend religious instruction classes (79%). In schools following the Bosnian curriculum, 50% of students attend these classes. As opposed to this, only 6% of students following the Serb curriculum said they had such classes. This is in accordance with the high-school curriculum in Republika Srpska, which foresees no religious instruction in secondary school. Although the percentage of the total number of students attending culture of religions in schools is rather low, these classes are more present in schools following the Bosnian and Croat curricula (See Figure 4).

An analysis with respect to areas suggests that, although religious instruction and culture of religions are more present in the Bosniak and Croat areas (whereas few students attend these courses in the Serb majority area and Brčko District), students taking the religious instruction course are more numerous in the Croat majority area, while there is no significant

<sup>29</sup> Official Gazette 18/2003.

<sup>30</sup> Participants in this initiative are the Abraham Association for inter-religious peace activism, Goethe Institut, OHR, OSCE and UNESCO.

difference between these two areas in the number of students taking culture of religions (see Figure 5).

As can be seen from Figure 5, there are significant differences in attending religious education classes between minority and majority students in a given area. With regard to religious instruction in the Bosniak and Croat majority areas, majority students attend these classes more often than minority students. In the Serb majority area, minority students attend religious instruction classes more often than Serb students, which is a result of the fact that religious instruction is not a high-school subject in the Serb majority area, as well as of the fact that these classes are mostly attended by Bosniak and Croat students in schools following the Bosnian and Croat curricula. The results indicate that Bosniak students living in the Croat majority area attend religious instruction classes more often than other students representing minorities in a given area – 70% of Bosniak students in the Croat majority area attend these classes, in comparison with 35% of Croat and 29% of Serb students in the Bosniak majority area, and 24% of Serb students in the Croat majority area.

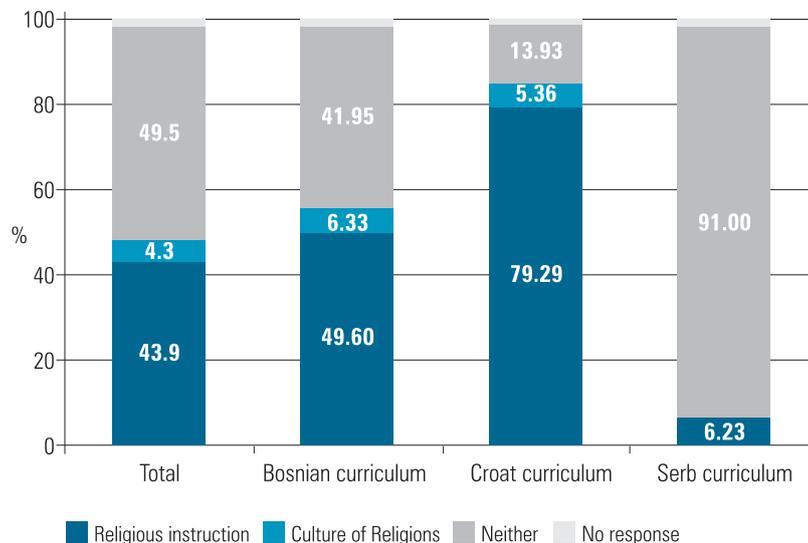
With regard to culture of religions in the Bosniak majority area, minorities attend these classes most frequently, while there is no difference between majority and minority students in other areas with respect to the frequency of attending these classes.

Minority students in the Bosniak and Croat majority areas take religious education courses less frequently than the majorities in the same areas. Considering that “culture of religions” is present in a small number of schools, focus group results indicate that this difference is usually caused by a lack of corresponding religious instruction classes in the schools minorities attend.

Focus groups also suggest that some minority students attending these classes also attend the “majority” religious instruction. Namely, pursuant to the law on Primary and General Secondary Education, religious instruction classes represent an optional course in accordance with the student’s own religious choice, while

students not wishing to take the religious instruction course are “guaranteed that their position shall in no way be less favourable than that of other students.”<sup>31</sup> A majority of students (73%) stated that they had a

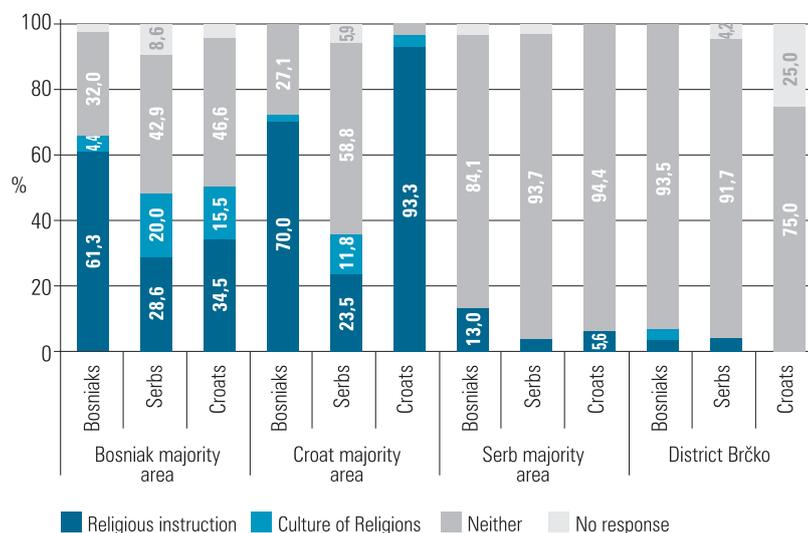
**Figure 4**  
**Do you attend religious instruction/culture of religions classes or have neither of these courses?**



choice with regard to these classes. Students who said they had no such choice usually came from the Serb majority area and followed the Serb curriculum. Minority students in this area stated there was no correspond-

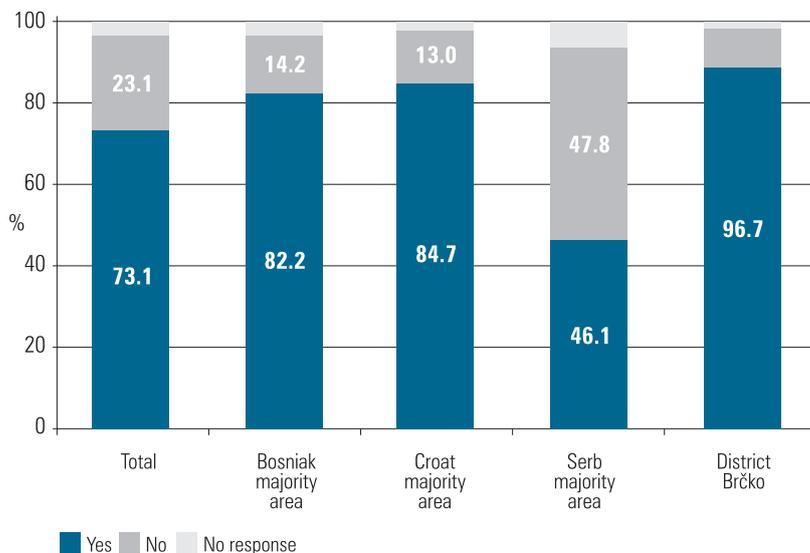
<sup>31</sup> Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education in BiH, Article 9.

**Figure 5**  
**Do you attend religious instruction/culture of religions classes or have neither of these courses?**



ing religious instruction in schools they attended, which they perceived as a lack of choice (though they could choose whether to attend Orthodox religious instruc-

**Figure 6**  
**Were you able to choose whether to attend religious instruction classes or not?**



tion or not). This is also the main reason that minority students in other areas offered as an explanation of their statement that they were not offered a choice with respect to religious instruction classes (see Figure 6).

**How can a hundred of them attend it and only one child not.**

(FGD Sarajevo, parent, majority)

**We all see it like this: if everybody attends it, you should do it too.**  
(FGD Sarajevo, parent, majority)

Focus group results also confirm the polling results. A majority of focus group participants confirmed that they were (formally) given a choice whether to attend religious instruction classes or not. Namely, when enrolling in the first grade of primary/secondary school, students and their parents were asked whether they wanted to take this course. This procedure differs from school to school – in some schools it is applied consistently (parents make a written statement on whether they want their children to take the religious instruction course), while in others the procedure is rather informal (parents are informed that religious instruction is an optional course and it is further assumed that parents wishing their children to take it will duly notify the staff). In yet another group of schools the attendance at religious instruction classes is implied and it represents an obligatory subject. As a rule, once parents and

students make their decision whether to take religious instruction, the decision is treated as final and it implies regular attendance at religious instruction classes throughout primary school. A Sarajevo parent group participant put it this way: *“My child took the course voluntarily but, in our school, we were not obliged to make a written statement, we were told several times that religious instruction classes were optional. However, the following year already, they ceased to be optional, the course became an obligatory subject, just as any other subject.”*

Just as the processes of making a decision on religious instruction attendance are different, so are the reasons behind this decision. Thus, apart from their desire to become familiar with their own religion, focus group parents and students also said they decided to take the religious instruction course in order to “improve their average grade”, i.e. to have better grades at the end of the academic year. They also said they were afraid that absence from these classes could cause their children to be isolated and treated unfavourably by their peers. This is the main reason that minority students in a given area decide to take the majority religious instruction course.

**Conclusion**

Most of all the respondents included in the survey consider the current education system in BiH to be a good one. This assessment, however, mainly refers to one of its characteristics - comprehensiveness - under which respondents imply the diversity of teaching material and the quantity of information acquired. Students, more frequently than parents, think that the current BiH education system can be characterised as good.

Even though the Interim Agreement on Meeting Special Needs and Rights of Children Returnees<sup>32</sup> enables students to follow a curriculum of their own choice, the survey shows that this right is mainly exercised by members of the majority people in a given area. Unlike them, only every fourth minority student follows the

<sup>32</sup> Item 2.

appropriate curriculum. Though it may seem at a first glance that Bosniak students living in the Croat majority areas are in the most favourable position (as almost half of them follow the Bosnian curriculum), it should be noted that this is a consequence of a specific form of segregation of children on ethnic grounds known as “two schools under one roof”, whose elimination BiH committed to accessing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>33</sup> Apart from Bosniaks in the Croat majority area, other children representing minorities in a given area in Bosnia and Herzegovina exercise their right to education according to their ethnic affiliation to a considerably lesser degree (9-26%).

Therefore, it can be said that the position of minorities in the BiH education system is determined, on the one hand, by a segregation policy preventing children of different ethnic background from attending the same classes and, on the other hand, by the assimilation policy according to which all students, regardless of their ethnic affiliation, should follow the majority group’s curriculum.

With regard to the presence of religious education in secondary schools in BiH, religious instruction is, in all the majority areas, much more present than culture of religions. Religious instruction classes are most frequently present in schools following the Croat curriculum and then the Bosnian one, while the Serb curriculum places religious instruction in primary school only. Although the percentage of the total number of students attending culture of religions in schools is rather low, these classes are more present in schools following the Bosnian and Croat curricula. Religious education in secondary schools following the Serb curriculum can be concluded to be represented through culture of religions, which, however, involves a small number of students (as only a few schools decided to introduce this subject).

There are significant differences in the attendance at religious education classes between minority and majority students in a given area. With regard to

religious instruction in the Bosniak and Croat majority areas, majority students attend these classes more often than minority students. In the Serb majority area, minority students attend religious instruction classes more often than Serb students (as these classes are mostly attended by Bosniak and Croat students in schools following the Bosnian and Croat curricula). It is important to note that Bosniak students living in the Croat majority area attend religious instruction classes more often than other students representing minorities in a given area – 70% of Bosniak students in the Croat majority area attend these classes, in comparison with 35% of Croat and 29% of Serb students in the Bosniak majority area, and 24% of Serb students in the Croat majority area.

Most of all the students say they are given a choice with regard to the decision on taking the religious instruction course. However, once made, this decision is taken as final. The choice that minorities in a given area usually have is restricted to attending the majority religious instruction course or to not attending religious instruction course at all.

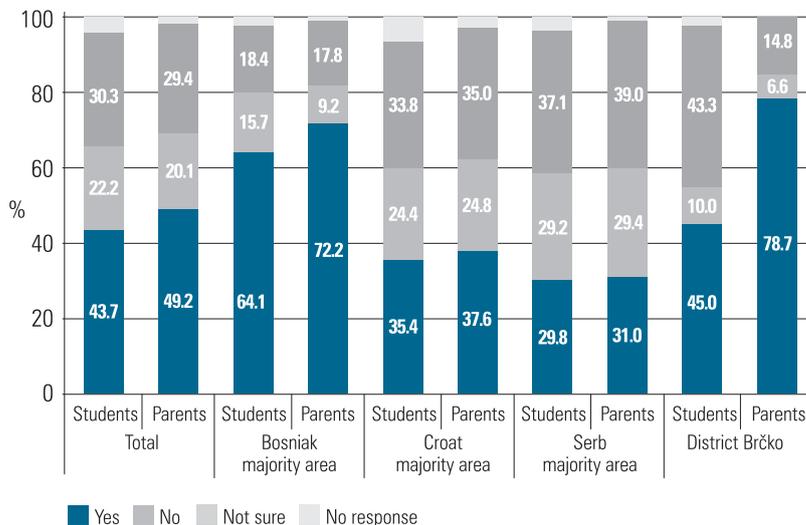
<sup>33</sup> *Official Gazette of the Republic of BiH 25/93.*

# Attitudes of parents and students about principles defined by law and proposed recommendations

## Principle 1: Raising awareness of affiliation to the state of BiH

The Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education (Article 3) prescribes that one of the main aims of education in BiH is raising students' awareness of their affiliation to the state of BiH. The survey includes student and parent attitudes towards this principle and their assessment of the actual implementation of the principle in education practice, including the following indicators:

Figure 7  
I believe that the education system promotes the feeling of affiliation to Bosnia and Herzegovina



- Presence of the state insignia in schools (flag, coat of arms, etc.);
- Studying the BiH anthem in schools;
- Use of both alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin);
- Place and role of schools in raising awareness of the affiliation to BiH.

Although the Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education prescribes it, less than half the respondents (46%) think that the current **education system promotes the feeling of affiliation to BiH**. This attitude is not equally held in certain majority areas – it is much more present in the Bosniak majority area and the Brčko District, in comparison with the Croat and Serb majority areas (where students and parents often think that the education system does not raise awareness of the affiliation to BiH and often cannot/do not want to answer this question) (see Figure 7).

In areas where, according to respondents' attitudes, raising awareness of the affiliation to BiH through the education system is more prominent, there are significant differences between students' and parents' assessments. Namely, students, less frequently than parents, think that the system promotes the feeling of affiliation to BiH. Considering that students have a direct insight into the teaching material and work of schools in general, these results indicate that the education system and everyday education practice do not promote the affiliation to BiH as much as parents expect them to.

Parents belonging to minority groups more frequently believe that the education system does not promote affiliation to BiH, whereas this attitude is equally held by students regardless of whether they represent the majority or a minority in a given area.

Differences in attitudes of students following different curricula correspond with differences in results obtained in individual ethnic majority areas – students following the Bosnian curriculum, more often than those following the Croat and Serb curricula, believe that schools they attend promote affiliation to BiH (52% against 22% and 19%).

Students stating that the education system does not promote the feeling of affiliation to BiH were further asked what they thought about it. A majority of them (63%) think it should not be so, while a smaller number (26%) think it should. Students in the Bosniak majority area more frequently do not agree with non-promotion of affiliation to BiH through the education

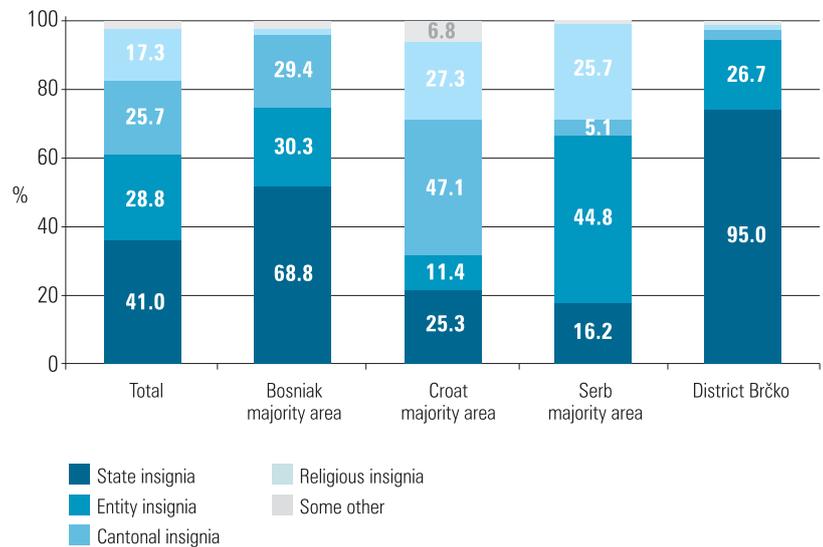
system, in comparison with students in the Serb majority area, who support this practice. A negative assessment as to the non-promotion of affiliation to BiH through the education system is even more prominent with students belonging to minorities, so that even 80% of them are unsatisfied with this practice of non-affiliation. The reasons behind such attitudes held by students are diverse; they are illustrated in Table 5.

### 1.1. State insignia in schools

According to the survey results, the presence of state insignia (coat of arms, flag, etc.) is different in different parts of BiH. Brčko District students most frequently state that the state insignia are present in their schools (95%), and they are followed by students from the Bosniak majority area (69%). Unlike this, students from the Croat majority area mostly say that the state insignia are seldom present in their schools (25%); they more frequently point at the presence of cantonal and religious insignia. Similarly, the predominant insignia in the Serb majority area are the entity (45%) and religious insignia (26%), while the state insignia are present in 16% of schools only. In addition to a low presence of the state insignia, students going

to schools in the Croat and Serb majority areas also point out a considerably stronger presence of religious insignia<sup>34</sup> (see Figure 8).

Figure 8  
The following insignia are present in my school:



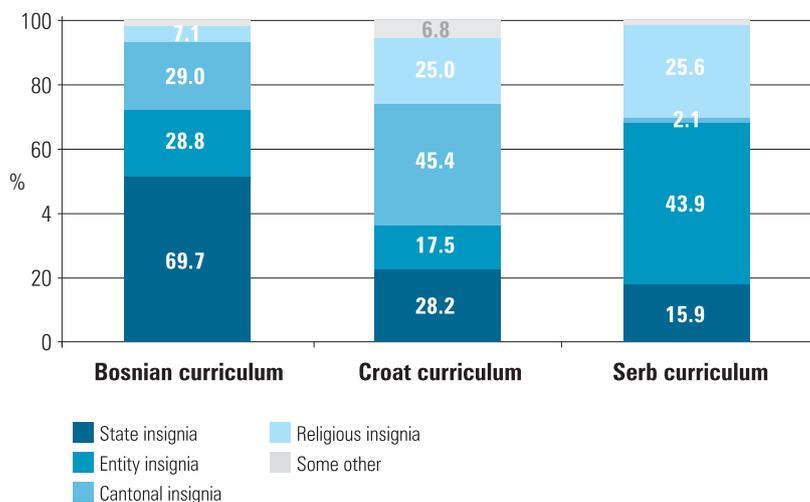
The presence of insignia in schools following the various curricula (see Figure 9) is, in principle, consistent with their presence in the majority areas. Students report that the state insignia are most frequently present in schools following the Bosnian curriculum

DO YOU FIND IT ACCEPTABLE THAT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM DOES NOT PROMOTE THE FEELING OF AFFILIATION TO BIH?	
Reasons for "Yes"	Reasons for "No"
<i>BiH has its entities.</i>	<i>Because we learn much more about everything else than about BiH.</i>
<i>It's better as it is.</i>	<i>Because of separation of the language.</i>
<i>We in RS don't really like Bosnia.</i>	<i>We are not taught and don't feel that BiH is our country.</i>
<i>Why would I belong to BiH?</i>	<i>Because I live in BiH but follow the Croatian curriculum.</i>
<i>Serbs should not consider themselves BiH citizens.</i>	<i>This is a way to disintegrate BiH.</i>
<i>The majority of Croat population does not see BiH as their country.</i>	<i>Because the feeling that BiH is our country should be much more actively developed.</i>
<i>Because BiH as it is is not my state.</i>	<i>I wish I knew more about my country.</i>
<i>BiH exists on paper only.</i>	<i>We should learn about BiH because it still is our country.</i>
<i>Because I don't see myself as living in BiH.</i>	<i>Education focuses on the majority people only.</i>
<i>There is none.</i>	<i>We learn about Croatia but live in BiH.</i>
	<i>Because this is a way to destroy unity of the country through education.</i>
	<i>Because we should all feel as citizens of this country.</i>
	<i>Because minority peoples are neglected in certain parts of BiH.</i>
	<i>As it promotes the feeling of affiliation to another country.</i>
	<i>We are one state – altogether.</i>

Table 5  
Reasons for supporting or not supporting non-promotion of affiliation to BiH through the BiH education system

<sup>34</sup> In the Serb majority area, the presence of cantonal insignia in schools is reported by students from Dobož, Novo Gorađe and Modriča (most frequently Bosniaks and Croats) following the Bosnian and Croat curricula, which leads to the conclusion that they live in RS but attend schools located in the FBiH..

Figure 9  
The following insignia are present in my school:



(usually located in the Bosniak majority area) – 70%. The presence of state insignia in schools following the Croat curriculum is reported by somewhat more than one-quarter of students (28%), religious insignia by a quarter (25%) and cantonal by less than a half (45%). Schools following the Serb curriculum predominantly display the entity (44%) and religious (26%) insignia, while the presence of state insignia is reported by only 16% of students.

### 1.2. Anthem in schools

Only 20% of the students polled had an opportunity to hear the state anthem in school. The number of

students having heard the anthem throughout school (i.e. in both primary and secondary school) is different in different parts of BiH and among students following different curricula. Most frequently these are students from the Bosniak majority area and students following the Bosnian curriculum, and the least frequently students from the Brčko District (regardless of their curriculum), students from the Serb majority area and those following the Serb curricula (see Figure 10).

### 1.3. Use of both alphabets

The data collected from students suggest that only 17% of students in schools across BiH equally use both alphabets. A further analysis shows that the practice of using only one alphabet is more frequent in schools following the Croat and Bosnian curricula (where most children use the Latin alphabet only), while the use of both alphabets is more frequent in those following the Serb curriculum (see Figure 11). As shown above, half of all the parents (49%) believe that their children are not sufficiently encouraged to use both alphabets - Cyrillic and Latin - in school. This attitude is most frequent with parents from the Croat majority area and least frequent with those from the Brčko District.

Parents participating in the Banja Luka focus group also pointed out the inadequate presence of the Cyrillic alphabet in schools within the BiH Federation. They

Figure 10  
Have you had an opportunity to hear the BiH anthem in school?

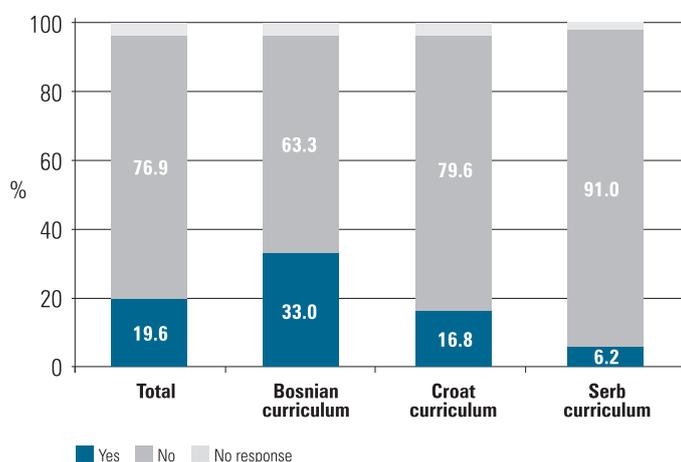
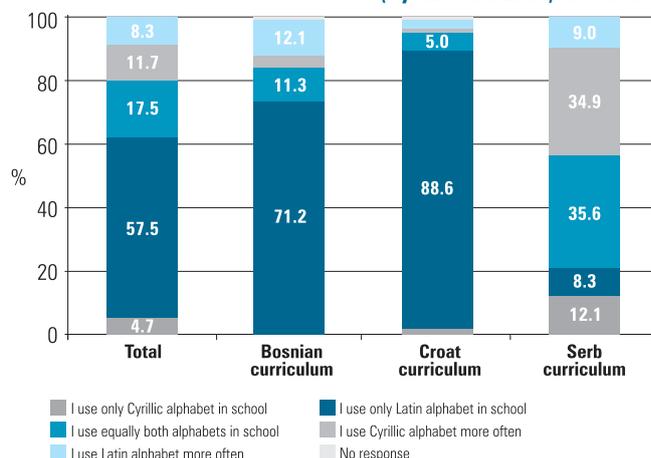


Figure 11  
To what degree do you use both alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin) in school?



consider this to be yet another proof of a discriminating position of Serb children in BiH. This is how one of the participants sees it: *“In the Federation, Serb children returnees are not familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet, they don’t use it, and here (in RS) we have the Latin alphabet as well. A Serb child over there is not familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet. The child comes home, the parents teach him its letters so that he could know; it means they teach the child because he doesn’t know.”*

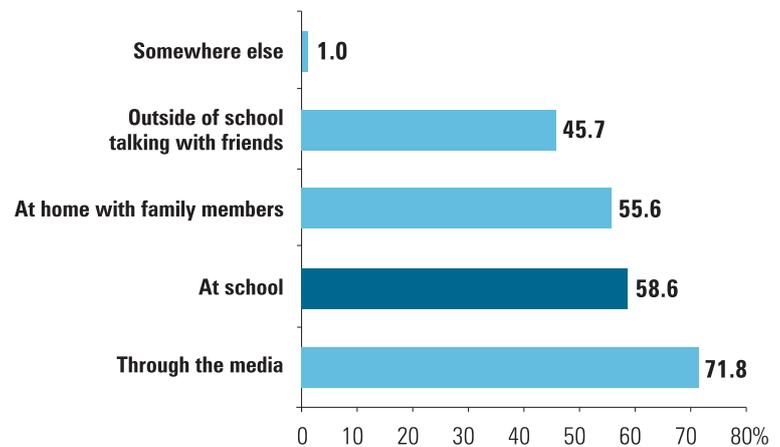
**The Questionnaire for parents included a statement from an Orthodox religious instruction textbook\* which tested their attitude towards the alphabets in official use in BiH. The statement reads: The Cyrillic alphabet is very important for preserving the Serb identity and a real Serb will always use it in his private life and only in legitimate exceptions can he use the Latin alphabet. Although both alphabets are more frequently used in schools following the Serb curriculum, 64% of Serb parents agreed with the statement – mostly those with more prominent ethnic identification. Moreover, 36% Croat parents agreed with the statement and 32% of Bosniak parents, which indicates that the prejudice of the alphabets being ethnically distributed is quite widespread.**

\*Pajić (2005:91)

#### 1.4. The place and role of schools in raising awareness of affiliation to BiH

One of the issues with regard to raising awareness of the affiliation to BiH was related to identifying the place and role of schools in comparison with other elements in society (family, friends, media, etc.). According to the data obtained, **the media** are on top of the list with respect to dealing with BiH-related topics. Namely, 72% of students stated that, during the week before the poll, they heard the state being discussed in the media, while 59% said they heard such a discussion in school. The media and school are followed by the family, whereas students less frequently talked with their friends about BiH when not in school (see Figure 12). Students are less frequently able to hear or talk about BiH in schools in the Serb majority area, while such discussions are most frequently present in schools in

Figure 12  
Did you hear/take part in a discussion about BiH in the following places last week?

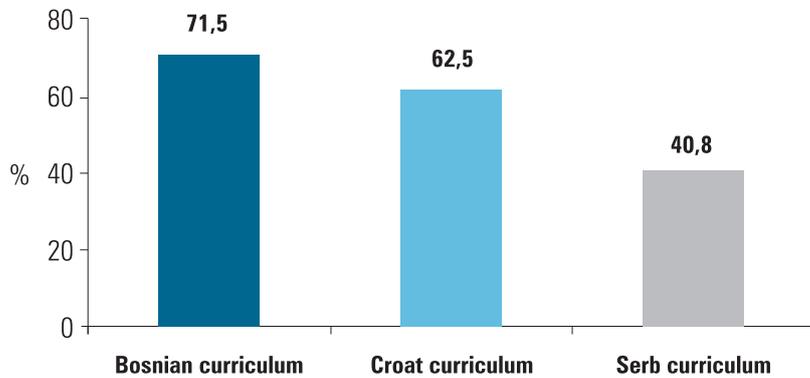


the Bosniak majority area. A data analysis with respect to the curriculum suggest the same trend: in schools following the Serb curriculum students are less frequently able to hear or talk about BiH, while such discussions are most frequently present in schools following the Bosnian curriculum (see Figure 13). The poll results indicating that BiH-related topics are more frequently present in the media are also confirmed by focus group participants. Thus, participants in the Banja Luka and Vitez stated that the state insignia (anthem, coat of arms) are seldom present in their schools. This also applies to schools in the Croat majority area which follow the Bosnian curriculum. Namely, students from Vitez said that there was no state flag in the school building and it can only be found outside the Municipality building. They also said they could hear the state anthem only when *“a football match was broadcast on TV”*. Similarly, a student participating in the Banja Luka focus group said: *“I could not tell the BiH anthem although I heard it on TV. We only learned the Serb ethnic anthem in school.”*

#### Conclusion

The data on the presence of state insignia in schools (flag, coat of arms, etc.), the BiH anthem, the use of both alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin) and the place and role of schools in raising awareness of an affiliation to

Figure 13  
During last week I heard/  
took part in a discussion  
about BiH in school



BiH suggest that, even though the Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education prescribes that raising awareness with students of an affiliation to BiH is one of the principal aims of education in BiH, its implementation is different in different parts of BiH.

The presence of state insignia in their schools is most frequently reported by students following the Bosnian curriculum (69%), while this percentage with students following the Croat and Serb curricula is 28% and 16%, respectively. These schools have much more cantonal (the Croat curriculum) and entity (the Serb curriculum) insignia. In addition, one-quarter of the students following these two curricula report the presence of religious symbols as well.

Only a small number of all the students polled had an opportunity to hear the state anthem in school, most frequently those following the Bosnian curriculum, less frequently those following the Croat and more seldom those following the Serb curriculum.

Although Article 7 of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH stipulates that “the languages of constituent peoples shall be used in all schools pursuant to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina” and that “all students in school shall learn the alphabets officially in use in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” this article is defined differently in entity and cantonal regulations. This could happen as both paragraphs defining the use of languages in school are not quite precise, which further results in a lack of harmonisation of laws on education at the lower

administrative levels and of practice itself. The survey results confirm the unequal use of the two alphabets inasmuch as 90% of secondary-school students following the Croat curriculum and 70% of those following the Bosnian one use the Latin alphabet only. The situation is much more favourable in schools following the Serb curriculum, where students use both alphabets to a greater extent (75%).

With regard to the place and role of schools in raising awareness of affiliation to the state of BiH, students come in contact with related topics through the media more frequently than in school. Students following the Bosnian curriculum most frequently and those following the Serb one least frequently hear and discuss BiH-related topics.

These results can also be confirmed by students’ and parents’ attitudes - somewhat less than half of them believe that the current **education system promotes affiliation to BiH**. This attitude is not equally held in certain majority areas - it is much more supported in the Bosniak majority area, and the Brčko District respondents often think that the education system raises awareness of affiliation to BiH. Most students who think that the education system does not promote the above affiliation also believe that this is not right, but most of them are members of minority peoples or are students from the Bosniak majority area.

It can be concluded that the application of the provision relating to raising awareness of affiliation to the state of BiH is not adequately applied within the BiH education system. Even when it is applied, its application is neither full nor consistent. For instance, although schools following the Bosnian curriculum are much more active in raising awareness through the state insignia and anthem, only a few such schools consistently apply Article 7 of the Framework Law on Education which relates to learning both alphabets.

## Principle 2: Education for a multicultural society

The Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education (Article 3) stipulates that one of the main aims of education in BiH is to study one's own cultural identity, language and tradition in a way reflecting civilisation achievements, together with becoming familiar with and acknowledging others who are different and cherishing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all persons, peoples and communities in BiH.

The survey examined student and parent attitudes about the acceptability of this principle and its application in current education practice. The focus was placed on establishing their relation towards the following aspects of education for a multicultural society:

- The education system is focused on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of all the groups in BiH;
- The presence of contents encouraging understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH;
- Multiculturalism of BiH is presented as a value and merit;
- Positive values and traits are presented as universal values typical of humans in general;
- Presentation of BiH historical development emphasising the contribution of all groups;
- A group identity is developed on the principle of inclusiveness.

### 2.1. Studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of all groups in BiH

Almost half the respondents think that the **education system in BiH is monoethnic**. Namely, 46% of the students and parents polled think that the education system in BiH (entirely or partially) is focused on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of one group only (see Figure 14).

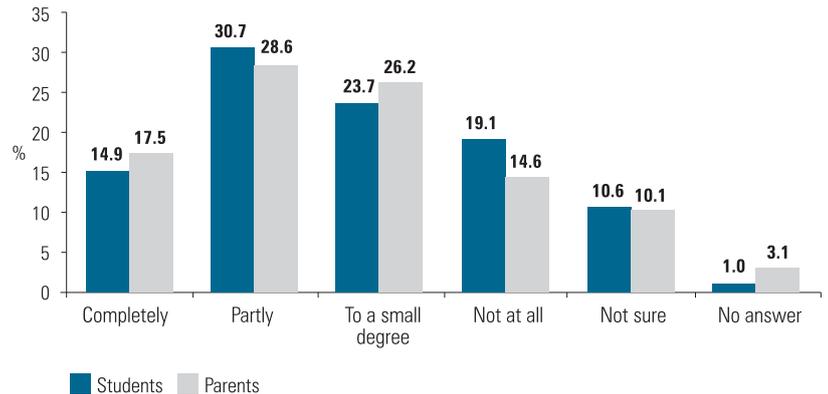


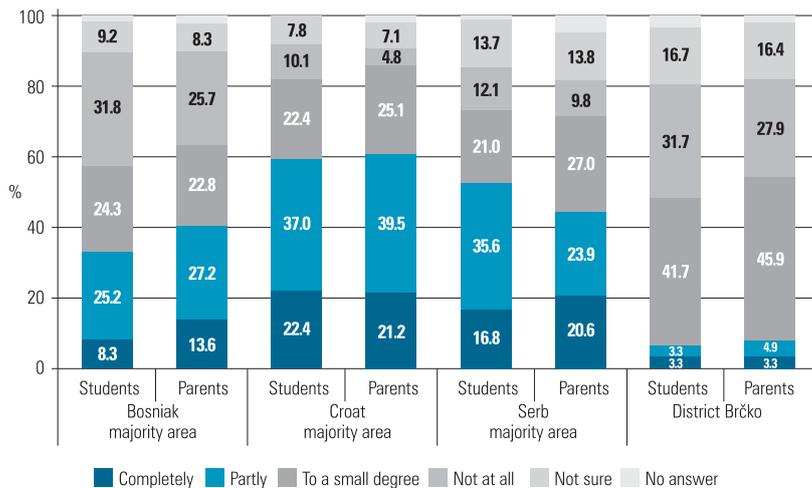
Figure 14  
**Is the BiH education system focused on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of one group only - and, consequently, is the system monoethnic?**

It is important to note that there is a statistically significant difference among respondents from different areas in BiH and their answers to this question.<sup>35</sup> The opinion that the BiH education system is monoethnic is most frequently present in the Croat majority area – 60% of students and parents, then in the Serb majority area (52% of students and 45% of parents) and Bosniak (33% of students and 40% of parents), while in the Brčko District this opinion is held by only 7% of students and 8% of parents. In accordance with this, the Brčko District has the highest percentage of parents who think that the education system is not focused on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of only one people. Both students and parents living in the Bosniak majority area give a more positive assessment of this characteristic of the system than their counterparts living in the other two majority areas (see Figure 15).

More than half of all the students (60%) and parents (55%) who consider the BiH education system to be monoethnic believe that it should not be so. Although this attitude is held by most respondents in all the majority areas, there are certain differences in its presence with students from different areas. Thus, students in

<sup>35</sup> A map outlining the majority areas in BiH can be found in Annex 1.

**Figure 15**  
**Is the BiH education system focused on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of one group only - and, consequently, is the system monoethnic?**



of the Bosniak majority area, more often than those in the Croat and Serb ones, think that the monoethnic feature of the education system they perceive is not right. It should be noted that differences in this attitude among parents living in different parts of BiH are not significant. Students and parents offer the following statements to argue the need to change this feature of the BiH education system: "BiH is a multiethnic country", "the

**Because the environment is already such.**

(High-school student, first grade, Bijeljina, majority)

**That's what they taught us.**

(High-school student, first grade, Bijeljina, majority)

**Because all the ethnic groups follow their education systems.**

(High-school student, second grade, Novi Travnik, majority)

**We should be taught our own values.**

(High-school student, first grade, Bihać, majority)

(only) about their own people", "children should know who they are and who they belong to", "the place and space are monoethnic". Students supporting this attitude are more often found in the Serb and Croat majority areas than in the Bosniak one, while parents' attitudes do not vary from one area to another.

A further analysis suggests that there are differences between majority and minority respondents - students and parents who find the BiH education system to be monoethnic more frequently belong to a minority than to the majority group. Furthermore, minority respondents who find the system to be monoethnic, more frequently than their majority counterparts, find that it should not be so. On the other hand, majority respondents more often support the monoethnic nature of the education system. There are more majority than minority parents whose answer to this question was "I do not know" (see Figure 16).

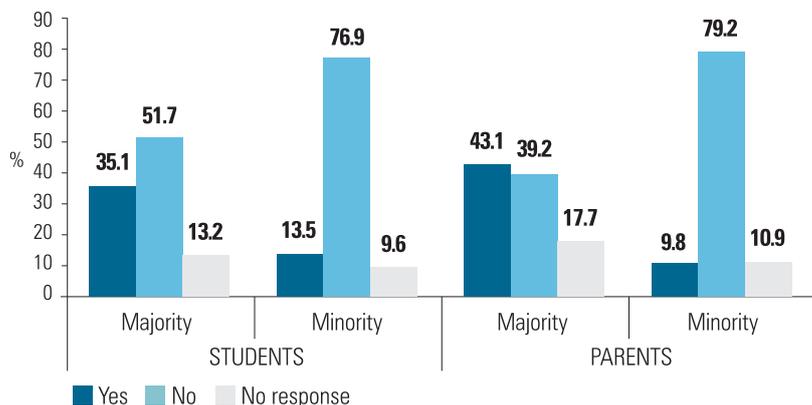
The above findings are also consistent with answers to the following two questions<sup>36</sup> indicating that, in all the areas (except in the Brčko District, with the same result trends but with no statistically significant difference), parents less frequently think that, in schools, their children get a sufficient amount of knowledge about **other groups in BiH** in comparison with the knowledge about **the group the child belongs to** (see figure 17).

In addition to their attitude that their children get an equal amount of knowledge about their own and other BiH groups in school, parents living in the Brčko District, more frequently than parents in the Serb majority area, assess that their children get sufficient knowledge in school about the people they belong to. In addition, more frequently than parents in the Croat and Serb majority area, Brčko District parents also think that their children

<sup>36</sup> Do you think that your child gets sufficient knowledge in school about the cultural identity, language and tradition of their own group? and Do you think that your child gets sufficient knowledge in school about the cultural identity, language and tradition of other peoples in BiH?

education system should be multiethnic", "students should learn about others". Many respondents also stated that "education should be a common value" and that it should be so "in order to have a better future". Less than one-third of students and parents who think that the BiH education system should be monoethnic (29%) state the following reasons for such attitude: "children should first learn about their own people and only then about others", "everybody should learn

**Figure 16**  
**Do you find it appropriate for the BiH education system to be monoethnic?**



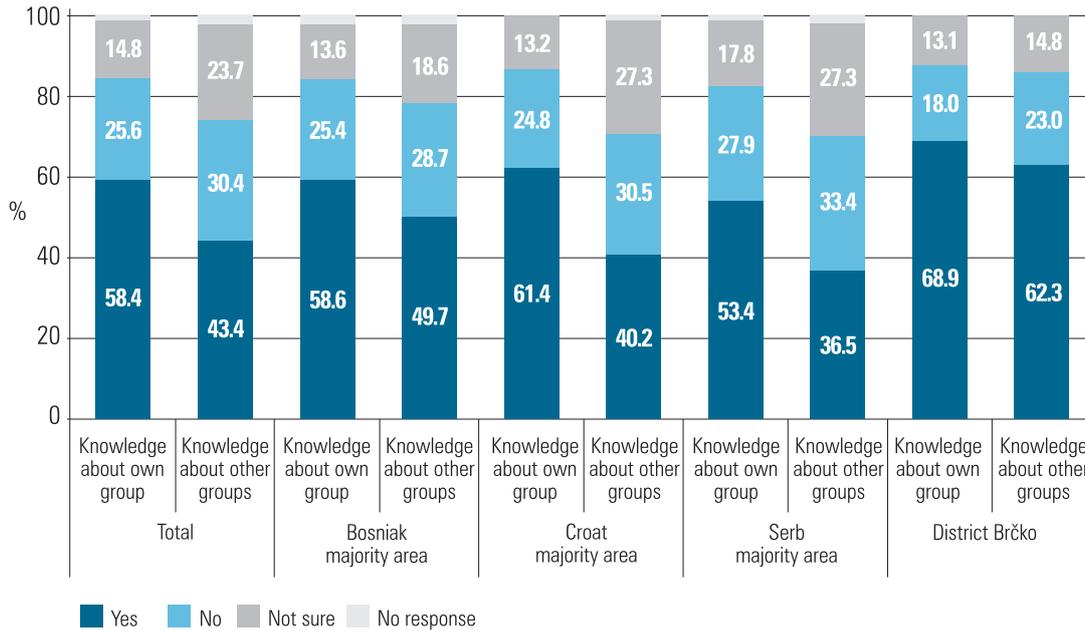


Figure 17  
Do you think that your child gets sufficient knowledge in school about the cultural identity, language and tradition of their own group? and Do you think that your child gets sufficient knowledge in school about the cultural identity, language and tradition of other groups in BiH?

Figure 18 Do you think that your child gets sufficient knowledge in school about the cultural identity, language and tradition of their own group/other groups in BiH?

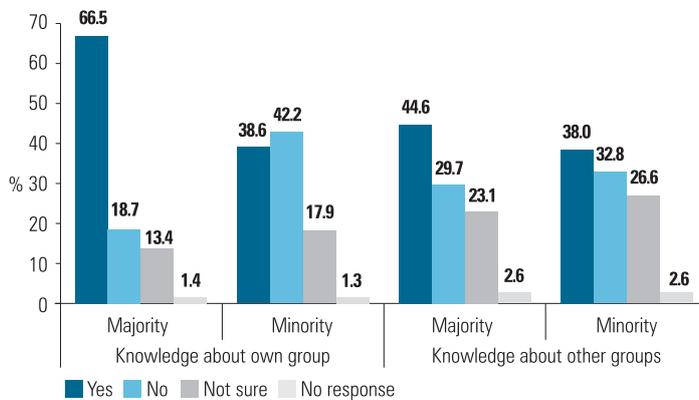
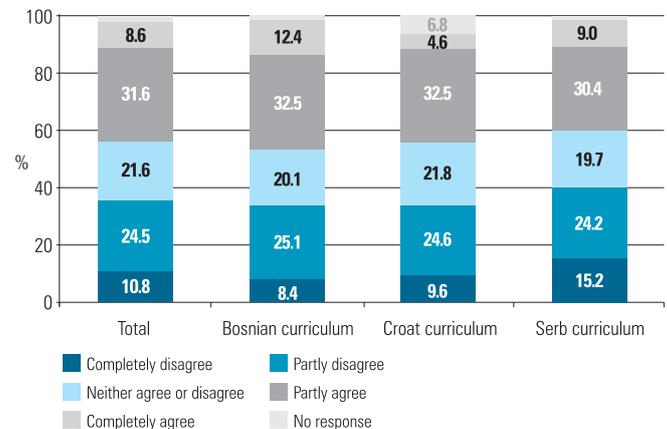


Figure 19 Do you agree that, in school, you do not get sufficient knowledge about other groups in BiH?<sup>37</sup>



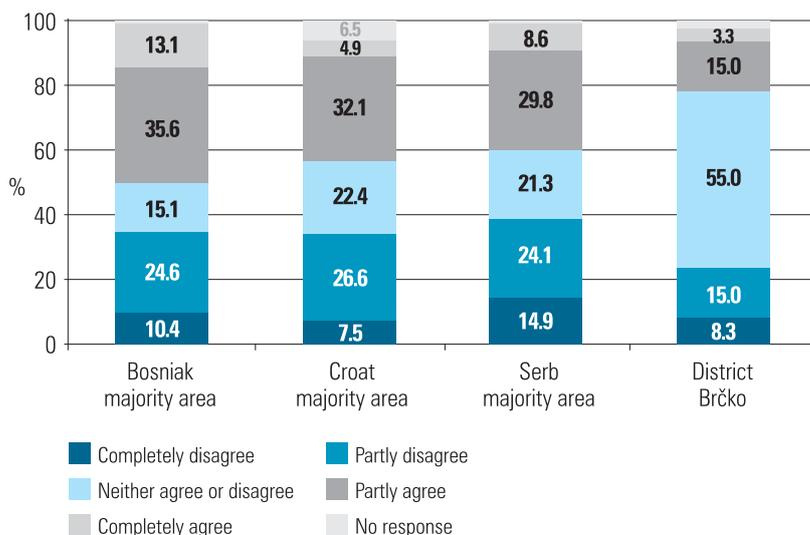
get sufficient knowledge in school about other groups in BiH, while the difference between them and parents in the Bosniak majority area is not statistically significant. More often than with majority parents, parents representing a minority in a given area think that their children **do not get sufficient knowledge** about the cultural identity, language and tradition of **the group they belong to**, while there is no statistically significant difference between majority and minority parents with regard to their assessment of the amount of knowledge their children get about other groups (see Figure 18).

Regardless of the curriculum they follow, over one-third of students (35%) agree with the parents' attitude about an insufficient amount of contents in the BiH education system related to the cultural identity, language and tradition of **other groups** in BiH (see Figure 19). Unlike parents, students in the Bosniak majority area, somewhat more often than their peers in other areas, think that they get sufficient knowledge about other BiH groups in school, while Brčko District students most frequently have an ambivalent attitude towards this issue - they neither agree nor disagree with the above

<sup>37</sup> As it cannot be established which curriculum 72 students follow, the total number of students whose answers were processed in the analysis with respect to curricula is N=948 instead of N=1020.

<sup>38</sup> Gnjato, Grčić, Marić i Rakita (2005:222).

**Figure 20**  
Do you agree that, in school, you do not get sufficient knowledge about other groups in BiH?

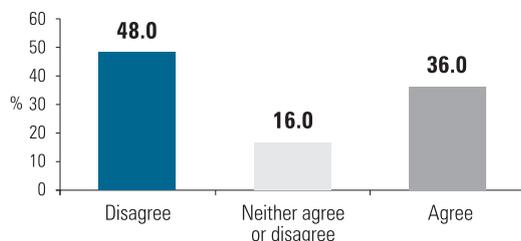


statement (see Figure 20). Moreover, more frequently than minority students, majority students think that they get sufficient knowledge “about others” in school. Apart from the question relating to the presence of contents on “others”, students were also asked about the way “others” are presented in school: 22% of all the students say that other peoples are mostly presented

in a negative context in school. What is additionally concerning is the fact that a percentage of students who think that they do get sufficient knowledge about “others” in school at the same time also think that “others” are mostly presented in a negative context (36%) (see Figure 21). Focus groups pointed out that presenting others in a negative context was not limited to textbook contents but that, in addition, teachers themselves often contributed to creating such attitudes about “others”. The Sarajevo focus group composed of majority students pointed out the following:

*Other groups are not as negatively presented in textbooks as some teachers denigrate them. There is one professor we know of, not teaching in our school though, who thinks that Serbs are the worst people, they slaughtered, killed, looted, abused young girls. It's not how we should be taught... We're still considered primitive because of the way we are taught about others. Let's learn about their achievements and see whether they were useful for us or we for them. Can we learn this? Without immediately mentioning violence and presenting them as negative.*

**Figure 21**  
Do you agree that, in school, you get sufficient knowledge about other groups in BiH? – only students agreeing that other groups are mostly presented in a negative context in school

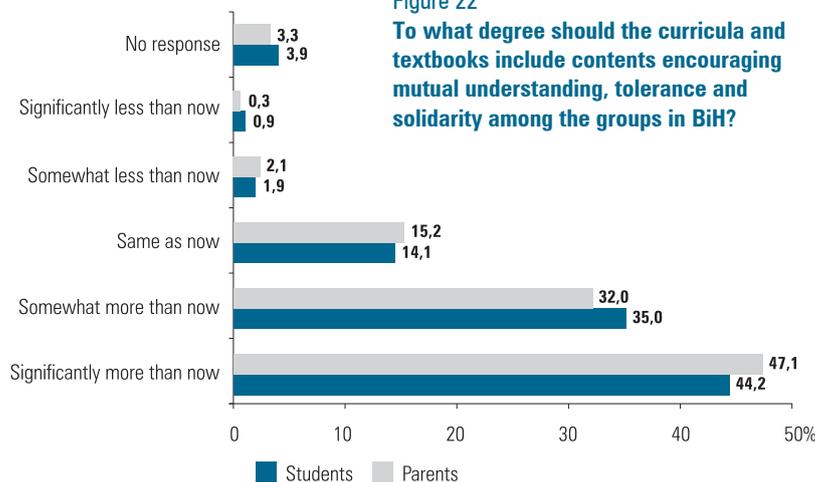


## 2.2. Presence of contents encouraging understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH

A majority of both students and parents agree that the curricula and textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples in BiH (see Figure 22).

In addition, most respondents in all the areas think that the curricula and textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH. This attitude is more frequently held by parents in the Bosniak majority area than by other parents, and less frequently by Brčko District students than by other students (see Figure 23). The need to include such contents is more frequently pointed out by students and parents representing minorities in the Croat and Serb majority areas than by respondents belonging to the majority peoples in these areas. There is no such difference in the Bosniak majority area. The questionnaire for parents also contained a statement taken from a geography textbook<sup>38</sup>, testing their attitude towards the presence of contents relating to tolerance:

**Figure 22**  
To what degree should the curricula and textbooks include contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the groups in BiH?



“The Serb people should demonstrate ethnic and religious tolerance towards other ethnic groups and should develop cooperation with those who are not aggressive in civilisational terms and a threat.” Half the parents said that the above statement could be found in textbooks meant for children in BiH. Parents supporting the presence of this statement in textbooks are mostly of the Serb ethnic background (64%), and there are a number of parents of different ethnic affiliation who agree with its presence - 45% and 40% of parents of the Croat and Bosniak ethnic background, respectively.

The focus group results indicate that the statement is articulated in a way which leaves room for different interpretations. Namely, the statement first suggests that the Serb people should demonstrate tolerance towards others and, then, a universal value is reduced to an attitude towards other ethnic groups with an (un)clear allusion to other BiH peoples (cooperation with those who are not aggressive in civilisation terms and a threat).

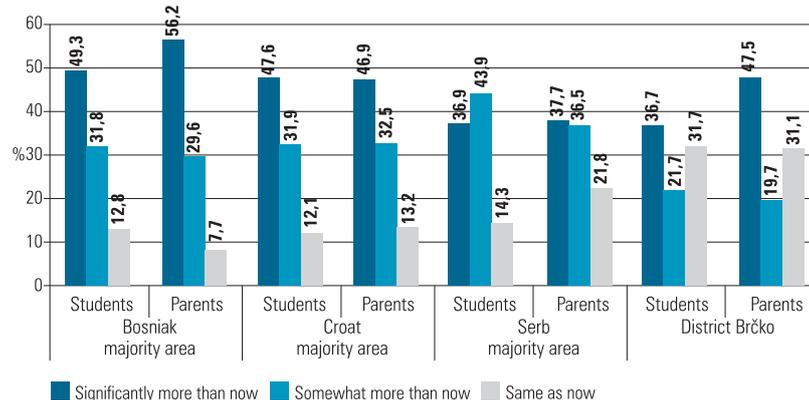
This is the reason that some parents participating in the focus groups interpret this statement as promotion of a universal value which should be present in BiH textbooks. Another possible interpretation of the statement, also resulting in the express support for its presence in textbooks, is that it implicitly indicates that the Serb people have not demonstrated tolerance so far and that it is therefore necessary for this people to develop tolerance towards others. As opposed to this, a number of parents consider the statement as insulting for the Serb people and think that it should not be included in textbooks. Only a small number of parents sees the statement as a case of abuse of the term “tolerance”, where the principle of tolerance is reduced to those ethnic groups that prove to be worthy of it; these parents think that such contents should not be included in the BiH education system.

### 2.3. Multiculturalism of BiH is presented as a value and merit

Education for a multicultural society implies that the diversity of peoples, cultures and religions in BiH and in general is presented as a value and a merit, not as a problem.

An analysis of the contents of curricula and textbooks indicates that this topic is seldom dealt with and that it is more frequently treated so as to send a message that cultural diversity in the country is problematic. However, most students (71%) and parents (75%) believe that, in schools, the diversity of peoples, cultures and religions in BiH should be presented as a value and a merit. As op-

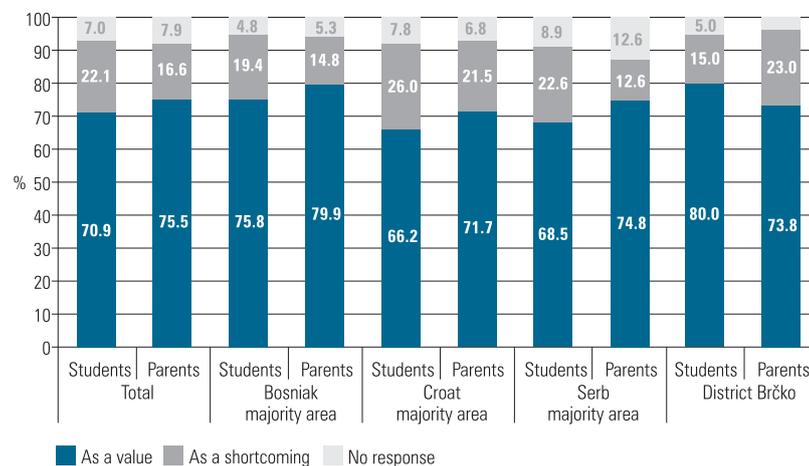
**Figure 23**  
To what degree should the curricula and textbooks include contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH?



posed to this, 22% of students and 17% of parents think that this diversity should be treated as a shortcoming and a possible source of problems (see Figure 24).

Although most respondents in all the areas support a positive presentation of cultural diversity in BiH, there are certain differences among different categories of respondents. Students from the Serb majority area, more often than parents from the same area, think that the diversity of people, culture and religion in BiH should be treated as a shortcoming and a possible source of problems. Students from the Croat majority area, more often than those living in the Bosniak majority area, think that this

**Figure 24**  
Should the diversity of people, culture and religion be presented as a merit and a value in schools or should it be treated as a shortcoming and a possible source of problems?



diversity should be treated negatively. This attitude is also more frequent with parents from the Croat majority area than those from the Bosniak and Serb ones.

There are no significant differences in attitudes of minority and majority students and parents. However, students and parents who, according to the national identity scale,<sup>39</sup> have a stronger feeling of cosmopolitanism more frequently think that the BiH diversity should be presented positively. The same applies to those who have a stronger feeling of ethnic affiliation and ethnic loyalty. Unlike them, students with a distinct feeling of exclusive ethnic affiliation - nationalism - more frequently think that the diversity of people, culture and religion in BiH should, in schools, be treated as a shortcoming and a possible source of problems.

#### 2.4. Positive values and properties are presented as universal values

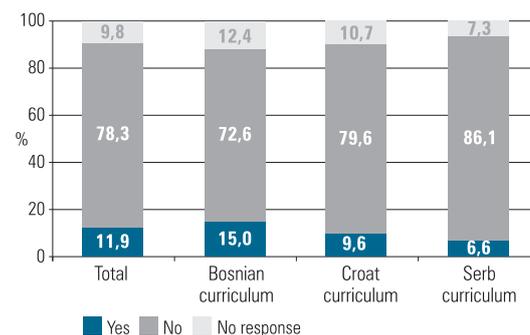
One of the indicators of the presence of education for a multicultural society is the presentation of positive values and properties as universal values typical of people in general, instead of their being ascribed to one nation only and promotion of the “superior culture” idea. Students were, therefore, asked to express their attitude about the way in which certain textbooks treat this topic. Namely, an analysis of contents of certain textbooks indicates that they ascribe positive values and properties to one BiH people only.

Most students (78%), regardless of their ethnic background and the curriculum they follow, do not support such practice. This attitude is most prominent with students following the Serb curriculum, then those following the Croat one and is the least prominent with students following the Bosnian curriculum (see Figure 25). The differences between majority and minority students in a given area are not significant.

At the same time, the questionnaire for parents contained a statement taken from a religious instruction textbook for sixth grade primary school<sup>40</sup>, testing their attitude towards the presence of contents more likely to ascribe universal human values to one people/

members of one religion: “It is natural for a Muslim to be modest and moderate... A Muslim can therefore be distinguished by their dignified and modest behaviour.” The findings indicate that over two-thirds of Bosniak parents (71%) support the presence of this statement in BiH textbooks, while 70% of Serb parents and 53%

Figure 25  
Some textbooks ascribe positive values and properties to one group only without presenting them as universal human values. Do you find it appropriate?



of Croat parents oppose it. Bosniak parents supporting the presence of the statement, which gives an impression that positive attributes can be ascribed to one group only and, at the same time, denies these attributes to other groups, are mostly parents with a stronger feeling of ethnic affiliation.

#### 2.5. Presenting BiH historical development to emphasise contributions of all people

One of the questions examining the attitude of respondents toward education for a multicultural society was related to their attitude towards emphasising the contribution of only one people to development of BiH, instead of presenting this development so as to emphasise contributions of all groups. Certain textbooks were assessed as emphasising the contribution of one group only.

The results indicate that more than half the students and parents (56%) do not agree with this practice. Somewhat less than one-third of them could not define their attitude with regard to this issue, while one-tenth stated they agreed with BiH textbooks suggesting that the contribution of one people is greater than those of other groups in BiH. There are no significant differences among respondents, students and parents equally, from differ-

<sup>39</sup> The National Identity Scale - NAIT (Čorkalo and Kamenov, 1998) is an integral part of the Questionnaire for students. The scale falls under the Likerton type, with the scope of answers from one (1) to five (5). The scale includes 27 statements. Respondent express their degree of agreement with each statement, where 1 stands for “I strongly disagree” and 5 for “I strongly agree”. The results for individual respondents can be expressed compositely on this scale - as a sum of answers relating to individual statements, where a high score indicates strong ethnic identity. As Čorkalo and Kamenov (1998) find that the scale is saturated with four factors (1. strong national affiliation, 2. nationalism or exclusive national affiliation, 3. loyalty to an ethnic group, 4. cosmopolitanism), the analysis can be performed with respect to individual forms of ethnic affiliation. The national identity scale and explanations of individual forms of national affiliation can be found in Annex 1.

<sup>40</sup> Čatić (1997:94).

ent majority areas who think that textbooks emphasise the contribution of one BiH people only. This also applies to minority and majority respondents in a given area. However, there are differences among respondents disagreeing with this approach. Thus, students and parents from the Croat majority area and the Brčko District, less frequently than those from the Bosniak and Serb majority areas, express their disagreement with such contents, much more frequently say they have no attitude about this issue and more frequently say they agree with such contents (see Figure 26).

Students and parents agreeing with the statement that textbooks in BiH suggest that the contribution of one group is greater than those of other groups have a stronger feeling of ethnic loyalty, prominent ethnic affiliation and exclusive ethnic attachment.

As an addition to this general question, the questionnaire for parents also contained the following statements relating to emphasising a greater contribution of certain peoples to the development of BiH.

Statement one reads:

*From the arrival of the Slavonic people to some thirty years ago, the BiH geographical space was populated by a majority Serb population.* Gnjata, Grčić, Marić and Rakita (2005:8)

Statement two reads:

*Muslims are indigenous population in this country and have firmly protected BiH from external attacks and internal attempts of its destruction for centuries.* Sulejmanović and Kapetanović (2005:192)

Statement three reads:

*Croats are the oldest witnesses to Bosnian history.* Madžar and Kichl (2001:63)

Although only a small number of parents (and students) say that, in principle, they agree with emphasising a greater contribution of one people in textbooks, the findings are quite different with regard to specific examples of emphasising a greater contribution of the group they belong to/other groups in BiH. Namely, 52% of respondents of the Serb background agree with the first statement (*From the arrival of the Slavonic people to some thirty years ago, the BiH geographical space was populated by a majority Serb population*) and its presence in textbooks used by children in BiH (whereas 70% of Bosniak and 73% of Croat parents think this statement should not be present in BiH textbooks). Furthermore, 67% of Bosniak parents support the presence of the second statement (*Muslims are indigenous population in this country and have firmly protected BiH from external attacks and internal*

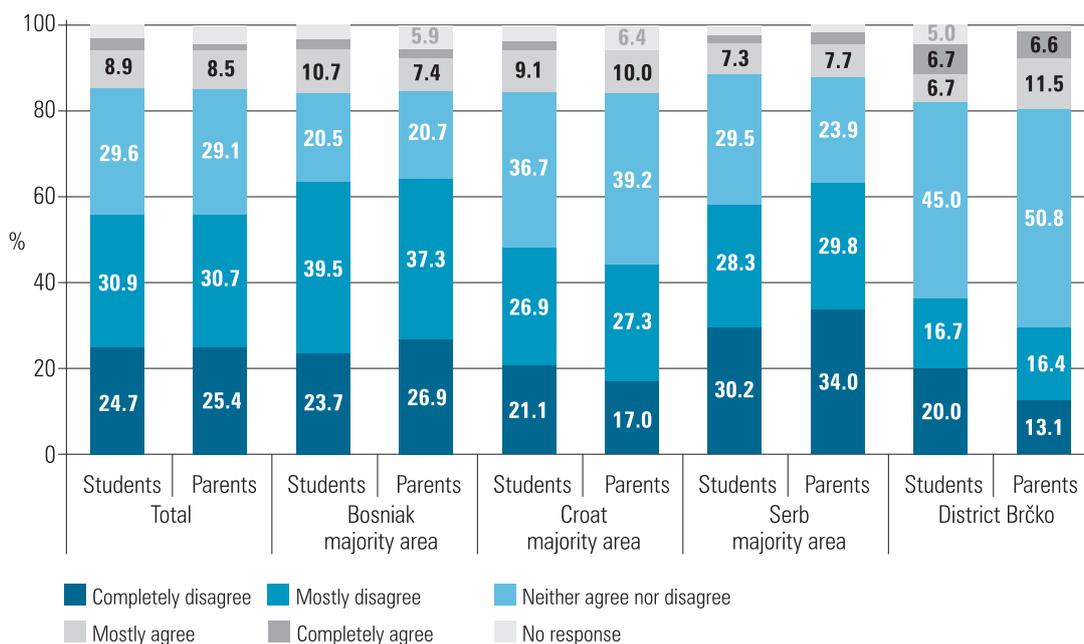
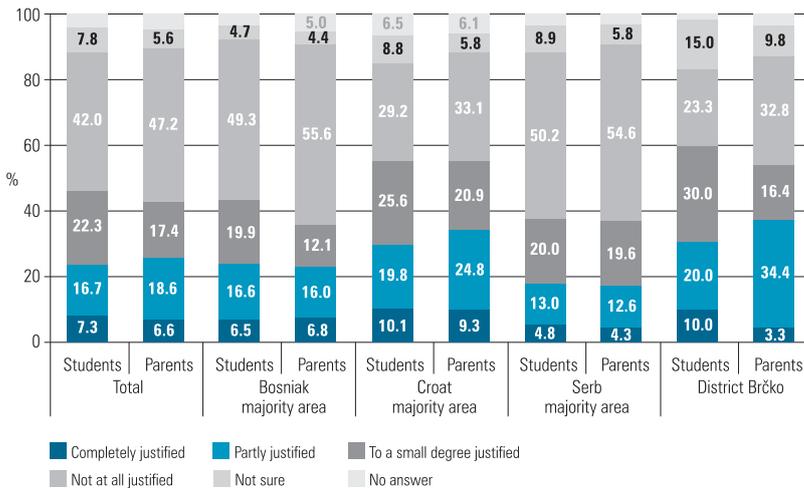


Figure 26  
Some textbooks used in BiH schools suggest that the contribution of one group to the development of BiH is greater than those of other groups. Do you support the presence of the above approach in textbooks?

**Figure 27**  
**The contents of certain textbook emphasise the vulnerability of one group in BiH. To what degree do you find it justified?**



attempts of its destruction for centuries), while 83% of Serb and 69% of Croat parents oppose it. With regard to the third statement (*Croats are the oldest witnesses to Bosnian history*), its presence is supported by 65% of Croat parents, while 74% of Serb and 69% of Bosniak parents think this statement should not be included in textbooks used by children in BiH.

number, only 7% of them believe this practice is utterly justified (most frequently students and parents with a stronger feeling of ethnic affiliation, exclusive ethnic attachment and ethnic loyalty), while the rest believe the practice is partly justified. As opposed to this, most students and parents (64%) condemn this practice (42% of students and 47% of parents think there is no excuse for it, while additional 22% of students and 17% of parents find it justified to a certain degree).

Respondents from various areas of BiH have different opinions as to whether it is justified for BiH textbooks to emphasise the vulnerability of one particular group. Thus, parents and students in the Bosniak and Serb majority areas more frequently think that the above attitude is not justified, while respondents in the Brčko District and the Croat majority area more frequently think that it is justified to emphasise the vulnerability of one BiH people (see Figure 27).

The attitude about the presence of these statements in textbooks is quite in proportion to the degree of the respondents' ethnic attachment. Specifically, parents belonging to all three ethnic groups who support the presence of statements emphasising a greater contribution of one people to development of BiH in comparison with others are those with a higher degree of ethnic attachment.

## 2.6. Group identity is developed on the inclusiveness principle

The analysis of curricula and textbooks indicates that, when constructing three different ethnic identities, textbook authors in BiH often use the mechanisms of exclusiveness, of creating a perceived danger and hostility of others towards one's own ethnic group, as well as glorification of one's own suffering and role of victim.

The polling results indicate that only one quarter of respondents in all the majority areas agree with the practice of emphasising the vulnerability of one's own group through different historical periods. Out of this

Despite the trend that majority students and parents more frequently find it justified (entirely and partly) for textbooks to emphasise the vulnerability of one group, this difference is significant only with regard to respondents in the Croat majority area (see Figure 28). Attitudes of minorities in this regard can probably be explained by the fact that textbooks emphasise vulnerability of the people whose national group of subjects is being studied and that minorities usually follow the majority group's curriculum. As pointed out by the Banja Luka majority focus group, *"the people writing the textbook are always the ones that are vulnerable"*. While there is no difference among students of different ethnic backgrounds with regard to justifiability of emphasising the vulnerability of one group in BiH textbooks, Croat parents, more frequently than others, find such practice justified.

As an addition to this general question, the questionnaire for parents also contained the following statement taken from a geography textbook for the high-school seniors,<sup>41</sup> examining the attitude about vulnerability of one group in textbooks: *"Only in the past four centuries, BiH lost one Croat every day. In a*

<sup>41</sup> Madžar i Kichl (2001:56).

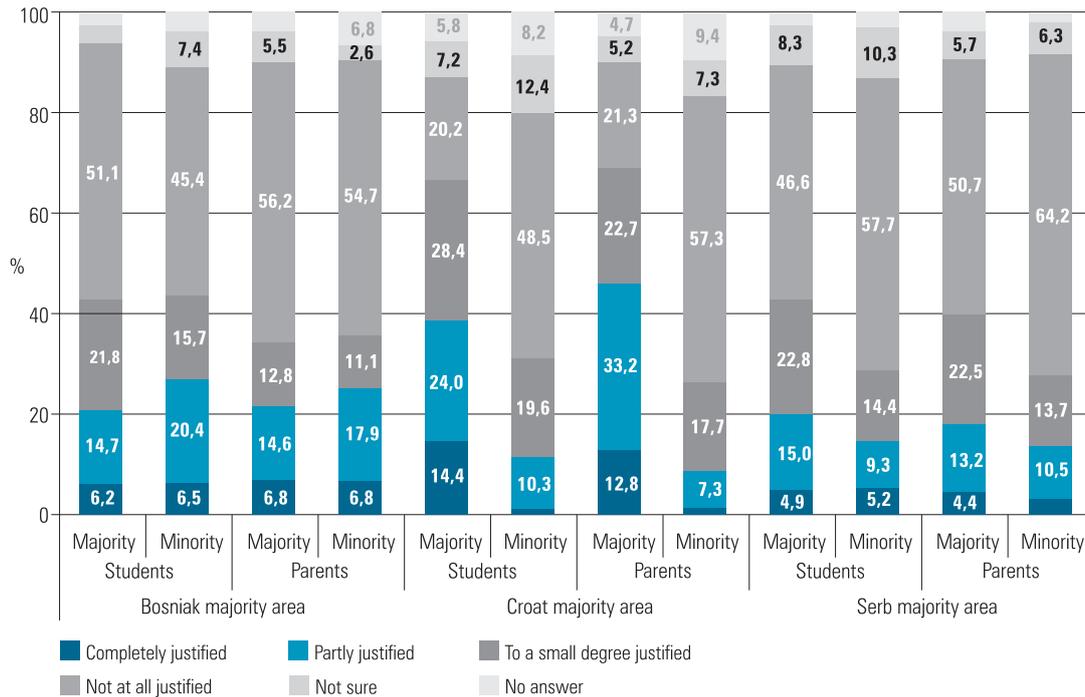


Figure 28  
The contents of certain textbook emphasise the vulnerability of one group in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To what degree do you find it justified?

*This is inherited from Milošević, who emphasised the vulnerability of one people for years and finally turned this people against the others. That is probably why all of them are now vulnerable. Children are taught at an early age that they are vulnerable and they will always be vulnerable. As soon as someone feels vulnerable, they will want to set free. And what then? They develop aggressiveness. Therefore, it is all done on purpose and aims at raising children to feel they have to defend themselves from something when they grow up. (FGD Sarajevo, majority parents)*

word, in BiH one Croat village was “extinguished” every month and one Croat town died away.”

Even though over one-third of Croat parents (39%) agree, in principle, with emphasising the vulnerability of one group in BiH, there are more of them (49%) who support the presence of this statement in textbooks that BiH children use. At the same time, 68% of Bosniak parents and 67% of Serb ones oppose this statement.

Parents of Croat ethnic background agreeing with the presence of this statement are frequently parents with a high degree of ethnic attachment.

## Conclusion

For the purpose of this research, education for a multicultural society is defined through the following aspects:

1. Cultural identities, languages and tradition of all the groups in BiH are equally good and valuable;
2. The teaching process should include contents encouraging understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH;

3. Multiculturalism of BiH should be presented as a value and a merit;
4. Positive values and traits should be presented as universal values typical of people in general;
5. The historical development of BiH should be treated so as to emphasise contributions of all groups;
6. Group identity should be developed on the inclusiveness principle

Most respondents support these aspects and their implementation in education. Although the data indicate unequal support for different aspects of education for a multicultural society in different parts of BiH, most respondents in each area agree with the legislation and its application in BiH schools, there is a considerable discrepancy between respondents’ attitudes about general principles and attitudes about specific examples.

At the same time, almost half the respondents think that the BiH education system focuses on studying the cultural identity, language and tradition of one group - thus being monoethnic, in these terms - in which

most of them have a negative attitude toward such an orientation in education. In accordance with this, less than half the respondents think that, in schools, students get sufficient knowledge about other groups in BiH. It is important to note that one-fifth of students believe that the education system does not offer “knowledge” about the cultural identity, language and tradition of other groups in accordance with education for a multicultural society. The system rather presents “others” in a negative context, not only through its contents but also through the approach of its teachers to such topics.

In principle, Brčko District respondents assess the presence of contents relating to the cultural identity, language and tradition of peoples in BiH in a more positive way than others. They are followed by respondents from the Bosniak majority area, while those from the Croat and Serb majority areas more frequently state that the education system does not pay enough attention to the needs and students and parents of different backgrounds.

Minorities more frequently regard the system as monoethnic and have a negative attitude towards such orientation. Considering that the system is assessed as focused on one ethnic group only, usually on the majority people, minority parents could be expected to state that their children do not get sufficient knowledge about the group they belong to. Although there is no significant difference between majority and minority parents in assessing the knowledge their children get about “others”, this difference is present between the corresponding categories of students.

The differences among majority and minority respondents in a given area are related to the first, second and sixth aspects. Thus, majority students and parents in the Croat and Serb majority areas, more frequently than minorities, think that the current education system teaches that the cultural identities, language and tradition of all the groups in BiH are equally good and valuable and, less frequently than minorities, state that there should be more contents encouraging under-

standing, tolerance and solidarity among the groups in BiH. Furthermore, more frequently than minorities, Croat respondents in the Croat majority area find it justified for textbooks to emphasise the vulnerability of one people.

The findings indicate that respondents with a stronger ethnic attachment less frequently support certain aspects of education for multicultural society. Respondents with a stronger feeling of exclusive ethnic affiliation more frequently think that the diversity of peoples, cultures and religions in BiH schools should be treated as a shortcoming and a potential source of problems. Moreover, respondents with a strong feeling of ethnic loyalty, pronounced ethnic affiliation and exclusive ethnic attachment more frequently agree with the presence of textbook contents emphasising the contribution and vulnerability of one group.

In addition to clear support for the applicable legislation, the results obtained also suggest that parents have double standards when it comes to general aspects of this education principle and when they assess specific contents relating to their own group/other groups in BiH. Thus, although only a minor number of all the parents generally confirmed that textbooks emphasised a greater contribution of one people, a further analysis indicated that their attitudes are rather different when it comes to specific examples of emphasising a greater contribution of their group/other groups in BiH. Namely, 52% of Serb respondents agree with the statement found in a textbook that, *“from the arrival of the Slavonic people to some thirty years ago, BiH was populated by a majority Serb population,”* although only 9% stated, within the general question, that textbooks emphasised a greater contribution of one group. Furthermore, 67% of parents of the Bosniak background support the statement that *“Muslims are the indigenous population in this country and have firmly protected BiH from external attacks and internal attempts of its destruction for centuries”*, while 8% express their support for the general practice of this sort. Some 65% of Croat parents agree with the statement that, *“Croats are the oldest witnesses to Bosnian history”*, 14% of them in support of the general question.

# Principle 3: Education for a society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law

The Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education (Article 3) prescribes that one of the principal aims of education in BiH is to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms and prepare every person to live in a society based on the principles of democracy and rule of law.

The survey examined students and parent attitudes about the acceptability of this principle and its presence in current education practice. The focus was on the following aspects:

- The curricula and textbooks are designed so as to encourage critical thinking and enable students to make their own conclusions with regard to the contents presented;
- The teaching process develops the attitude that differences are desirable;
- Education contents do not encourage stereotypical presentations of certain groups;
- Education encourages understanding and respect for individual and collective principles.

### 3.1. Encouraging critical thinking

Although one of the aims of education reform in BiH is to introduce contents and methods encouraging critical thinking, debate and dialogue, only 37% of students polled think that their curricula and textbooks are designed (entirely and partially) in such a way, whereas only 5% of them think they are completely designed in such a way. As opposed to this, almost half the students (48%) think that there is little or no presence of such approach in BiH education. More frequently than others, students following the Bosnian

curriculum think that curricula and textbooks are designed (entirely and partially) so as to encourage critical thinking and enable students to make their own conclusions with regard to contents presented, while students following the Croat curriculum, more frequently than others, think that they are not designed in such a way at all. Students following the Serb curriculum, more often than others, think that, in the curricula and textbooks currently used, this concept is present only to a small degree (see Figure 29).

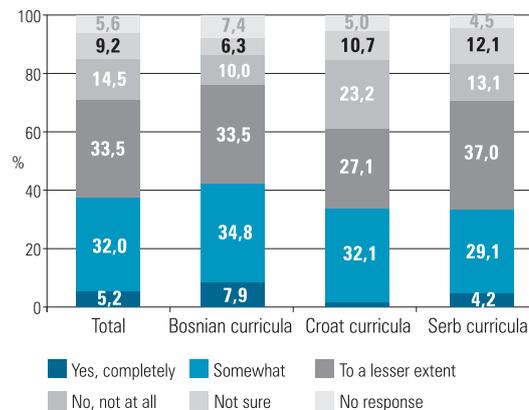


Figure 29  
**Are the curricula and textbooks designed so as to encourage critical thinking and enable students to make their own conclusions with regard to contents presented?**

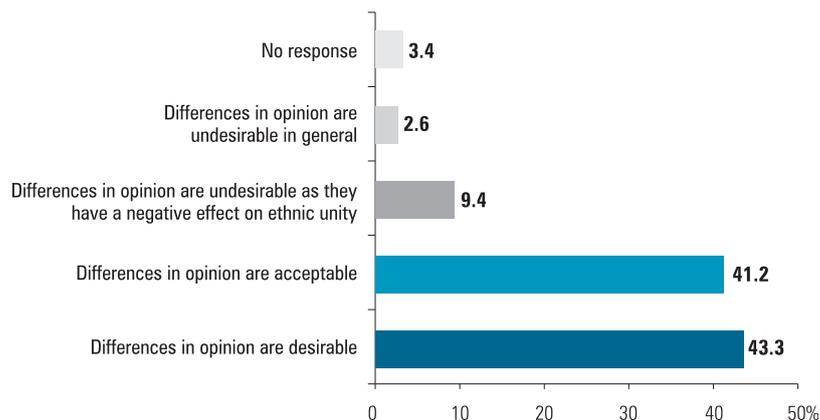
To establish their attitudes about the need to develop a positive relation toward differences in opinion, the students were asked about the way such differences should be presented in schools. They were offered the following options:

- differences in opinion are desirable,
- differences in opinion are acceptable,
- differences in opinion are undesirable as they have a negative effect on ethnic unity,
- differences in opinion are undesirable in general.

The results obtained support the need to have a larger amount of focus on developing critical thinking. Thus,

43% of students believe that schools should teach that **differences in opinion are desirable**, while 41% of them believe that they are **acceptable**. Only 9% of students think that differences in opinion are **undesirable** as they have a negative effect on ethnic unity, while additional 3% think that schools should teach that differences in opinion are undesirable in general (see Figure 30).

Figure 30  
Do you think that students should be taught in schools that...?



Students in BiH, regardless of the curriculum they follow, have similar attitudes about treating differences in opinion within the teaching process. However, there are differences among students with different forms of ethnic attachment. Thus, students with a strong feeling of cosmopolitanism more frequently think that differences in opinion are desirable, while those with a strong feeling of ethnic attachment find differences in opinion not to be desirable.

### 3.2. Stereotypical presentation of “us” and “others”

*Stereotypes are put in textbooks in order for children to read them and become good Bosniaks, Serbs or Croats when they grow up. Some educated minds say that children should be properly directed before they are 14 and can be used for any purpose after that. They are to be brainwashed and instructed what to think, and not to think differently.*

(FGD Sarajevo, parent, majority)

Table 6a Auto-stereotypes in textbooks in BiH

AUTO-STEREOTYPES		
Bosnian Curriculum	Croat Curriculum	Serb Curriculum
<p><b>Pan-Bosnian orientation<sup>42</sup></b></p> <p>Bosniaks are the people offering the strongest support for the idea of an integral Bosnian identity.</p>	<p><b>The right to state</b></p> <p>All dominant political opting on the part of Croats through history expressed a key aspiration - to have their own state.</p>	<p><b>Heroism</b></p> <p>We are a small people that became big through love of freedom, resolution not to be subdued and heroism.</p>
<p><b>Equality</b></p> <p>Bosniaks feel compelled to keep proving the legitimacy of their own identity, both to themselves and to others.</p>	<p><b>Indigenoussness</b></p> <p>The Croat identity is the oldest and the longest present identity in BiH.</p>	<p><b>Martyrdom</b></p> <p>The Serb people embody the Christ-like principle of sacrifice - part of which is a constant lack of understanding on the part of others.</p>
<p><b>Humanity</b></p> <p>Bosniaks are characterised by sublime morality - one of its principle expressions is our passive suffering in different historical periods.</p>	<p><b>Political superiority</b></p> <p>Croats are a people that has always clearly defined its strategic goals and interests through history and has timely acted on them.</p>	<p><b>Progressiveness</b></p> <p>Serbs are a people that have always been the first and most progressive - others refuse to recognise this.</p>

<sup>42</sup> The original study used the term *pan-nationalism*.

In her study on the presentation of historical content in BiH textbooks, entitled, *“Divergent Stories, Convergent Attitudes”*, Pilvi Torsti<sup>43</sup> used a theoretical framework based on a thesis of social and historical collectivism to establish the presence of stereotypes in representing the BiH constituent peoples in textbooks. Torsti also defined specific auto and hetero-stereotypes in textbooks and pointed that, on the one hand, they helped raise ethnic awareness about “us” and, on the other, helped maintain and justify a hostile attitude towards “others”.

An adapted version of Torsti’s categorisation of stereotypes was used for the purpose of this research. Since an analysis of textbook contents was made simultaneously with this survey, parts of textbooks (paragraphs, sentences) were taken over from the preliminary results of this analysis. These parts represent examples of stereotypical representation of “us” and “others”.<sup>44</sup> They were then incorporated in the questionnaire for students to establish students’ attitude towards the presence of such contents in BiH textbooks.

Table 6 gives an adapted overview of stereotypical presentation of “us’ and “others” in textbooks for the national group of subjects, i.e. in different curricula: Bosnian, Croat and Serb.

The survey examined attitudes of students towards the presence of stereotypes in textbooks. Owing to limited space, one auto-stereotype from all three curricula was chosen for the purpose of this survey: *“Pan-Bosnian orientation”* from the Bosnian curriculum, *“The right to a state”* from the Croat and *“Martyrdom”* from the Serb curriculum.

**Pan-Bosnian orientation**

This auto-stereotype implies seeing Bosniaks as a people that most strongly supports the idea of an integral Bosnian identity. The Bosnian identity is identified with the idea of several nations without competition among them. The statement examining the presence of this auto-stereotype is taken from a history textbook for the first grade of secondary school.<sup>45</sup> It reads as follows:

<sup>43</sup> Torsti (2003).

<sup>44</sup> Owing to a limited space and extensiveness of this research, not all examples of stereotypes could be included.

<sup>45</sup> Fornić, Daguda i Zaimović (2003:67).

Table 6b  
Hetero-stereotypes in textbooks in BiH

HETERO-STEREOTYPES		
Bosnian Curriculum	Croat Curriculum	Serb Curriculum
<p><b>Insignificance of others</b></p> <p>Historical events in the region are presented from the point of Bosnian and Bosniak peoples. The Bosnian point covers both Serb and Croat points, without clearly differentiating between the two.</p>	<p><b>Hostility</b></p> <p>Others are seen as unbenevolent, even antagonistic towards the Croat “national project”.</p>	<p><b>Cruelty</b></p> <p>Through history, others continuously treated the Serb people extremely cruelly.</p>
<p><b>Presentations of other people are sporadic</b></p> <p>The presence and role of other groups are sporadic and rarely mentioned. Bosniak suffering is described in terms of suffering injustice, implying that others cause it.</p>	<p><b>Privileged position of others</b></p> <p>Others are presented as privileged - they are systemically preferred in distribution of common goods and roles. Others are colonisers.</p>	<p><b>Hostility</b></p> <p>Considering the intensity and frequency of unfair treatment, others are clearly hostile towards “us”.</p>
		<p><b>Unreliability</b></p> <p>Others are seen as traitors that crossed over to the enemy in different historical events.</p> <p>Others are collaborators.</p>

*There are few places in the world today such as BiH, where three major religions meet. The capital of BiH, Sarajevo, is called the European Jerusalem.*

The results indicate that 48% of students following the Bosnian curriculum agree with the presence of the above statement in textbooks used by children in BiH, which is considerably more in comparison with students following the Serb curriculum (30%) and the Croat one (35%). The only difference in supporting this statement among students following the same curricula is in the fact that Bosniak students following the Serb curriculum more often support its presence in textbooks than their peers of Serb background.

This stereotype can be concluded to be strongly present with students following the various curricula. A possible reason behind this is an inclusive character of the stereotype that promotes multiculturalism as one of a lasting values of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which most students believe should be promoted as an advantage in schools.

### **The right to a state**

This is a Croat stereotype in which actions and dominant political orientations of the Croat people are reduced to and explained primarily by an aspiration for an unjustly denied state. This stereotype emphasises the importance of an independent state for Croats, where all dominant political opting of Croats through history is interpreted by means of one key element - an aspiration for their own state. The statement examining the presence of this stereotype is taken from the textbook entitled *My Geography*. It reads as follows:

*The BiH Constitution establishes two entities (states): the FBiH and RS. Therefore, three constituent, equal groups live in two entities. It is not difficult to conclude who is denied their share in BiH! Without this, BiH cannot function as a state.*

This stereotype is most frequently present with students following the Croat curriculum (46%). However, a significant share of students following the Bosnian (39%) and Serb (28%) curricula also agree with this state-

ment. The difference among students of different ethnic backgrounds following the same curriculum is present inasmuch as Croat students following the Croat curriculum more frequently support its presence in textbooks.

### **Martyrdom**

This stereotype reflects the perception of Serbs as a people that, despite facing misunderstanding and unfair treatment on the part of others, are ready to sacrifice themselves for "a noble cause". The statement is taken from a ninth grade primary school history textbook:

*During WWI, people in BiH were exposed to all the misfortune and suffering caused by a war. The Serb people were in the most difficult position. They were accused of the assassination in Sarajevo and thereby exposed to unheard-of terror.*

53% of students following the Serb curriculum agree with this statement, as well as 21% following the Bosnian and 14% following the Croat curriculum. Regardless of their curriculum, students of Serb background support the presence of this statement in BiH textbooks more frequently than their peers of the Bosniak and Croat backgrounds.

For the purpose of examining the hetero-stereotypes in student attitudes the following hetero-stereotypes were selected: "*Insignificance of others*" in the Bosnian curriculum, "*Privileged position of others*" in the Croat curriculum and "*Unreliability*" in the Serb curriculum.

### **Insignificance of others**

Hetero-stereotypes with Bosniaks are based on seeing other as historically insignificant. They are seldom mentioned, sporadically and indirectly - through suffering they inflicted on Bosniaks. As this is related to the absence of others, not to their negative treatment, the presence of this stereotype with respondents could not be examined against statements taken from textbooks.

### **Privileged position of others**

This stereotype presents others as privileged - they are systemically preferred in distribution of common goods and social roles. This entails that Croats can exercise

their national and civil rights only within their own state. The statement for this stereotype is taken from a history textbook for the eighth grade of primary school:<sup>48</sup>

*All important decisions in Yugoslavia were made in the centre of the state and the republic had to implement them. In Croatia, a privileged position of Serbs was very prominent. As party members, they were given responsible positions and they suppressed expressions of Croat national feelings in various ways.*

Somewhat more than one-third of students following the Croat curriculum (34%) agree with the above statement. A considerably lower percentage of students following the Bosnian (17%) and Serb (14) curricula agree with the statement. The differences between students following different curricula consist in the fact that Croat students following the Croat curricula, more frequently than their Bosniak and Serb counterparts, support the presence of this statement in textbooks.

### Unreliability

In this stereotype others are seen as unreliable - they crossed over to the enemy in different historical events and can, therefore, not be considered reliable. The relating statement was taken from a history textbook for the ninth grade of primary school:<sup>49</sup>

*German troops entered Zagreb on 10 April 1941. Zagreb townsfolk greeted them with flowers and offered them treats. For the Serb people and the peaceful people of Yugoslavia, this meant the beginning of suffering, hardships and genocide.*

46% of students following the Serb curriculum, 17% of students following the Croat curriculum and 16% of

those following the Bosnian curriculum agreed with this statement. Serb students following the Serb and Croat curricula, more often than Bosniak and Croat students, supported the presence of this statement in textbooks.

### 3.3. Individual and collective principles in textbooks

In order for their attitudes to be established with regard to a desirable treatment of the principle of the individual and collective in textbooks, the students were asked how BiH curricula and textbooks should be designed. The results indicate that the awareness of the need to emphasise the individual and civic principles is at a rather low level. Namely, most respondents (71%) think that the curricula and textbook should **equally emphasise** the importance of individual citizen in society and the importance of belonging to a certain group or religion. A smaller percentage (18%) think that **the importance of the individual citizen in society** should be emphasised, while less than one-tenth of them think that the curricula and textbooks should be designed so as to emphasise the importance of belonging to a group and/or religion. Parents, more often than students, think that the importance of the individual should be emphasised (see Table 7).

The attitude that it is important to *equally emphasise both the importance of the individual citizen and the importance of belonging to a people* is most frequently held by students and parents in all the majority areas and students in the Brčko District, whereas parents in the Brčko District most frequently think that the curricula should emphasise the *importance of the individual*

<sup>48</sup> Matković, Goluža i Šarac (2005:108)

<sup>49</sup> Pejić (2005:65).

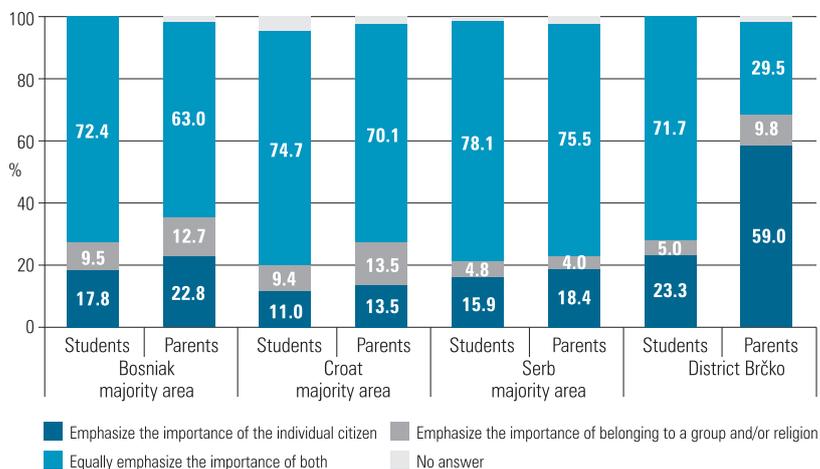
SHOULD THE CURRICULA AND TEXTBOOKS USED IN SCHOOLS...	Parents		Students	
	N	%	N	%
Emphasise the importance of the individual citizen in society	215	20,75	158	15,49
Emphasise the importance of belonging to a group and/or religion	104	10,04	79	7,75
Equally emphasise the importance of both	695	67,08	763	74,80
I do not know	17	1,64	16	1,57
I do not want to answer	5	0,49	4	0,39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.036</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7  
The attitude of respondents to the individual and collective in BiH curricula and textbooks

*citizen in society.* The same attitude is more frequently held by parents in the Bosniak majority area than those living in the Croat majority area, and more often by students in the Brčko District and the Bosniak majority area than those living in the Croat majority area.

The opinion that the curricula and textbooks should emphasise the importance of belonging to a group and/or a religion is less frequently supported by parents in the Serb majority area than by others, as well as by students in this area than students in the Bosniak and Croat majority areas (see Figure 31).

Figure 31  
Do you think that the curricula and textbooks used in schools should:



Focus group participants gave the following examples to illustrate attitudes toward the principles of the individual and collective in BiH schools:

*Textbooks often encourage one not to see a person as an individual; they consider groups and classify a person as belonging to one of them, to a group they may not want to belong to but their name classifies them as a member, whether they want it or not...*

*Therefore, if you are a member of the Serb people, right away you are considered a Serb who took part in the war and are placed in a negative context. Even though you were here at the time, in Sarajevo during the war, even if you lost someone, they immediately put you in a negative context. (FGD Sarajevo, minority student)*

### 3.3.1. Presentation of the value of the collective in textbooks

During preparations for this survey, it was observed that some BiH textbooks presented values as a group, state or religion as the highest achievements of the human social existence. The values shared by a whole collective are given preference over the personality of the individual, realisation of their potential and respect for personal integrity. All other elements of the individual's identity are considered unimportant and subordinate to their collective identity.

The questionnaire for parents contained two statements from textbooks illustrating such an approach. Their purpose was to establish the attitude of parents towards their presence in textbooks.

The first statement was taken from the textbook entitled, *My Geography*<sup>50</sup> and served as an example of the representation of social institutions, concepts and values (state, nation, democracy, human rights, freedom, etc.) as absolute, constant and indisputable:

*The people and the state are the highest achievements of the human mind.*

63% of parents agree with the fact that this statement should be found in textbooks used in BiH. Parents supporting the presence of this statement in textbooks are usually of Bosniak and Croat backgrounds (66%) but 56% of Serb parents also agree with its presence.

The second statement from the same textbook<sup>51</sup> is an example of putting so much emphasis on the "religious" identity that this value is represented as "universal" and as typical of humankind in general:

*Religion is a centuries-old supreme inspiration for man. It does not consist of places of worship only. It is the entirety of our spiritual space - the way we think, behave, act and live.*

78% of parents agree that the statement should be included in textbooks used in BiH. Parents support-

<sup>50</sup> Markotić i Markotić (2005:51)

<sup>51</sup> Markotić i Markotić (2005:87)

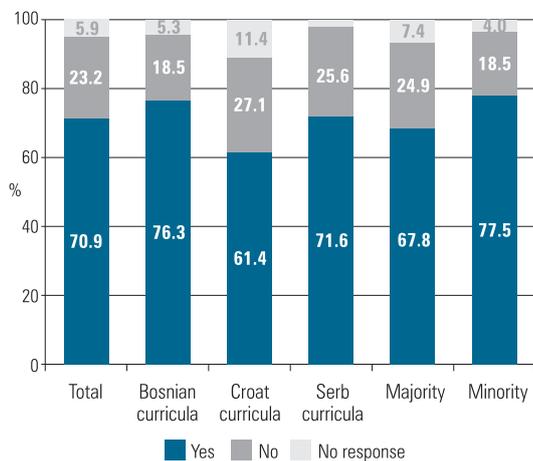
ing the presence of this statement in textbooks are most usually Croats (83%), but most Bosniak and Serb parents also agree with its presence (77% and 74%, respectively).

### 3.3.2. Contents related to armed conflict and war in general

The analysis has established that history textbooks devote a lot of space to armed conflict and war in general, which gives students an impression of their inevitability. In addition, textbooks often make one's readiness to die for one's country or people the key criterion for patriotism.

The data obtained in this survey is consistent with the content analysis results - most students (71%) think that BiH textbooks place too much emphasis on armed conflict and war in general while studying national or global history. This attitude is more frequently present with those following the Bosnian and Serb curricula than those following the Croat curriculum. In addition, minority students in any given area, more often than their majority counterparts, think that armed conflicts and wars receive too much attention in textbooks (see Figure 32).

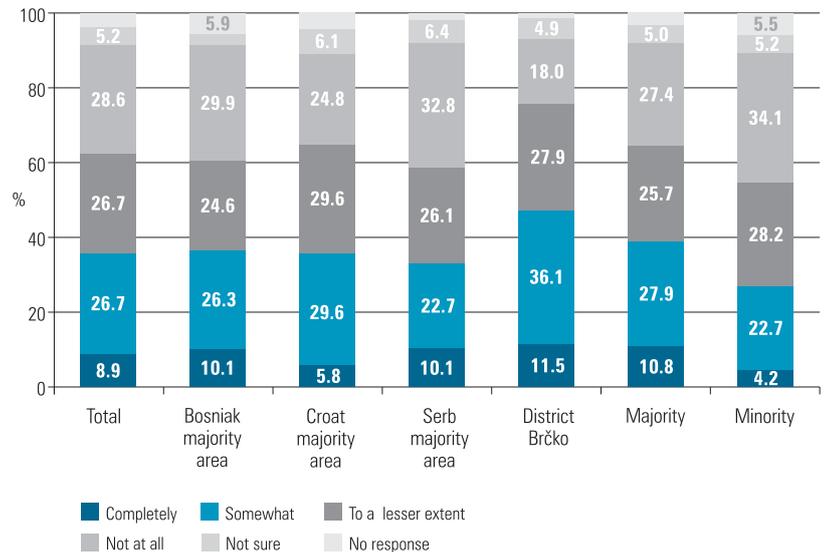
**Figure 32**  
**Do you think that there is too much emphasis on armed conflict and war in general while studying national or global history?**



It is interesting that this is one of the rare cases when there is a difference in opinion between male and female students. Female students more frequently think that there is too much emphasis on armed conflict and war in general while studying national or global history.

Parents were additionally asked whether it was justified to devote too much textbook space to armed conflicts. Half the parents (55%) believe such textbook concept is not justified at all or is justified to a degree. One-third of parents (36%) believe it is justified (entirely and partly) to devote a lot of space to armed conflicts and wars in general in history teaching. Brčko District parents, more frequently than parents in other majority areas - the Serb majority area in particular, support a considerable presence of armed conflicts and wars in general in history textbooks. Majority parents more frequently support this approach than minority parents in any given area (see Figure 33).

**Figure 33**  
**In national and global history textbooks, a lot of space is devoted to armed conflict and war in general. To what degree do you find it justified?**



Apart from the question relating to parent attitudes about the presence of contents on armed conflicts, the survey used certain statements to examine their attitudes towards the way armed conflicts and wars are treated in textbooks. The statements related to the inevitability of wars in general, the justifiability of war as a means for pursuing national interests, to the glorification of violence and taking martyrdom and

readiness to die for one's country as the key criteria for patriotism:

*From 1992 to 1995, there was a war within BiH, which represented a means for pursuing the ethnic interests of the constituent groups.*

Gnjato, Grčić, Marić and Rakita (2005:17)

*Serbs in BiH heroically fought for their entity – Republika Srpska. Serbs in Croatia did not manage to defend Republika Srpska Krajina and, in 1995, they were mostly expelled from their homes.*

Mihaljčić (2003:238)

*In our proud country, BiH, there were many veterans who, sacrificing their lives, confirmed the nobility and truth of their martyrdom. Even today Bosniaks are ready to confirm their martyrdom, if necessary, to defend their faith and country.*

Omerdić and Kalajđisalihović (2005:9)

59% parents polled agreed with the fact that the first statement should be found in textbooks used by children in BiH, while one-third of them agreed with the second and third statements. The presence of the first statement, which is rather general, is, in principle, supported by parents of all ethnic backgrounds; however, this is not the case with the other two statements, which relate the attitude towards the war with one of the BiH peoples.

Thus, parents supporting the presence of the second statement in textbooks are mostly of Serb background (68%) and usually with a strong feeling of ethnic attachment. As opposed to this, most Bosniak (71%) and Croat (60%) parents oppose its presence in textbooks. It is important to note that Croats oppose this statement to a considerably lesser degree than Bosniaks.

Parents supporting the presence of the third statement are mostly of Bosniak background (57%) and usually with a strong feeling of ethnic attachment. 52% of Serb and 45% of Croat parents oppose the presence of this statement in textbooks.

## Conclusion

Although one of the aims of education reform in BiH is to introduce contents and methods encouraging critical thinking, debate and dialogue, only 37% of students polled think that their curricula and textbooks are designed in such a way. This is supported by the results indicating the presence of stereotypes in both textbook contents and students' attitudes, a comparatively low level of awareness of the need to emphasise the civic and individual principles, and attitude of students towards the treatment of differences in opinion through teaching materials.

Students following the Croat curriculum, more often than others, think that the curricula and textbooks are not designed to encourage critical thinking and enable students to make their own conclusions about the contents presented, whereas students following the Bosnian curriculum, more frequently than others, think that the curricula and textbooks are designed to encourage critical thinking. As opposed to this, there are no significant differences with regard to the desirable treatment of differences in opinion: 43% of students believe that schools should teach that **differences in opinion are desirable**, 41% of them believe that they are **acceptable**, and only 12% of students think that differences in opinion are **undesirable**.

Respondents in all the majority areas most frequently think that both the *importance of the individual citizen* and the *importance of affiliation to a group* should be equally emphasised. Only parents in the Brčko District for the most part feel that it is necessary to emphasise the importance of the individual citizen. This attitude is less present in other areas (between 11% and 23%).

Both students and parents agree that contents relating to armed conflict and war in general are given a lot of textbook space in studying national and global history. At the same time, according to the results relating to specific examples of presenting history as a series of conflicts pursuing the interests of various groups in certain historical periods, the awareness of the

ultimate consequence of such a presentation of history - legitimising the use of weapons - is at a rather low level.

Differences in opinion between majority and minority respondents in a given area are present inasmuch as minority students and parents are more critical of the presence of contents relating to armed conflict and wars in general in BiH textbooks.

The data obtained also indicate that both auto and hetero-stereotypes of one's own group are, in principle, more frequent with students who represent the majority and who follow "their own" curriculum. Minority students following a majority curriculum have fewer stereotypes of their own people and give stronger support to certain stereotypes of the majority group than their majority counterparts. It can be concluded that textbooks have a considerable influence on generating stereotypical presentations of "us" and "others", without diminishing the influence of the media, family and environment in general.

The presence of stereotypes in textbooks and student attitudes is in direct contravention of legal provisions stipulating the encouragement of analytical and interpretation skills with students, a multiperspectivity approach to studying historical events and preparing the individual to live in a pluralist society based on participatory democracy and the rule of law. This is particularly dangerous in a society such as BiH, since differentiating between "us" and "them" by adopting stereotypical images of historical roles, political orientations and, generally, the position of a group in "a higher order of things" upholds the process of differentiation of the constituent peoples in BiH. Looking at characteristics of particular people through stereotypes develops the attitude that "our" and "their" characteristics are significantly or completely different and are not overlapping whatsoever,<sup>52</sup> thus implicitly or explicitly degrading "others" in comparison with "us". Since they offer a ready-made categorial apparatus for understanding oneself and others and since they encourage students to identify with collec-

tive values and norms, stereotypes also serve to justify actions taken by members of one's own group in the name of this people, as well as to preserve an uncritically positive image of one's own people.

With regard to the above, the issue of stereotypes in textbooks and student attitudes is an important one within education reform and it requires to be paid due attention. Owing to limited space, this issue cannot be properly treated within this research, but it would be very important for it to be subject to separate and detailed research. Namely, this study cannot offer an answer as to whether there is a causal relationship between certain stereotypical contents in textbooks and students' attitudes, but the results are sufficiently indicative for the following issue to be raised: what does education actually teach our children?

<sup>52</sup> Kecmanović (2005).

## Principle 4: Providing high-quality education free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice and discrimination

In the Education Reform Strategy, education ministers committed to giving children the opportunity to have high-quality education free from political, religious, cultural and other prejudice (Promise 1). This survey examined attitudes of students and parents towards the application of this principle in current education practice. The focus was on the following forms of discrimination:

- Discrimination on ethnic grounds;
- Discrimination on religious grounds;
- Discrimination on economic grounds;
- Discrimination on the grounds of politics and gender.

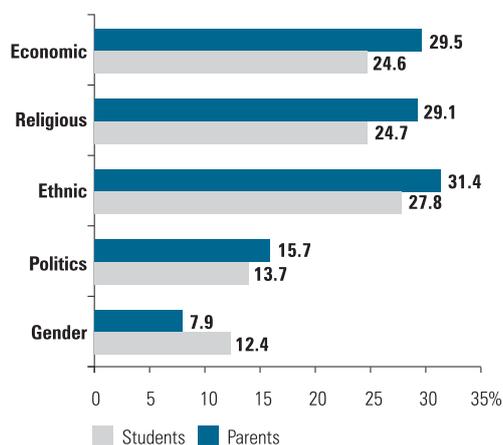
Students and parents included in this research think that discrimination on various grounds is present in the BiH education system. They most frequently think that students are discriminated against on ethnic, religious and economic grounds, whereas a smaller number of them think that discrimination on the grounds of politics and gender is also present in schools. There are significant differences between students and parents

with regard to the presence of discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender (students more frequently report its presence), as well as on economic and religious grounds (parents, more often than students, think it is present in the BiH education system) (see Figure 34).

After the question relating to their perception of different forms of discrimination within the BiH education system, students and parents were asked to give examples of discrimination they had faced in education. Parents were asked to state whether their children had ever been discriminated against on various grounds in school, while students were asked to say whether they personally, or their peers, had experienced any form of discrimination. The results indicate that the perception of various forms of discrimination in the BiH education system does not correspond with personal experiences with regard to discrimination. Namely, in comparison with the assessment of general presence of discrimination in BiH schools, there are fewer examples of personal experiences relating to discrimination.

The few parents who said their children were discriminated against in school usually referred to discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds (5% each). Fewer parents said their children were discriminated against on economic grounds in school (4%), while there were almost no examples relating to other forms of discrimination. The same trend is observed in the category of students. They most frequently mentioned cases of discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds (12% each), which were followed by examples of economic discrimination in their schools (8%).

Figure 34  
I think that, in the BiH education system, children are discriminated against on the following grounds:



Focus group results show that, apart from the fact that the presence of discrimination is usually established on the basis of “secondary sources” (the media, informal conversation and assessment of the general socio-economic situation in the country), this difference is caused by the tendency of majority respondents in a given area to, while assessing the presence of ethnic, religious and political discrimination in the BiH education system, talk about the position of members of their group in the other two majority areas (owing to which they were not able to give their personal experiences relating to discrimination in school). Unlike them, minorities mostly talked about their personal experiences, as well as about the treatment of members of other majority groups in areas where they represent minorities. However, while talking about personal experiences with regard to discriminatory treatment on ethnic, religious and political grounds, minority respondents were often deterred by their fear to talk about their own position and difficulties to present it using “specific” examples.

Thus, minority focus groups in Vitez, Sarajevo and Banja Luka have different results. Namely, the Vitez group talked about explicit discrimination of minority students on ethnic and religious grounds (students following the Bosnian curriculum stated they had no access to certain classrooms in school and that they were exposed

to insults and provocations by majority students<sup>53</sup>). In the Sarajevo group, minority students described the discriminatory treatment as dominantly implicit: “You can’t say that someone will point their finger at you. No one tells you “you are this or that”, but you can feel it in the things they say, somehow, willy-nilly, you feel insulted”. Unlike the previous two groups of students, minority students in Banja Luka were obviously not at ease to be in the group at all and to discuss such a topic, and they were rather afraid to talk about any possible presence of discrimination; therefore, their discussion was reduced to a few conventional statements not offering any experience or attitude.

#### 4.1. Discrimination on ethnic grounds

As already stated, students and parents think that discrimination on ethnic grounds is one of the most prominent forms of discrimination within the BiH education system.

The opinion that ethnic discrimination is present in the BiH education system is most frequently held in the Croat majority area and is more frequently held by parents than by students. The presence of ethnic discrimination (and other forms of discrimination) is least frequently reported by Brčko District respondents.

<sup>53</sup> Although majority students in Vitez also talked about insults and provocations coming from minority students.

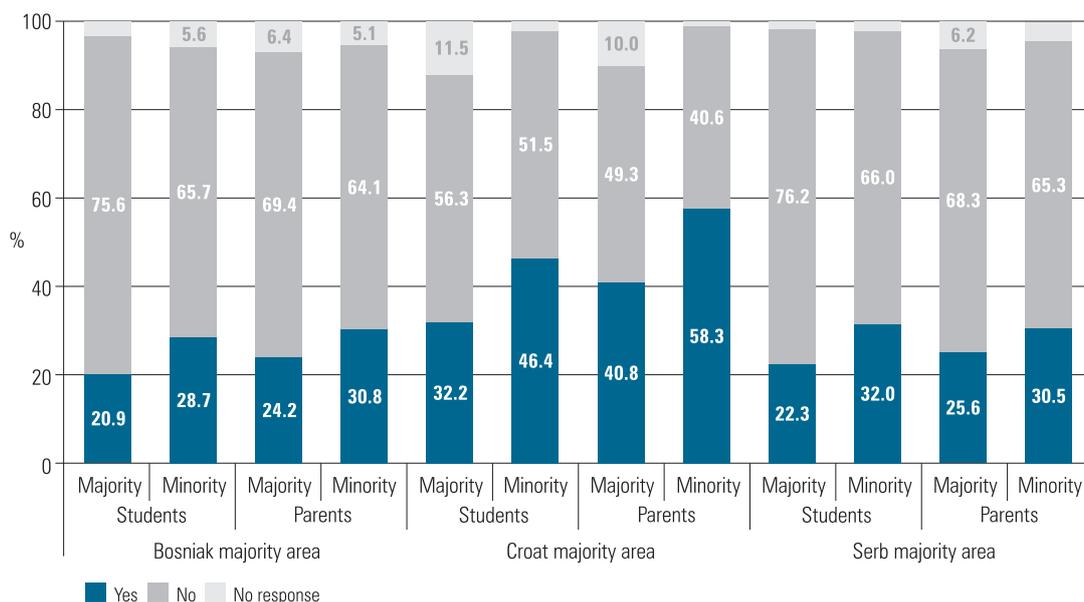


Figure 35  
**Do you think that children are discriminated against on ethnic grounds in the BiH education system?**

Examples of discrimination on ethnic grounds given by students and parents:

**Stoning done by Croat children**

(Parent, Vitez, minority)

**A physical assault before a religious instruction class**

(Parent, Banja Luka, minority)

**Threatening messages on the desk, insulting remarks**

(Parent, Banja Luka, minority)

**Everybody in school insultingly called her Balinkuša**

(Parent, Doboj, minority)

**Friends in school insultingly called me Vlahinja**

(Student, secondary school, second grade, Bosanski Petrovac, minority)

**They threw away and tore my books, provoked me**

(Student, secondary school, first grade, Banja Luka, minority)

**I was beaten up on account of my ethnic background**

(Student, secondary school, second grade, Prijedor, minority)

As could be expected, minority students and parents more frequently warned against the presence of ethnic discrimination than their majority counterparts in a given area. However, though this is a general trend, the difference in opinion between minority students and parents and majority ones is significant only in the Croat majority area (see Figure 35).

**Two schools under one roof**

A separate form of discrimination is the practice of separating students within one school, the so-called “two schools under one roof”. These are schools where Bosniak and Croat students attend separate classes, they are often physically separated as well, having no joint extracurricular activities. According to the Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Mid-term Development Strategy made by non-governmental organisations,<sup>54</sup> there are around fifty such schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the moment.

This practice is still present although the Report of the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR 2005) – a body monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its member countries (including BiH) - explicitly states:

*The Committee requests BiH to eliminate the practice of schools with the structure known as “two schools under one roof”, as well as of building separate schools for children belonging to different ethnic groups. The Committee suggests that schools in BiH be unified and follow a single*

*curriculum in all grades, regardless of the ethnic background of students, and request the state to submit a report on all steps to be taken in the following reporting period.*

Furthermore, the final report of March 2006 of the Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) states the following:

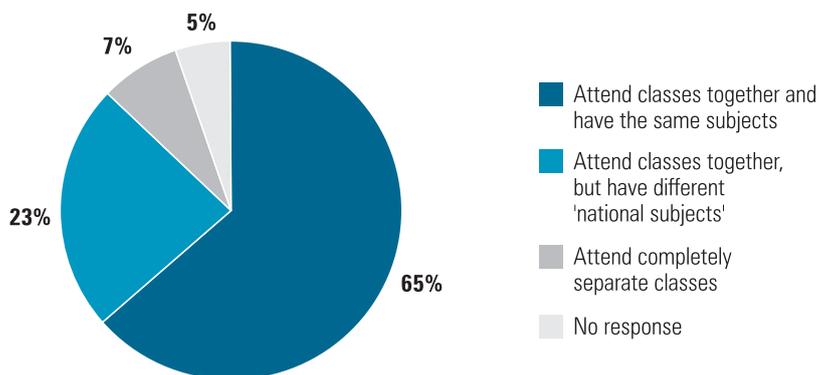
*The Committee seriously requests BiH to, as soon as possible, end segregation in public schools, meaning to eliminate monoethnic schools with the structure of the so-called “two schools under one roof”. The Committee suggests that responsible authorities administratively unify previously separate schools, to remove monoethnic symbols from all schools or symbols and flags pertaining to one religion only, and to apply in all the schools in the BiH territory the contemporary common core curricula, which meets the cultural needs of the different groups in BiH.*

The survey shows that most students polled do not support separation of students and separate classes within one school. Namely, 65% of them believe that students of different ethnic backgrounds should be in the same classes and have the same subjects. A majority of the remaining students (23%) believe that children of different ethnic background should be in the same class but have different “national subjects”. Only a small number of students believe that children of different ethnic backgrounds should attend completely separate classes (7%) (see Figure 36). This group has more students from rural areas, students of Serb and Croat backgrounds and returnees – members of the majority people in their area.

There are differences in answers to this question among students following different curricula. Thus, students following the Bosnian curriculum, regardless of their ethnic background, more frequently than others think that students should attend the same classes and have the same subjects (78%). This attitude is least frequently held by students following the Croat curriculum (48%).

<sup>54</sup> ICVA (2006).

Figure 36  
**Do you think that students of different ethnic background should:**

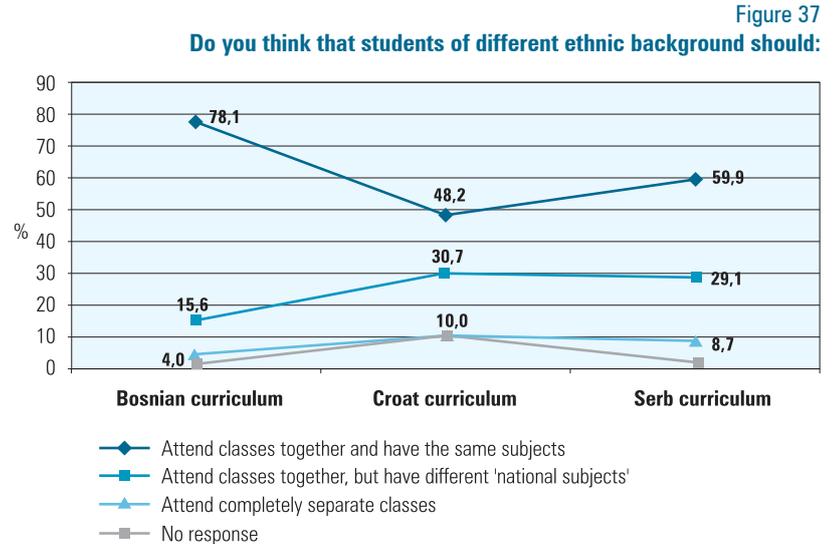


Moreover, the data indicate that students following the Croat and Serb curricula, in comparison with those following the Bosnian one, more frequently think that children with different ethnic affiliation should attend the same classes **but have different classes relating to the “national group of subjects”** (31% and 29% against 16%). They also more frequently think that children with different ethnic affiliation should **attend completely separate classes** (10% and 9% against 4%) (see Figure 37).

Differences in the presence of certain attitudes among students following different curricula are in compliance with differences among attitudes of students living in different areas in BiH. Although the attitude supporting common education is dominant in all of the areas, in the Bosniak majority area and the Brčko District most students think that students of different ethnic backgrounds should attend the same classes and have the same subjects, whereas in the Croat and Serb majority areas, part of the respondents support common education within which students would attend the same classes but have separate “national subjects”.

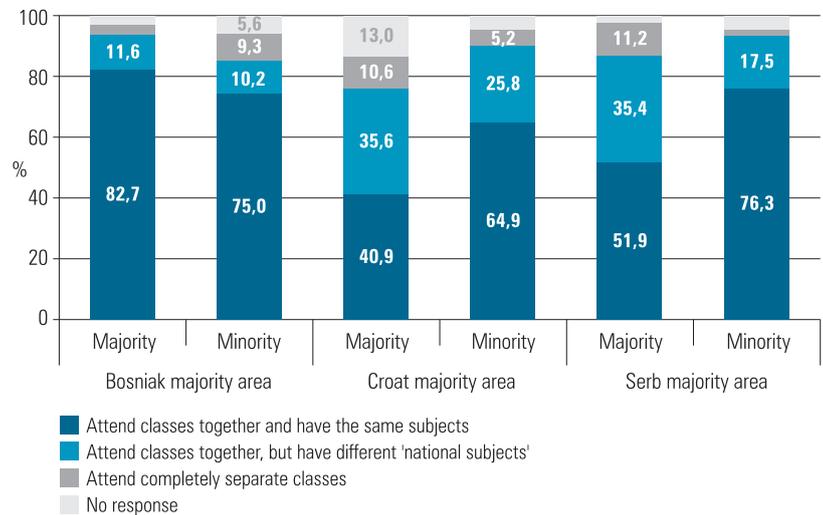
However, the attitude that children of different ethnic backgrounds **should be in the same classes and should have the same subjects** is supported by most students in all the areas. Still, minority and majority students do not support this attitude to the same degree. Minority students support it more frequently than majority ones, while majorities, more frequently than minorities, think that children of different ethnic backgrounds should attend the same classes but have separate “national subjects”.

The results relating to minorities and majorities in the Serb and Croat majority areas show the same tendency. Minorities in the Serb majority area much more frequently believe that children of different ethnic backgrounds should be in the same classes and should have the same subjects, while majorities think that children of different ethnic backgrounds should attend the same classes but have separate groups of “national subjects”, as well as that such children should not attend same



classes at all. However, in the Croat majority area, this difference is significant only with regard to the first attitude. In the Bosniak majority area, the only significant difference relates to the attitude that children of different ethnic backgrounds should not attend the same classes at all, which is more frequently supported by minorities than by members of the majority people (see Figure 38).

Figure 38  
**Do you think that students of different ethnic background should:**

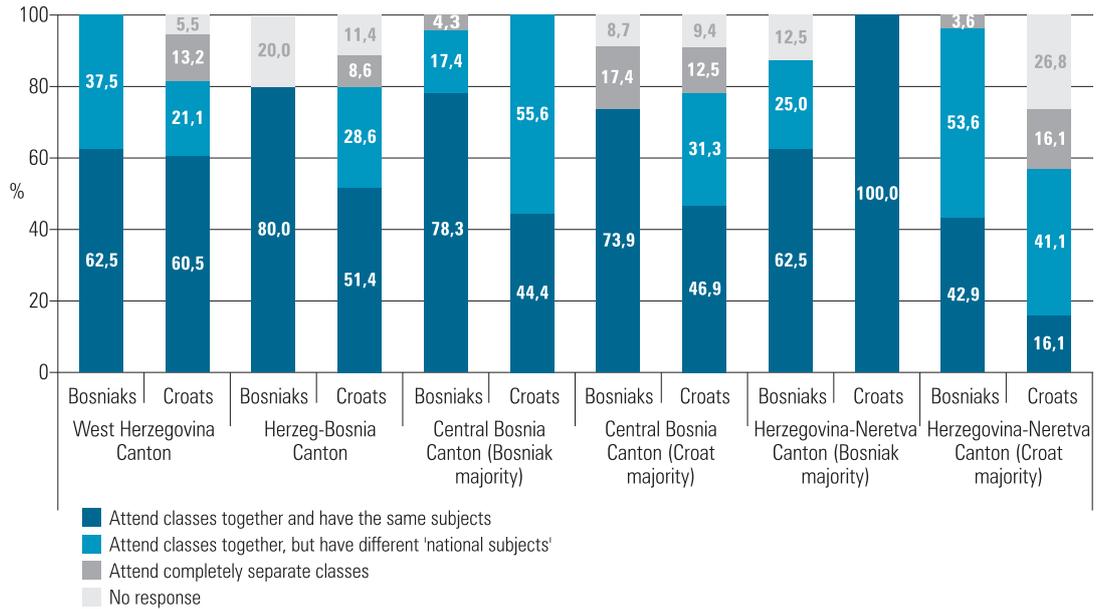


The survey particularly aimed at establishing the attitude of students living in regions that still have such schools separating students of different backgrounds. The results suggest that the attitude about common education is supported by a majority of Croat and Bosniak students in cantons that still have two schools under one roof, as well as that a considerable share of

Surveying Attitudes

Figure 39  
Do you think that students of different ethnic background should:

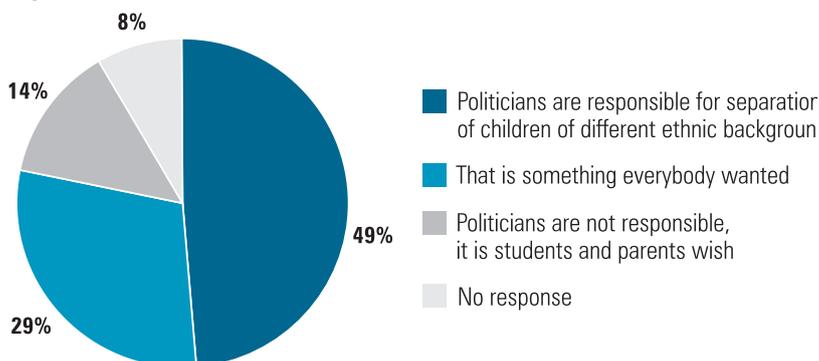
Minority students from Vitez, who have experienced attending separate monoethnic classes, emphasise the importance of the immediate elimination of the practice of two schools under one roof: *It should be done as soon as possible, since we are a partly separated generation (we have the same school building) and, if this continues, I am afraid the damage will soon be irreparable.*



them support complete integration in schools. The only exception are Croat students living in the areas of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton with the Croat majority - 16% of them think that students of different ethnic backgrounds should not attend the same classes and have the same subjects. However, this percentage is not considerably different from the percentages relating to students in the West Herzegovina and Herzeg-Bosnia cantons, Bosniaks in the part of the Central Bosnia Canton with the Bosniak majority, and Bosniaks and Croats in the same canton with the Croat majority. This leads to the conclusion that the above percentage is not a result of stronger students' support for this practice but of a higher percentage of the answers "I do not know" and "I do not want to answer". It should be noted that 41% of Croats in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton think

that students of different ethnic backgrounds should attend same classes but have separate "national subjects", while even 73.9% of Bosniaks in the Central Bosnia Canton think that students should share both the school and the curriculum (see Figure 39).

Figure 40  
In some parts of BiH, students of different ethnic backgrounds are separated in school. What is your attitude about it?



Students were also asked who they thought was responsible for the practice of "two schools under one roof." Half of them think that politicians are responsible for separation of children of different ethnic backgrounds in school and that it was not something that students and parents wanted. 29% of them think there is a consensus on this issue and that politicians, students and parents agree that children of different ethnic backgrounds should be separated in school. An additional 14% think that this is something that students and parents wanted, and that politicians only acted on their wish (see Figure 40).

Brčko District students, more frequently than others, think that politicians are exclusively responsible for the existence of "two schools under one roof." Students in the Bosniak majority area, more often than students in the Croat majority area and Brčko District, think that it is a wish shared by students, parents and politicians. Students in the Serb majority area, more often than those in the Croat majority area, think that

it is something that students and parents want and that politicians are not responsible for the fact that students with different ethnic affiliation are separated in school in some parts of BiH (see Figure 41).

Students representing minorities in the Croat and Serb majority areas, more often than their majority counterparts, think that politicians are the ones responsible for separation of children of different ethnic backgrounds in school, whereas the majorities in these two areas more frequently think that it is a shared wish. Additionally, Serb students in the Serb majority area, more frequently than other students, think that the separation in school is a wish of students and parents, and that politicians hold no responsibility for the presence of this form of discrimination in certain parts of BiH. There is no significant difference between majority and minority students in the Bosniak majority area with regard to the responsibility for having “two schools under one roof” (see Figure 42).

The above can be confirmed by the results of focus groups in Vitez, consisting of students going to general grammar school (one of the so-called “two schools under one roof”) and students going to mixed high school (where students of different ethnic backgrounds are in the same grade). Their discussion indicates that Bosniak students (minority) and Croat students (majority), in principle, have different attitudes about the reasons and solutions for the current situation.

Thus Bosniak students dominantly think that students are not separated because they want it to be so. One participant clarifies the whole process: “When we came to enroll there were two classrooms in the school. One was for students following the Bosniak curriculum, the other one for those following the Croat one. And everyone knew where to go. Because it starts in primary school”. Participants pointed out the experience of the mixed high school, where students of different ethnic backgrounds are in the same class and where there are no problems related to ethnic issues. A group of Bosniak students concludes that “the authorities decided that children should be separated in school, and we can blame neither them nor us for it”. They also believe it

is necessary to bring about integration at all the levels as soon as possible, in both primary and secondary schools, as “when children are together from the beginning, there will be no further problems”.

Unlike them, Croat students think that everyone is responsible for separation in school (politicians, students and parents) and that it will be difficult to overcome. Reasons they state mostly refer to the inability to have common language/literature classes: “How can we be in the same class and have the same subjects when everyone has their own language (Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian), and we all have the right to our language?”

Figure 41  
In some parts of BiH, students of different ethnic backgrounds are separated in school. What is your attitude about this?

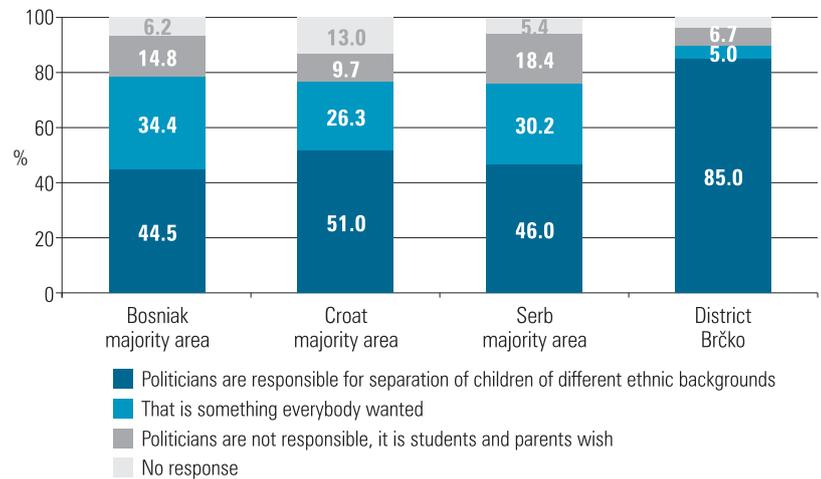
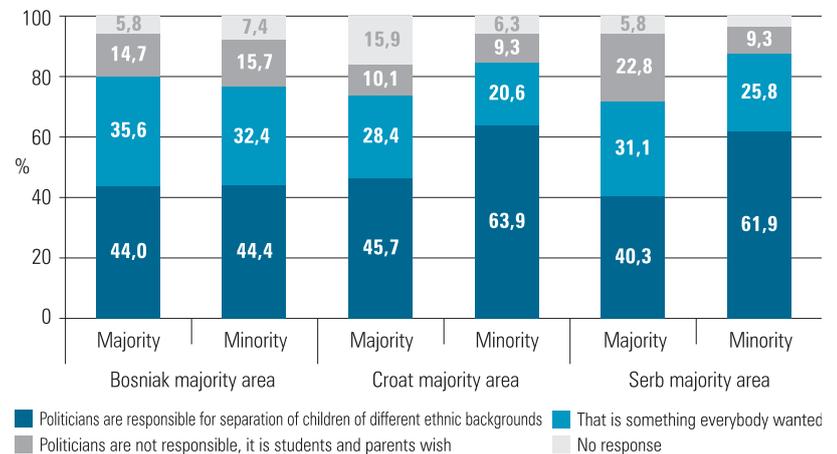


Figure 42  
In some parts of BiH, students of different ethnic backgrounds are separated in school. What is your attitude about this?



Examples of discrimination on religious grounds given by students and parents:

**The teacher failed a student because he is Orthodox.** (Student, secondary school, fourth grade, Sarajevo, majority)

**They made me attend religious instruction.** (Student, grammar school, second grade, Doboj, minority)

**Religious holidays are not celebrated.** (Student, secondary school, Banja Luka, minority)

**They curse my religious symbols.** (Student, secondary school, fourth grade, Livno, minority)

**Muslims were laughed at during history classes.** (Student, secondary school, second grade, Banja Luka, majority)

## 4.2. Discrimination on religious grounds

Both students and parents in all the areas report **discrimination on religious grounds** among the three most frequent forms of discrimination.

Parents living in the Croat majority area, more often than parents in other parts of BiH, think that religious discrimination is present in the BiH education system, while students and parents in the Brčko District more often think there is no such discrimination in the education system.

The same as with ethnic discrimination, in comparison with majority students and parents in a given area, minority respondents more often think that there is discrimination of children on religious grounds within the BiH education system. As with ethnic discrimination, although this is a general trend, the difference in opinion between minority and majority respondents in the Croat majority area is significant with respect to students and parents, in the Serb majority area minority students, more often than majority ones, think such discrimination is present, while there is no significant difference in the Bosniak majority area (see Figure 43).

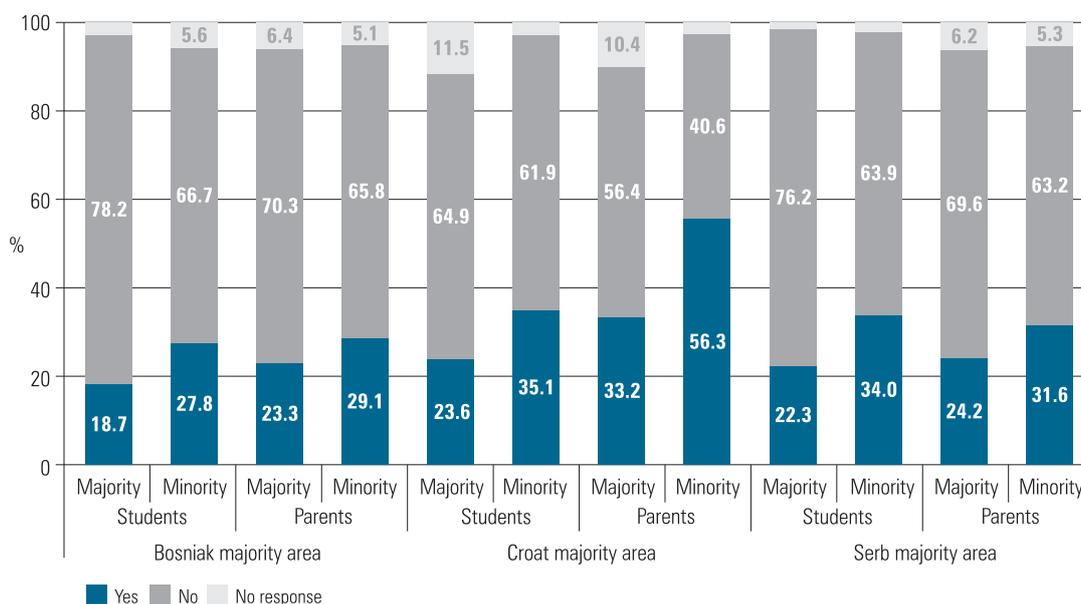
The 2004 Human Rights Report for BiH, made by the US State Department, reports different forms of religious discrimination: *"In principle, schools in BiH offer religious education only for student members of the majority religion in a given area. There are also cases of religious discrimination where, although the attendance of religious instruction classes is a matter of choice, parents are under pressure to consent to their children attending religious instruction classes"*.<sup>55</sup>

These conclusions can be confirmed by the survey results indicating that minorities in a given area are often limited to the choice between attending the majority religious instruction classes or not attending religious instruction at all, as well as that procedures for making a decision on taking this elective course are often such as to influence students and parents towards attending religious instruction.

## 4.3. Discrimination on economic grounds

Even though both parents and students report economic discrimination among the three most frequent forms of discrimination, it is necessary to note that, to a statistically significant degree, parents think it is present in BiH schools and hold this attitude much more frequently than students.

Figure 43  
Do you think there is discrimination of children on religious grounds in the BiH education system?



<sup>55</sup> US State Department, 2004 Human Rights Report for BiH; the Report can be found at the following website: [www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41673.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41673.htm)

There is no statistically significant difference among different majority areas in assessing its presence. Both students and parents in the Brčko District, in accordance with their general attitude about a very low presence of discrimination in the BiH education system, also report economic discrimination much less frequently than respondents in other parts of the country. There is no statistically significant difference between minority and majority respondents with regard to their perception of the presence of economic discrimination.

Parents usually gave examples of economic discrimination relating to a *different treatment of children coming from low-income families* on the part of teachers and a *derisive treatment on the part of other students*. Students participating in focus groups related economic discrimination to corruption in society, stating that there were a number of cases of a less favourable position of students not having enough money for “additional costs of education”:

*In our system teachers can make students attend additional tutorials for which teachers charge 8, 10 or 15 marks per hour, instead of doing their best in classes to teach children. No, they make IT courses more difficult, math course more difficult, make everything more difficult...*  
(FGD Sarajevo, majority parents)

*Everyone knows how things are. So, I will graduate from trade high school and will go to Busovača and graduate from their grammar school in a year, or somewhere else for that matter, meaning I will graduate from grammar school as if I had attended it regularly just like everybody else; I will then enroll in a university, in Split or Zagreb, where there are certain connections, and I will graduate from it, so that I can have a diploma as everybody else. That's how things work here and it will never change, not even in 10 years.*

#### 4.4. Discrimination on the grounds of politics and gender

Both students and parents (14% and 16%) equally perceive the presence of **discrimination on political grounds**. Students from the Bosniak majority area, more frequently than those in the Serb and Croat ones, and parents in the Bosniak and Croat majority areas, more frequently than parents from the Brčko District and the Serb majority area, think that this form of discrimination is present in the BiH educational system. There are no considerable differences between majorities and minorities in assessing this form of discrimination.

Very few examples were given within the poll. Parents stated the following: “*imposed foreign curricula*”, “*children of politicians receive a different treatment*”, “*affiliation of parents to a different political option*”, “*a child's parent in the same political party as the teacher*” and “*children of HDZ members are privileged*”. Students reported similar examples of political discrimination relating to separation on political grounds, insulting statements related to “our” politicians and parties, giving preference to children whose parents are members of certain parties and imposing political orientation.

The attitude that discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender is present in the BiH education system is more often supported by students (12%) than by parents (8%). Students in the Serb majority area, more frequently than those in the Croat majority area, as well as parents in the Bosniak, Croat and Serb majority areas more frequently than those in the Brčko District, think that this form of discrimination is present in the BiH education system. There are no differences between minorities and majorities in assessing the presence of discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender.

Respondents gave very few examples of actual sex/gender discrimination. Five parents stated that “*girls get better marks than boys*”, that “*girls are always discriminated against by physical education teachers*”, “*girls' squabbling*”, “*problems with teachers*”. 18 female students gave examples of sex discrimination they or their peers had been exposed to, mentioning the fol-

The following is a statement taken from a religious instruction textbook for sixth grade of primary school\*, which represents an example of implicit discrimination:

***It is in the nature of woman to be protected by her husband. To protect a woman means prevent everyone from insulting her, then to provide her with clothes, food and good living conditions.***

70% of parents polled think that the above statement should be found in textbooks children in BiH learn from. Parents with a lower degree of education are more inclined to support the presence of this statement than are more educated parents. This result indicates a low level of understanding of contents that are demanding in terms of interpretation, as well as insensitivity of respondents to gender discriminating messages.

\* Čatović (2003:100)

lowing: “the teacher wouldn’t let a girl be a class monitor”, “female teachers prefer boys”. They also said they were insulted: “she was ill treated by male students and teachers because “she’s a stupid female””.

***I think the key to everything is the interference of politics, schools should be depoliticised. We (students) understand one another well and an excellent example showing that students do not support these two schools under one roof is that Croat students follow the Bosnian curriculum and, similarly, Bosniak students go to economics high school (following the Croat curriculum) as they live nearby and their parents approve of it. I think this is not an issue for us students, it rather comes from politicians and ministries.***  
(FGD Vitez, minority students)

## Conclusion

Somewhat less than one-third of parents and one-quarter of students included in this research reported the presence of ethnic, religious discrimination in the BiH education system. In comparison with this assessment as to the presence of discrimination of children in school, respondents gave few examples of discrimination students were personally exposed to in school.

Parents, more frequently than students, think that ethnic and economic discrimination is present in the education system. Furthermore, respondents from the Croat majority area, more frequently than respondents from other areas, report the presence of discrimination on ethnic grounds. The same trend is observed with parents with regard to discrimination on religious grounds. There are no considerable differences in perceiving economic discrimination in different majority areas, except that students and parents in the Brčko District, in accordance with their general attitude of a very low presence of discrimination in the BiH education system, report economic discrimination much less frequently than respondents in other parts of the country.

In comparison with majority students and parents in a given area, minority respondents more often think that there is discrimination of children on ethnic and religious grounds within the BiH education system. However, although this is a general trend, the difference in opinion between minority and majority respondents is significant only in the Croat majority area. There is no significant difference between minorities and majorities in assessing the presence of economic discrimination.

Focus group participants pointed to different forms of ethnic and religious discrimination against minorities in a given area - from explicit discrimination denying equal

opportunities and conditions for high-quality education to implicit accusations based on stereotypical perception of traits and the role of a minority within different historical events.

A separate form of discrimination on ethnic grounds can be seen in so-called, “two schools under one roof”, which, despite explicit requests on the part of international bodies monitoring the implementation of declarations on human rights, are still present within the BiH education system. The survey indicates that most students polled do not support separation of students and separate teaching processes within one building. Moreover, 65% of them believe that students of different ethnic backgrounds should be in the same classes and have the same subjects, while a majority of the remaining students (23%) believe that children of different ethnic background should be in the same class but have different groups of “national subjects”. Although the attitude that children of different ethnic backgrounds should not be in the same class – which is the case in “two schools under one roof” - is more frequently present with students following the Croat and Serb curricula, it should be noted that only a small number of students support this attitude (Croat curricula 10%, Serb 9% and Bosnian 4%).

Separate forms of discrimination on religious grounds relate to the ability to have religious education. As stated in the 2004 Human Rights Report for BiH, “*In principle, schools in BiH offer religious education only for student members of the majority religion in a given area. There are also cases of religious discrimination where, although the attendance of religious instruction classes is a matter of choice, parents are under pressure to consent to their children attending religious instruction classes.*”<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> US State Department, 2004 Human Rights Report for BiH; the Report can be found at the following website: [www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41673.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41673.htm)

# Attitudes toward the need and direction for changing curricula and textbooks

The survey included questions eliciting students' and parents' attitudes toward the need for changing the current curricula and textbooks. The survey also offered possible directions with respect to changing the contents of the "national group" of subjects. Some of them derived from the Guidelines for Production of History and Geography textbooks<sup>57</sup> and others from findings of various studies relating to education in BiH in the post-war period. They are based on the principles of education for an open society.

## 1. The need to change the curricula and textbooks

Overall, more than one-third of students (36%) and less than one-third of parents (32%) think that the contents of textbooks for "national group" subjects should remain as they are now. This attitude is most strongly supported by students and parents in the Serb majority area, who are followed by those in the Croat majority area and then by those in the Bosniak one. Students and parents in the Brčko District most frequently think that "national group" subjects should be changed. Overall, 42% of students and 44% of parents do not agree with maintaining the current situation. These are mostly students (72%) and parents (79%) from the Brčko District, then students (52%) and parents (54%) from the Bosniak majority area, students (36%) and parents (38%) from the Croat majority area and, finally, students (31%) and parents (33%) from the Serb majority area (see Figure 44).

Students and parents representing the majority people in a given area, more often than those representing minorities, think that "national group" textbooks should remain as they are. This trend is present in all the ethnic majority areas, although the difference relating to the Bosniak majority area is not significant.

<sup>57</sup> Official Gazette of BiH, 05/07.

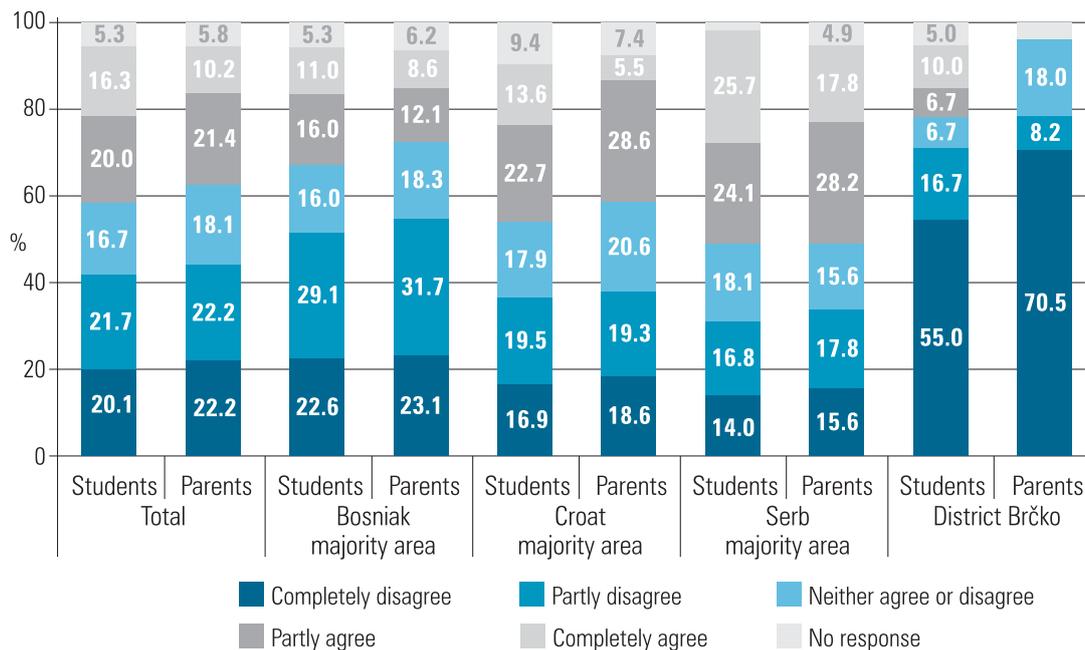


Figure 44  
The contents of textbooks for the national group of subjects should remain as they are now.

***I believe one should know more about one's own state than about another state.***  
(Student, secondary school, fourth grade, majority)

## 2. Directions for changing the contents of the “national group” of subjects

The survey offered different directions for changes in the teaching process and contents of the “national group” of subjects, arising from the Law on Primary and General Secondary Education, Strategic Papers on Education Reform and Guidelines for Producing History and Geography Textbooks. Finally, respondents were asked what they thought was the most adequate division of education responsibilities - from the local to the state level. The survey offered the following directions for change.

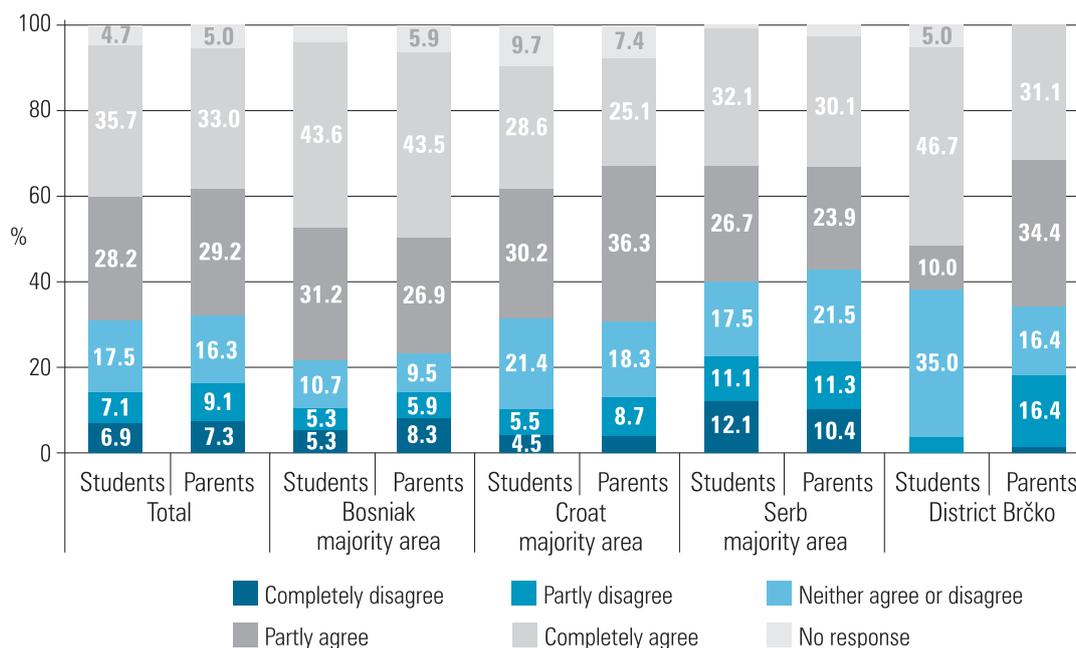
- Textbooks should primarily teach BiH affairs and only after that on each individual group or neighbouring country;
- “National subject” textbooks should be changed to focus more on members of all three groups and ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone;
- Textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the groups in BiH;
- “National subject” textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer dif-

ferent interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues;

- There should be a single language policy resulting in agreement about the name of the language, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks;
- The current treatment of BiH historical development should be changed;
- BiH history textbooks should also treat the period since 1992;
- In addition to religious instruction, there should also be a subject in schools teaching about all world religions in an objective and neutral way;
- Education should be at the state level, while part of education responsibilities should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels.

The following is an overview of results for each of the proposed changes.

**Figure 45**  
**National subject textbooks should primarily teach BiH affairs and only then on each individual group or neighbouring country.**



### 2.1. Textbooks should primarily teach BiH affairs, and only then on each individual group or neighbouring country

Most students and parents in all the ethnic areas agree with the proposal that textbooks should primarily teach BiH affairs and only then on each individual group or neighbouring country.

This recommendation received more support from students in the Bosniak majority area than from students in the Croat and Serb majority areas and the Brčko District, as well as from parents in the Bosniak majority area than from parents in the Croat and Serb majority areas (see Figure 45).

The proposed change to the national group of subjects, according to which textbooks should primarily teach BiH affairs before each individual group or neighbouring country, receives more support from majority than from minority respondents in the Bosniak majority area, while in the Croat and Serb majority areas it is the other way around – minorities in these areas express more support for this recommendation than majority students and parents. This results from the fact that Serb students and parents support the recommendation when they are in the position of the

minority, which is also the case with Croat students (see Figure 46).

The results relating to the change of textbook contents to focus on BiH first and only then on each individual group or neighbouring countries are in accordance with the results relating to the selection of starting points for studying geography and history in primary and secondary schools in BiH.

Namely, students and parents were presented with different starting points for studying **geography** in primary and secondary schools in BiH and were asked to select one they thought should be the primary one. The selection included the following options:

- *Bosnia and Herzegovina;*
- *Entity/district you live in;*
- *Canton you live in;*
- *States or geographical regions where your group constitutes the majority;*
- *Region - SEE countries;*
- *Europe;* and
- *The world.*

The results indicate that most respondents think that the starting point for studying geography in BiH should be **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. This is the answer most frequently supported by students and parents in all the

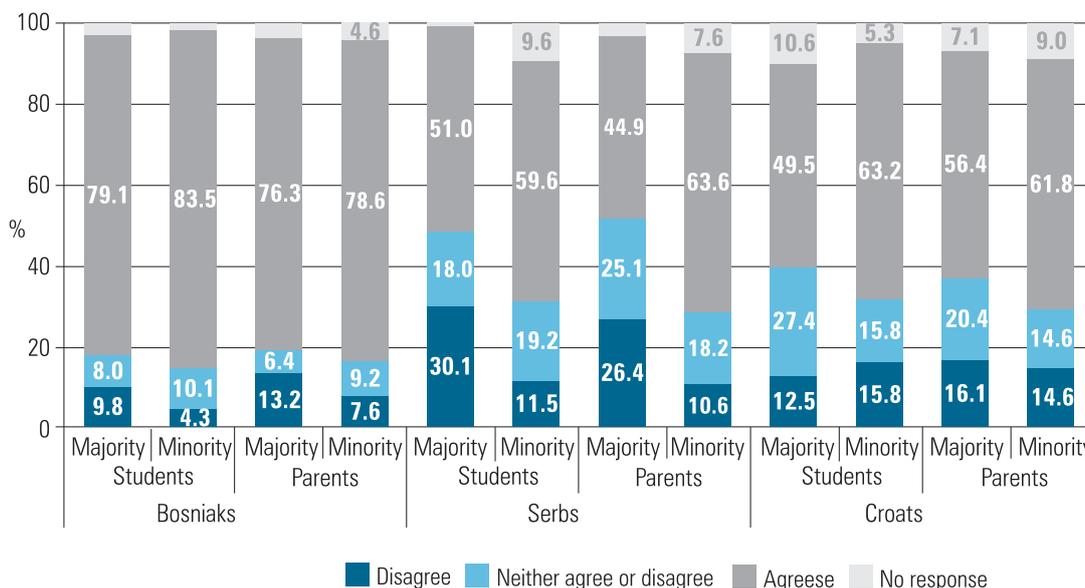


Figure 46  
National subject textbooks should primarily teach BiH affairs and only then on each individual group or neighbouring country.

areas. However, Students and parents in the Brčko District and parents in the Bosniak majority area support it more frequently than other respondents. Students and parents constituting minorities in a given area, somewhat more frequently than majority respondents, think that Bosnia and Herzegovina should represent the starting point for studying geography in BiH schools.

Other options are much less supported. The starting points implying the big picture - Europe and the world - are more frequently supported by students in the Serb majority area.

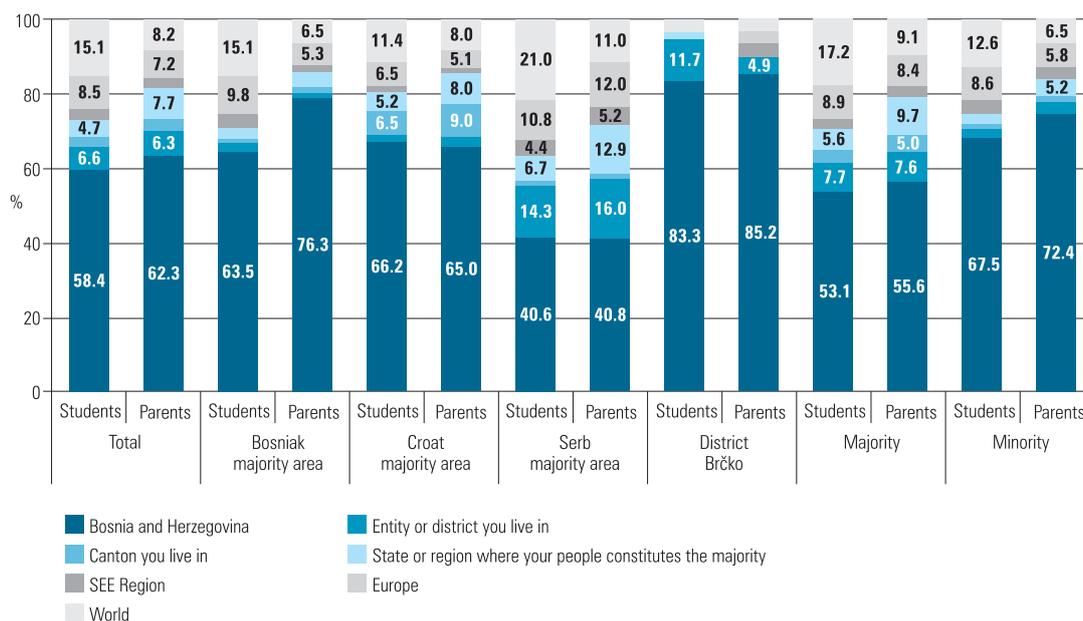
The results for the other options are the following: **entity/district you live in** - supported by 14% of students and 16% of parents from Republika Srpska, as well as 12% of students and 5% of parents from the Brčko District; **state or geographical region where your people constitutes the majority** - 5% of students and 8% of parents from the Croat majority area, and 7% of students and 13% of parents in the Serb majority area. These are more frequently supported by majority respondents in the Croat and Serb majority areas (see Figure 47).

Similarly, while determining the starting point for studying **history**, respondents were offered the fol-

lowing options: *Bosnia and Herzegovina; Entity/district you live in; Canton you live in; Historical events relating to your people; Historical events equally relating to all three peoples and ethnic minorities in BiH; Region - SEE countries; Europe; and the world*. It has been established that, here too, most respondents (53% of parents and 50% of students) think that the starting point for studying this subject should be **Bosnia and Herzegovina**.

However, unlike geography, the opinion that BiH should represent the starting point for studying history is not the most frequent answer in all the areas. Namely, in the Serb majority area the option *Historical events relating to your group* is only slightly less supported. This is also the second most frequent answer in the Croat majority area., although the dominant option in this area is BiH as the starting point. This is followed by the attitude that studying history in BiH schools should start from historical events equally relating to all three peoples and ethnic minorities in BiH. The world as the starting point is proposed by 6-13% of students and 4-9% of parents, while Europe by 6-10% of students and 4-26% of parents (with this option being more frequently supported by Brčko District parents than by parents in other areas) (see Figure 48).

Figure 47  
What do you think should be the starting point for studying geography in primary and secondary schools in our country – first answers receiving over 5%



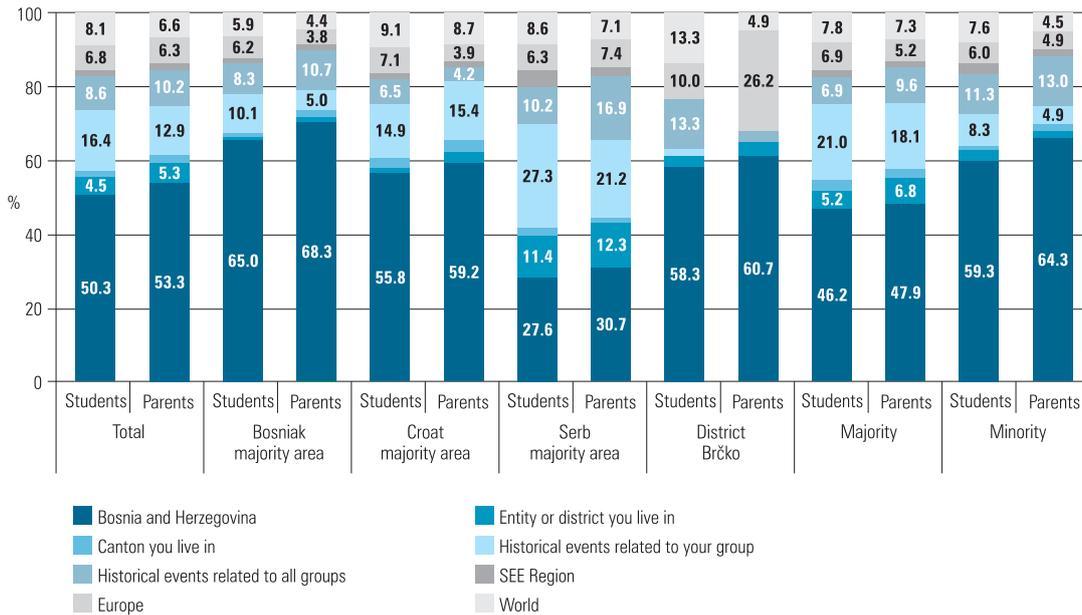


Figure 48  
What do you think should be the starting point for studying history in primary and secondary schools in our country?

*There are several ethnic groups in school, the curriculum should reflect this.*  
(Student, secondary school, fourth grade Orašje, majority)

*We have several ethnic groups but learn about one.*  
(Student, secondary school, fourth grade, Orašje, minority)

The attitude that BiH should represent the starting point for studying both geography and history is more frequently present with minorities than the majority in a given area, although it is the answer most frequently supported by respondents of all ethnic backgrounds.

However, it is important to note that the attitude that BiH should be the starting point in studying geography in

primary and secondary schools in BiH is less supported by Serb students and parents than by other respondents. A higher number of Serb respondents think that the entity should represent the starting point. Although seldom supported, the opinion that geography in BiH schools should start from states/geographical regions where a group constitutes the majority is still more frequently held by Serb and Croat respondents (see Table 8).

Table 8  
Starting points in studying geography in primary and secondary schools in BiH.

What do you think should be the main starting point for studying geography in primary and secondary schools in our country?	BOSNIAKS				CROATS				SERBS				OTHERS			
	Parents		Students		Parents		Students		Parents		Students		Parents		Students	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	302	81,4	290	73,4	194	61,0	164	56,9	129	41,1	121	42,9	15	65,2	18	50,0
Entity/district you live in	9	2,4	12	3,0	8	2,5	10	3,5	46	14,6	41	14,5	0	0,0	0	0,0
Canton you live in	6	1,6	2	0,5	26	8,2	20	6,9	3	1,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	2,8
States or geographical regions where your people constitutes the majority	10	2,7	8	2,0	31	9,7	17	5,9	38	12,1	22	7,8	1	4,3	0	0,0
Region - SEE countries	4	1,1	8	2,0	2	0,6	10	3,5	22	7,0	10	3,5	1	4,3	0	0,0
Europe	13	3,5	21	5,3	22	6,9	27	9,4	35	11,1	31	11,0	5	21,7	4	11,1
World	20	5,4	48	12,2	28	8,8	36	12,5	33	10,5	53	18,8	1	4,3	13	36,1
Something else	1	0,3	0	0,0	1	0,3	2	0,7	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
I do not know/do not want to answer	6	1,6	6	1,6	6	1,9	2	0,7	8	2,5	4	1,4	0	0,0	0	0,0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

As already pointed out, respondents of all ethnic backgrounds most frequently state that Bosnia and Herzegovina should represent the starting point in studying history, but this opinion is most frequently held by Bosniak respondents. Serb and Croat respondents more frequently think that studying history should start from historical events relating to the people they belong to. Serb students and parents also more frequently point out that the entity they live in should represent the starting point (see Table 9).

## 2.2. The contents of “national subject” textbooks should be changed to focus more on members of all three groups and ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone

64% of students and 62% of parents support the recommendation that “national subject” textbooks should be changed **to focus more on members of all three groups and on ethnic minorities** instead of on one group alone.

This recommendation is more strongly supported by students and parents in the Bosniak majority area and

the Brčko District than by parents and students in the Croat and Serb majority area (see Figure 49).

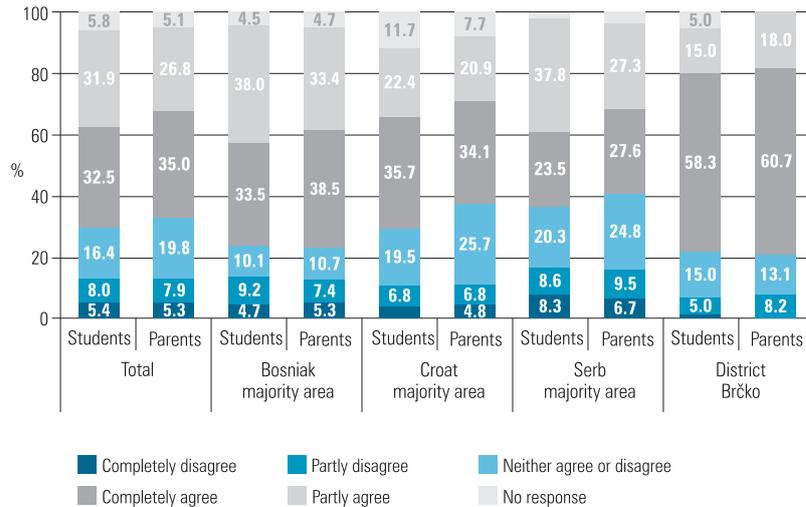
This recommendation that national subject textbooks should be changed to focus more on members of all three groups and other ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone receives more support from minority students and parents than from those constituting the majority people in a given area. This trend is observed in all the ethnic majority areas, with the difference being significant in the Croat and Serb majority areas, as opposed to the Bosniak one. This is a result of the fact that Croats and Serbs constituting minorities more frequently support this recommendation than those constituting the majority people in a given area. The same trend is observed with the Bosniak people, but the difference is not statistically significant here.

As already pointed out, 58% of parents believe their children get sufficient knowledge about the cultural identity, language and tradition of **the people they belong to**, while only 43% of them believes the same with regard to the cultural identity, language and

Table 9  
Starting points in studying history in primary and secondary schools in BiH.

What do you think should be the main starting point for studying history in primary and secondary schools in our country?	BOSNIAKS				CROATS				SERBS				OTHERS			
	Parents		Students		Parents		Students		Parents		Students		Parents		Students	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	279	75,2	275	69,6	159	50,0	134	46,5	98	31,2	86	30,5	14	60,9	14	38,9
Entity/district you live in	5	1,3	8	2,0	9	2,8	4	1,4	38	12,1	32	11,3			0	0,0
Canton you live in	5	1,3	2	0,5	9	2,8	9	3,1	4	1,3	4	1,4			1	2,8
Historical events relating to your people	15	4,0	37	9,4	54	17,0	51	17,7	63	20,1	69	24,5	2	8,7	3	8,3
Historical events equally relating to all three peoples and ethnic minorities in BiH	32	8,6	23	5,8	27	8,5	29	10,1	45	14,3	25	8,9	1	4,3	9	25,0
SEE region	2	0,5	3	0,8	6	1,9	6	2,1	8	2,5	11	3,9			0	0,0
Europe	9	2,4	18	4,6	21	6,6	27	9,4	30	9,6	21	7,4	5	21,7	2	5,6
World	17	4,6	25	6,3	26	8,2	22	7,6	21	6,7	27	9,6	1	4,3	7	19,4
Something else			2	0,5	1	0,3	4	1,4			2	0,7			0	0,0
I do not know/do not want to answer	7	1,9	2	0,5	6	1,9	2	0,6	7	2,2	5	1,8			0	0,0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 49**  
**The contents of national subject textbooks should be changed so as to focus more on members of all three groups and of ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone**



tradition of other groups in BiH. Most parents (71%) who believe that their children do not get sufficient knowledge about the cultural identity, language and tradition of **other groups in BiH** or who are not sure about this state that children should learn more about other groups in BiH.

### 2.3. Textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH

Most of all the students and parents (79%) state that the curricula and textbooks **should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH.**

Only 15% of respondents think that the amount of such contents should stay at the present level, while only 3% of them think that there should be less such contents that there currently are.

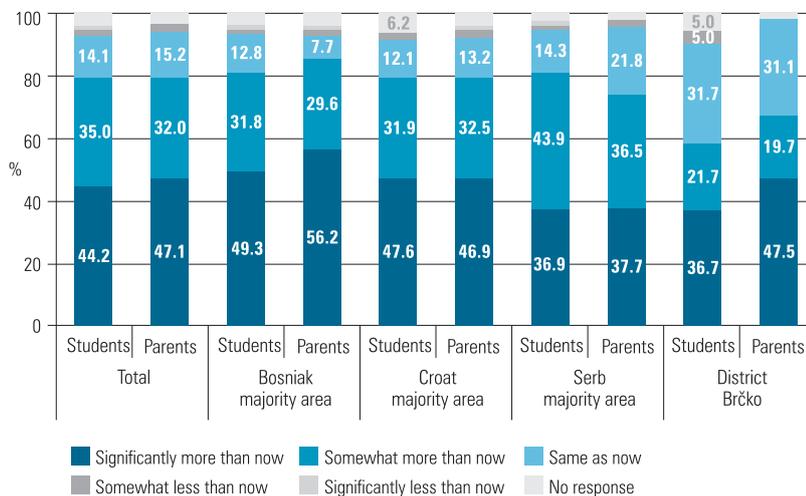
Although the need for change is supported by most respondents in all the areas, it is somewhat less strongly supported by Brčko District students than students in other areas, and somewhat more strongly supported by parents in the Bosniak majority area than parents in other parts of BiH (see Figure 50).

Differences between minorities and majorities are present inasmuch as minority students and parents, more often than those constituting the majority group in a given area, think that the amount of content

*Everyone would then have their own interpretation and we would have another conflict. We should talk, but how?* (FGD Banja Luka, minority students)

*It is too much to stuff their heads with this or that, they end up not knowing what happened.* (FGD Banja Luka, minority students)

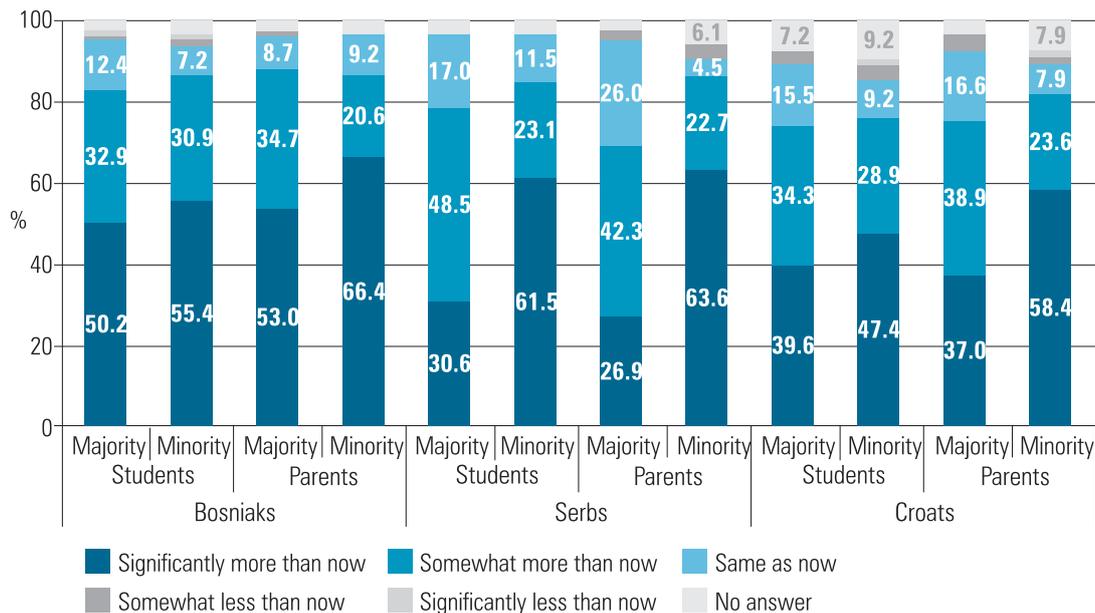
*If three truths were presented, children might learn the wrong things.* (FGD Banja Luka, majority parents)



**Figure 50**  
**To what degree do you think the curricula and textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH?**

Surveying Attitudes

Figure 51  
To what degree do you think the curricula and textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH?

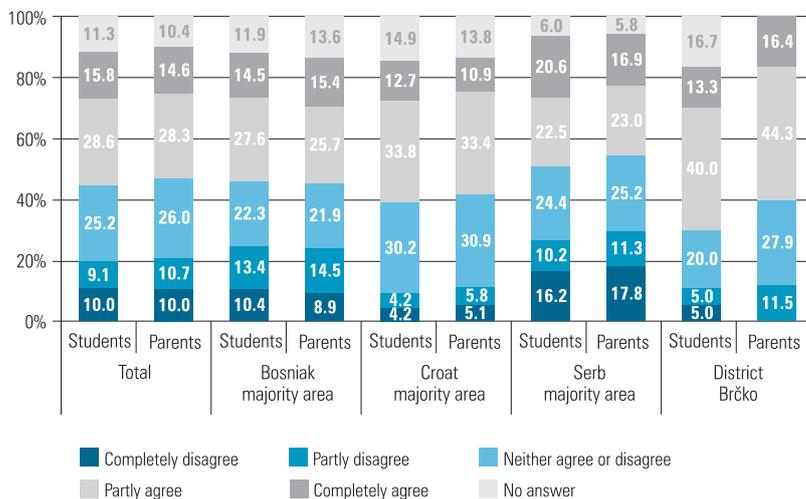


developing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples in BiH should considerably increase. The difference with regard to increasing the amount of such content (regardless of the degree specified) is significant only with respect to Serb parents who, when living in the Bosniak and Croat majority areas (more frequently than when they constitute the majority people), think that the amount of content developing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples in BiH should (considerably and partly) increase in the curricula and textbooks (see Figure 51).

Furthermore, it is interesting that female students, more frequently than male ones, think that the amount of content developing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples in BiH should be increased, while the gender category has no influence on this issue with respect to parents.

Figure 52  
National subject textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues

2.4. "National subject" textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues



Somewhat less than half the respondents (43%) agree with the proposal that "national subject" textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues. Another 20% oppose such an approach, while the remaining respondents have no attitude towards it, cannot or do not know how to answer this question.

Parents in different ethnic areas have different attitudes. Thus, Brčko District parents, more frequently than parents in the Croat and Serb majority areas, think that "national subject" textbooks should include different views

on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues. At the same time, this approach is most frequently opposed to by students and parents in the Serb and Bosniak majority areas than in the Croat majority area and the Brčko District (see Figure 52).

According to focus group participants, the main reason for not supporting this attitude is their fear of the way “others” will interpret their own group, as well as their fear that children who have not been encouraged to take an analytical approach to textbooks will not know “what to think”. They also resist the introduction of new, interactive methods in the teaching process, saying that children in school should be taught objective facts, without asking questions, relativising or discussing contents presented.

*“It is good that we do not use interactive methods because, this way, we can follow what the teacher is saying; besides, the interactive teaching process proved not to be so good”.* (Banja Luka, minority students)

Minority students and parents express a higher degree of support for the proposal that “national subject” textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues. The polling data also confirm this trend (where there is no statistically significant difference with respect to respondents in the Bosniak majority area and to students in the Croat majority area). Focus groups discussions articulated the reasons for which minorities are more inclined to support multiperspectivity in the teaching process:

*It is always the majority group that writes textbook from its own standpoint. This is why minorities support different views on the same topic.* (FGD Sarajevo, minority students)

*Minorities support it out of fear of melting in, of losing their identity, they want to feel alive, to feel present. . .* (FGD Sarajevo, majority parents)

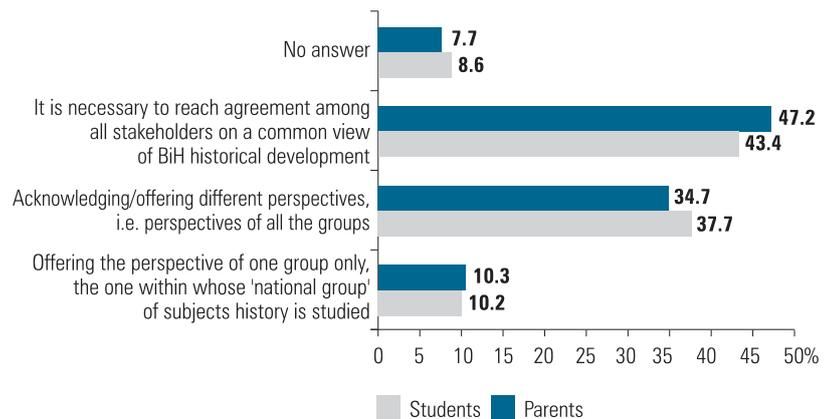
*They do not want to be put in a negative context; they, of course, suppose that, as a minority, they*

*will presented negatively which, of course, nobody wants, to be presented negatively.* (FGD Sarajevo, majority students)

### Treating the historical development of BiH

Asked about the way the historical development of BiH should be treated, respondents in all the ethnic areas except the Brčko District most frequently think it is necessary to **reach agreement among all stakeholders on a common view** of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks (45%) or that textbooks should deal with historical development of BiH **acknowledging/offering different perspectives**, i.e. perspectives of all the groups (36%). Only a small number of students and parents in these areas support the current practice of **offering the perspective of one group only**, the one within whose “national group” of subjects history is studied (see Figure 53).

Figure 53  
How should textbooks treat the historical development of BiH?



The attitude that it is necessary to reach agreement among all the stakeholders on a common view of BiH historical development and then present it in textbooks is most frequently held by students and parents in the Serb majority area and least frequently by Brčko District respondents. There is no significant difference between majority and minority respondents in a given area with regard to this attitude.

The attitude that textbooks should treat the historical development of BiH acknowledging/offering perspectives of all groups is more frequent with students in the Bosniak than students in the Croat and Serb major-

Reasons stated by focus groups for including the period since 1992 in history textbooks used in BiH: **Textbooks do not deal with this period but teachers do, they offer their standpoints and personal views.** (FGD Sarajevo, majority parents) **If we do not learn it in school, our parents will teach us.** (FGD Sarajevo, minority students) **These textbooks are restrictive, they avoid topics that should not be avoided but should be put in a proper context.** (FGD Sarajevo, minority students) **I do not think we should shy away from topics such as ethnicity but should discuss such things in school, regardless of the results. For example, I think we are all full of prejudice after the war and I think it should stop, a new context should be created.** (FGD Sarajevo, minority students)

ity areas, as well as with parents in the Bosniak and Croat majority areas than parents in the Serb majority area. There are no significant differences between majority and minority respondents in a given area with regard to the degree of presence of this attitude.

Offering the perspective of one group only, the one within whose "national group" of subjects history is studied, is an approach most frequently supported by students and parents in the Brčko District (regardless of their ethnic affiliation) and Bosniak parents living in the Bosniak majority area (See Figure 54).

The Questionnaire contained two statements taken from textbooks representing the practice of giving the perspective of only one group while dealing with contents relating to the historical development of BiH:

*The territory of Republika Srpska, in historical and ethnic terms, belongs to the Serb people.* Gnjato, Grčić, Marić and Rakita (2005:11)

*The military aggression against BiH began in autumn, 1991. Muslims were not timely equipped with arms, while Croats organised armed forces called HVO and firmly stood up against the Serb assault.* Matković, Mirošević, Goluža and Šarac (2003:280)

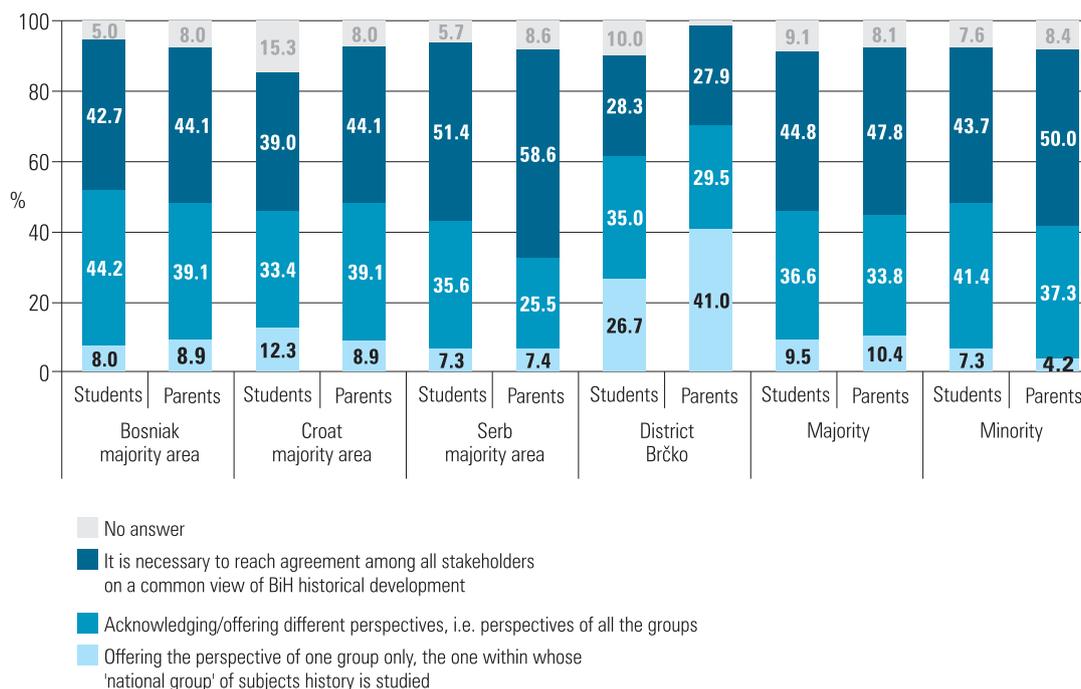
58% of parents from the Serb majority area agree with the presence of the first statement although, while answering the general question on treating BiH historical development, only 7% of these parents stated that it was justified to deal with such contents giving the perspective of one people only. Similarly, 55% of parents in the Croat majority area supported the second statement although only 9% of them support the approach of giving the perspective of one group only.

### Treating the period from 1992 till the present

There is a recent trend in studying national and global history in European countries. Unlike the traditional approach of teaching history from a certain distance in time, the new trend focuses on recent history (the past 25 years). The traditional approach is the basis for the decision pertaining to our country not to include the period since 1992 in textbooks to avoid possible difficulties arising from different interpretations of sensitive and controversial events.

However, 31% of students and 38% of parents support the practice of not studying the period since 1992 except mentioning key historical points (e.g. mentioning the Dayton Agreement). More than half of them (60% and 55%) think that history textbooks in BiH should include this pe-

Figure 54  
How do you think textbooks should deal with historical development of BiH?



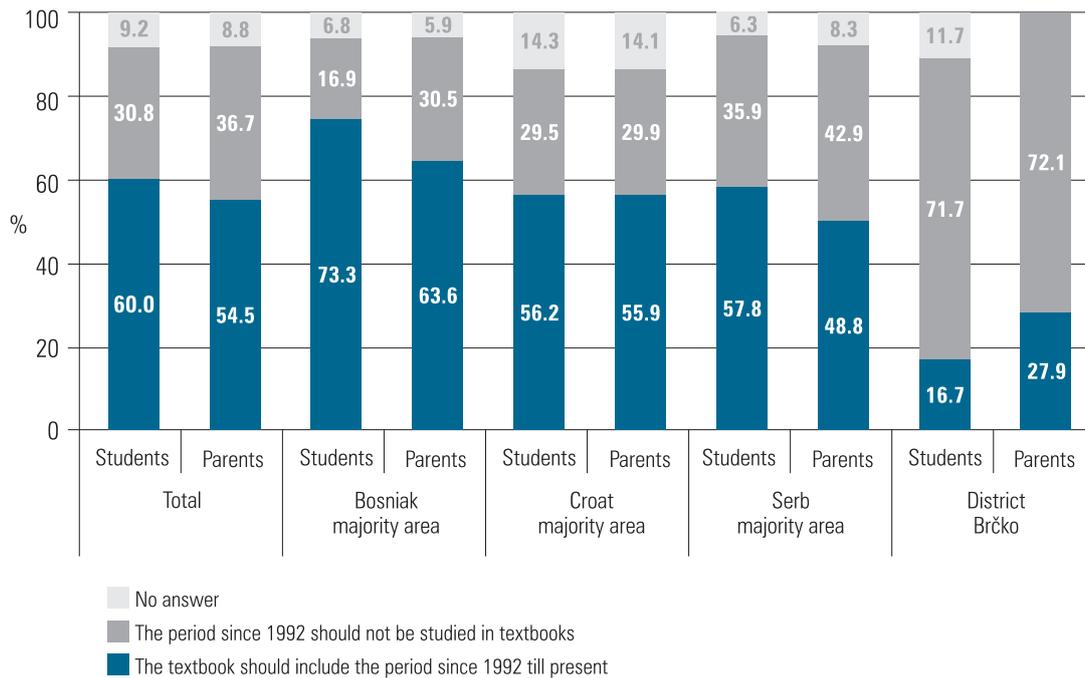


Figure 55  
The history textbooks currently used in BiH mainly do not deal with the period since 1992. What do you think about this?

riod as well. This disagreement with the current practice is most strongly present with students and parents in the Bosniak majority area and the least so with students and parents in the Brčko District, with whom there is a clear majority in supporting the approach for textbooks not to include the period since 1992 (see Figure 55).

The opinion that the period since 1992 should not be included in textbooks is, in principle, more frequent with respondents belonging to a minority group in a given ethnic majority area in BiH.

### 3. Language policy

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are different titles of the official language in the entities and cantons: Bosnian and Croatian; Serbian of *jekavian* and *ekavian* dialects; Croatian and Bosnian (Kreso, 2004). This non-standardised practice poses problems for mobility of students within the country and for implementation of the education rights of students returnees in the area where they constitute a minority.<sup>58</sup> Students and parents were offered two options relating to a possible change of the current situation:

- A single language policy should be agreed on,

which should result in agreement on the name, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks;

- All students in BiH schools should learn all three official languages, not only one.

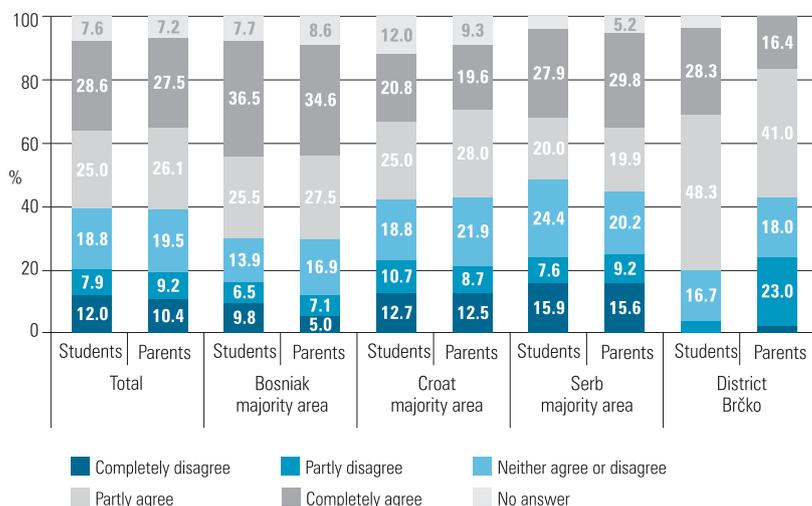
The opinion that a single language policy should be agreed on, which should result in **agreement on the name, grammar, use and study of language in schools and textbooks**, is held by at least half the students and parents in all the areas (54%). 20% of respondents do not agree with this change, while 26% of them could not express their attitude about this issue. Brčko District students, more frequently than other students, and students from the Bosniak majority area, more frequently than those from the Croat and Serb areas, support the idea of reaching agreement on a single language policy. This attitude is also more frequently supported by parents in the Brčko District and the Bosniak majority area than those in the Croat and Serb majority areas (see Figure 56).

The opinion that a single language policy should be agreed upon for the whole country is more frequently held by minorities than majority respondents in the

<sup>58</sup> The implementation plan for the Interim agreement on meeting special needs and rights of children returnees, 2002.

Figure 56

**A single language policy should be agreed on, which should result in agreement on the name, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks**



There is another element in favour of the attitude that there should be a single language policy - reaching agreement on the name, grammar and use of the language, i.e. the fact that only 21% of students and 22% of parents throughout BiH agree with the current practice of studying only the literature of the group the children belong to. Although not significant, the support for such a practice is more frequently present with students in the Croat and Serb majority areas than those in the Bosniak majority area, as well as with parents in the Croat than parents in the Bosniak and Serb majority areas. Most Brčko District parents remain neutral with regard to this issue (see Figure 58)

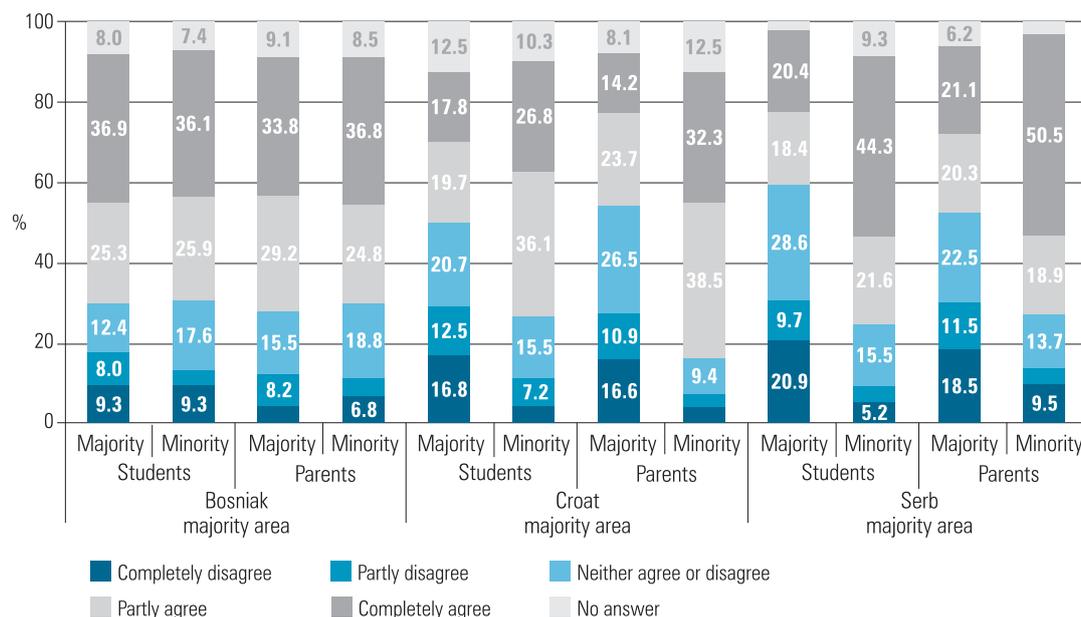
Majority students in the Serb majority area, and parents constituting majorities in the Croat and Serb majority areas, more frequently than minorities in these areas, find it appropriate for the literature of only one group to be studied in BiH schools, the group the majority students belong to. The difference in supporting this practice between majority and minority respondents in the Bosniak majority area is not statistically significant (see Figure 59).

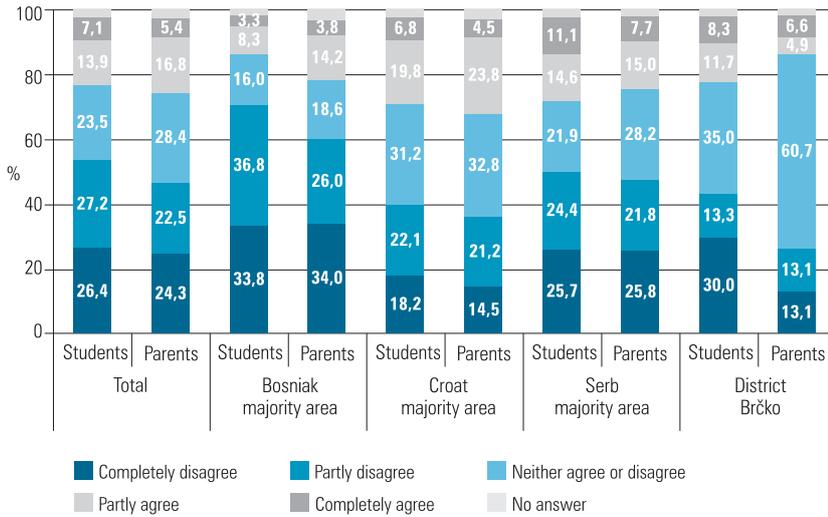
Croat and Serb majority areas, while these differences in the Bosniak majority areas are not significant. Namely, in more than half the cases, Bosniaks, even when they are in the majority position, support the proposal about reaching agreement on a single language policy. Croats living in the Croat majority area and Serbs living in the Serb majority area support this idea less frequently than members of their respective groups who are in a minority position (see Figure 57).

Another option for overcoming the current situation is the proposal implying that all students in BiH schools should learn all three official languages, not only one.

Figure 57

**A single language policy should be agreed on, which should result in agreement on the name, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks**

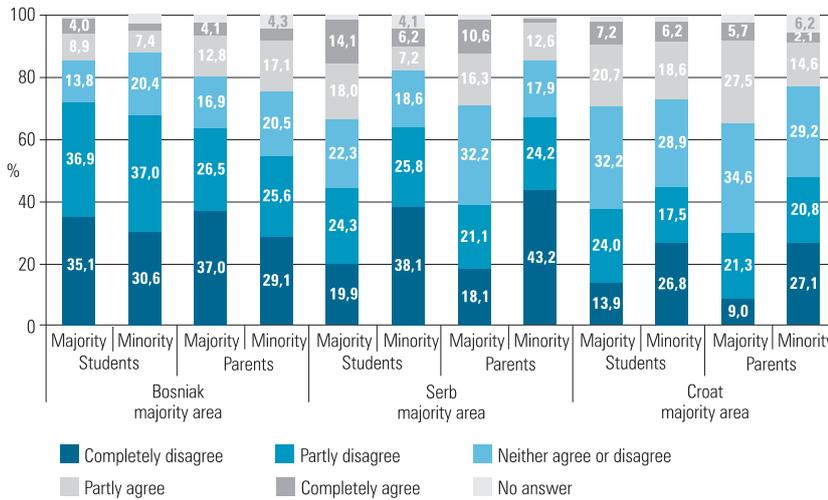




**Figure 58**  
Some curricula include only the literature of one group – the one students belong to. To what degree do you agree with this practice?

Reasons given by focus group participants for including culture of religion in the curriculum:

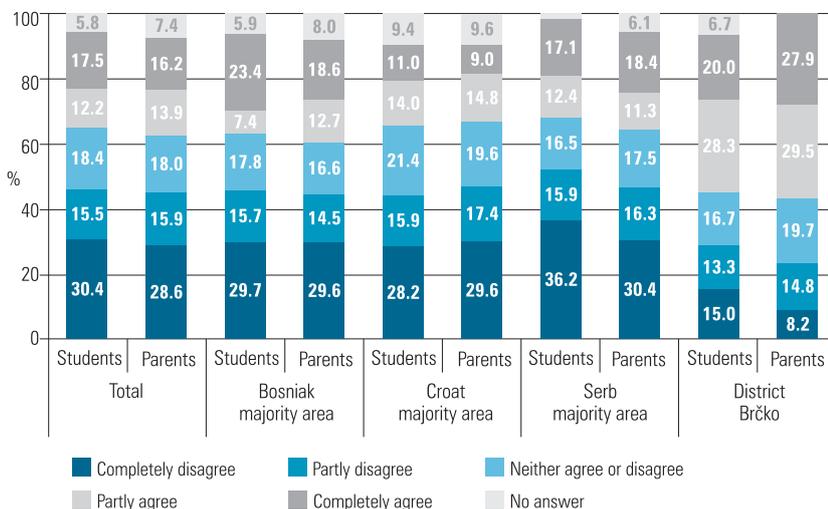
*Because I am a BiH citizen, I am constituted and interested in religion and history of others, and I want them to respect me too.* (FGD Banja Luka, minority students)



**Figure 59**  
Some curricula include only the literature of one group – the one the students belong to. To what degree do you agree with this practice?

*Because we must be informed about something to understand it and not to judge it right away, which is what is happening now.* (FGD Sarajevo, minority students)

*To have knowledge of one another... Somehow, if we became closer by learning about their religion we would be able to accept them more easily* (FGD Banja Luka, majority students)



**Figure 60**  
Children should learn all three official languages in school, not only one

*If there had been such a subject long ago, if my generations had studied culture of religion, many things may not have happened ... as soon as religion mixed with politics – we got what we got* (FGD Sarajevo, majority parents)

*Especially as we live in Bosnia which is a powder keg. An excuse for wars has always been searched in religions...* (FGD Banja Luka, minority students)

The polling results indicate that most respondents (45%) do not agree with this proposal. There is a higher degree of agreement in the Brčko District, while most students and parents in the ethnic majority areas oppose such a solution to the “*issue of language*” in BiH (see Figure 60).

It is important to note, however, that majorities and minorities have completely opposite attitudes towards this issue. Namely, in most previous cases they support the same ideas to a different degree. However, with regard to this issue, majority respondents in a given area more frequently oppose and minority respondents more frequently support the proposed change of the language policy according to which children in BiH schools should learn all three official languages (see Figure 61).

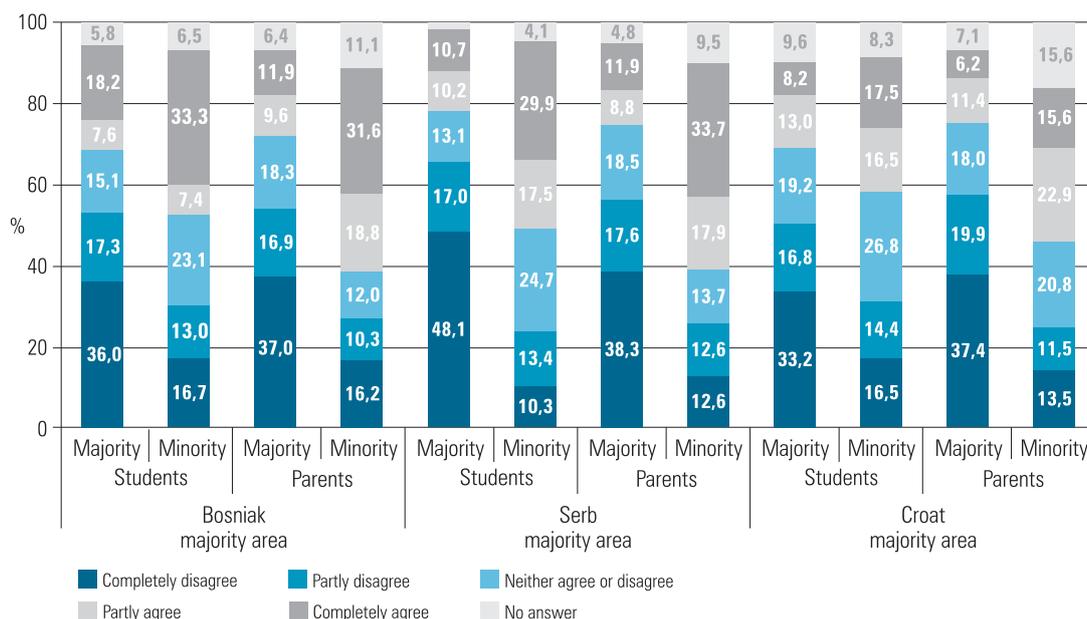
#### 4. Religious education in schools

In early 1990s, religious instruction classes were introduced into schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries in the region. The Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education guarantees students the freedom of religious expression and of choice in accordance with their

personal and family orientation. Religious instruction is of a denominational nature, and the law stipulates that religious instruction is an optional course. As a denominational subject, it “teaches on the specifics of a particular religion” or “teaches for religion” - offering religious beliefs, identities and skills of practicing religious rituals from the *standpoint of a believer*. Unlike denominational, non-denominational instruction (Culture of Religions) teaches “about religion”, offering positive facts from a neutral standpoint. The introduction of this non-denominational subject, is a project that started in BiH schools in 2002 and is still in its pilot phase in a limited number of schools in both entities.

With regard to the respondents’ relation towards religious education in schools in our country, most students and parents polled think that **schools should offer subjects relating to religious education: both religious instruction (denominational instruction) and a subject teaching about all religions (e.g. culture of religions)**, or that **schools should offer only religious instruction**. The rest of the respondents (6-10%) think that **schools should not offer religious instruction but a subject teaching all religions**, or that **neither of these subjects should be taught in school (2-12%)**.

Figure 61  
Children should learn all three official languages in school, not only one



**Figure 62**  
**The attitude towards religious education in BiH schools**

The attitude that schools should have only religious instruction is most frequently supported by students and parents in the Croat majority area and least frequently by respondents living in the Bosniak majority area.

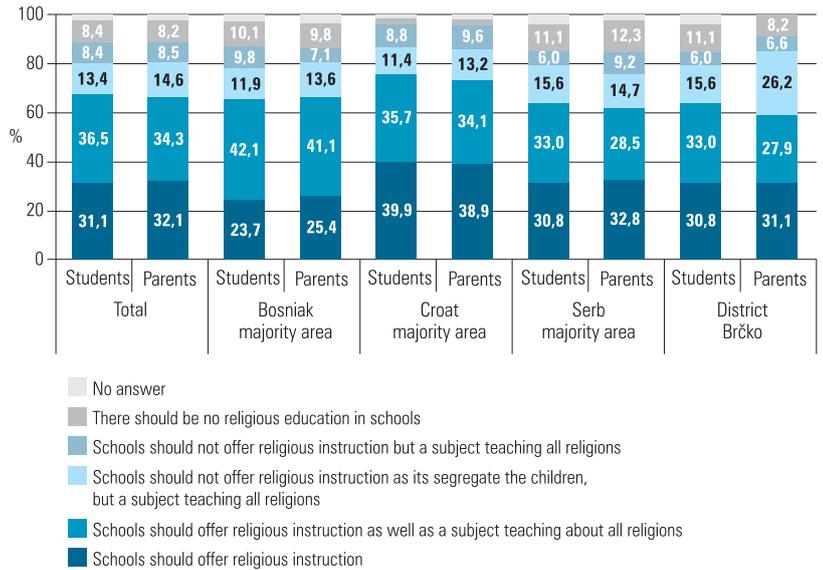
Students and parents in the Bosniak majority area, considerably more frequently than respondents in the Serb majority area and the Brčko District, think that schools should offer both religious instruction and a subject on all religions.

The attitude that schools should not have religious instruction but should have a subject teaching about all religions is equally supported in all the areas, while the attitude that schools should have neither of these is more frequently present in the Bosniak and Serb majority areas than in the Croat majority area (see Figure 62).

Majority and minority respondents have different attitudes about the presence of religious education in schools. Majority students and parents more frequently state that schools should include religious instruction, as well as that schools should include both religious instruction and a subject on all religions, unlike minority students and parents in a given area, who more frequently state that schools should not include religious instruction (as it necessarily separates children) but should include a subject teaching all religions, as well as that schools should include neither of these subjects.

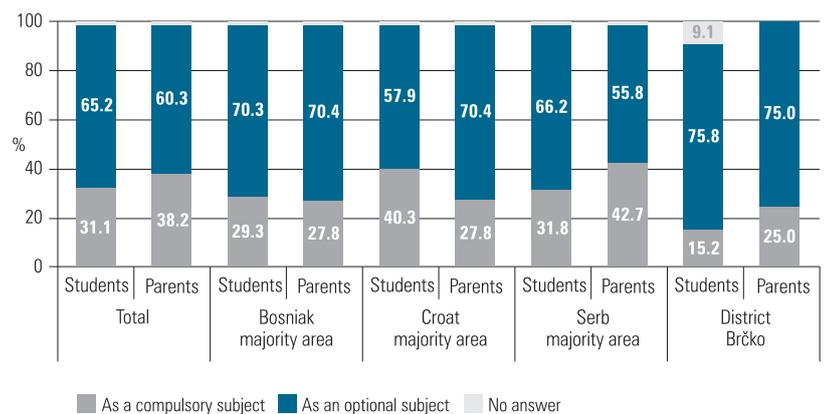
Male students, more frequently than female students, think that schools should offer religious instruction, while female students more frequently think that none of these subjects should be taught in schools – neither religious instruction nor culture of religions.

Respondents thinking that schools should offer religious instruction (whether as the only religious instruction course or together with culture of religions,



67% in total) were additionally asked whether it should be a compulsory or an optional/elective course. Most students and parents (56-76%) think that, in BiH schools, religious instruction should be offered as an optional/elective course. A smaller number (15-43%) think that religious instruction in schools should be a compulsory subject. This opinion is more frequently held by students in the Croat and parents in the Serb majority area (see Figure 63).

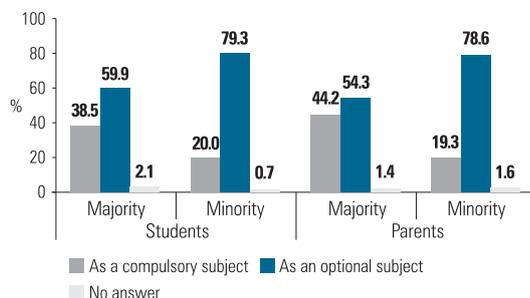
**Figure 63**  
**Should schools offer religious instruction as:**



Minority respondents believing that there should be religious instruction in schools, regardless of their area, more frequently think that it should be an optional/elective course than do majority students and parents,

who, less frequently than minorities, think that religious instruction should be a compulsory course (see Figure 64).

**Figure 64**  
**Should schools offer religious instruction as...**



There was no additional question about culture of religion in the questionnaire. However, as a significant number of respondents (58%) pointed the need to introduce a subject teaching children in BiH schools about all religions (as the only religious education course or together with religious instruction), this was made a topic of focus in group discussions. The results indicate that students and parents agree with the UN Recommendation<sup>59</sup> stating that, in a religiously heterogeneous society (such as BiH), it is desirable to acquire knowledge of different cultures and religions in order to encourage critical thinking, dialogue and respect for people with different beliefs.

However, it should be noted that part of students and parents point out that religious instruction could also include contents on existential or moral issues such as they are dealt with in different religious traditions, which would reduce the need to introduce culture of religion in BiH schools.

## 5. Education jurisdiction

The Dayton Constitution places responsibilities for education in BiH at the level of the entities, cantons and the Brčko District. After the Peace Agreement was signed, there was no institution at the state level responsible for education. In early 2000, the inter-entity Agency for Standards and Assessment was established and, in 2003, the Ministry of Civil Affairs

was given jurisdiction for coordination, harmonisation of plans of entity and cantonal authorities and defining a strategy at the international level in the field of education, science, culture and sports. Although the Framework Law on Primary and General Secondary Education prescribes that a state agency for curricula should be established, no such agency has yet been established.

A small number of respondents (8-27%) included in this survey support the current distribution of education responsibilities. Namely, this percentage of parents and students in BiH think that education should fall within the entity and cantonal jurisdiction, while approximately the same number (7-25%) hold that education responsibilities should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels. As opposed to this, most respondents believe that education should be placed at the state level (48-85%).

A majority of respondents throughout BiH support this attitude, with Brčko District respondents and those from the Bosniak majority area expressing stronger support than others. The attitude that education jurisdictions should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels is more frequently supported by respondents in the Croat majority areas than by other respondents. The attitude that the jurisdiction for education should remain exclusively at the entity and cantonal levels is more frequently supported by students and parents in the Serb majority area (see Figure 65).

If they represent minorities, respondents more frequently support the attitude that education should fall within the state authority. An exception to this is the Bosniak majority area, where there are no significant differences between minority and Bosniak respondents with regard to the distribution of education responsibilities. However, minority students and parents in the Croat and Serb majority areas, more frequently than majorities, think that education should be at the state level. This is a result of the fact, that, when they constitute the majority people in a given area, Croat

<sup>59</sup> Zaključci sa UN Konsultativne konferencije o školskom obrazovanju i slobodi religije ili vjerovanja, toleranciji i nediskriminaciji, održanom u Madridu 2001. godine

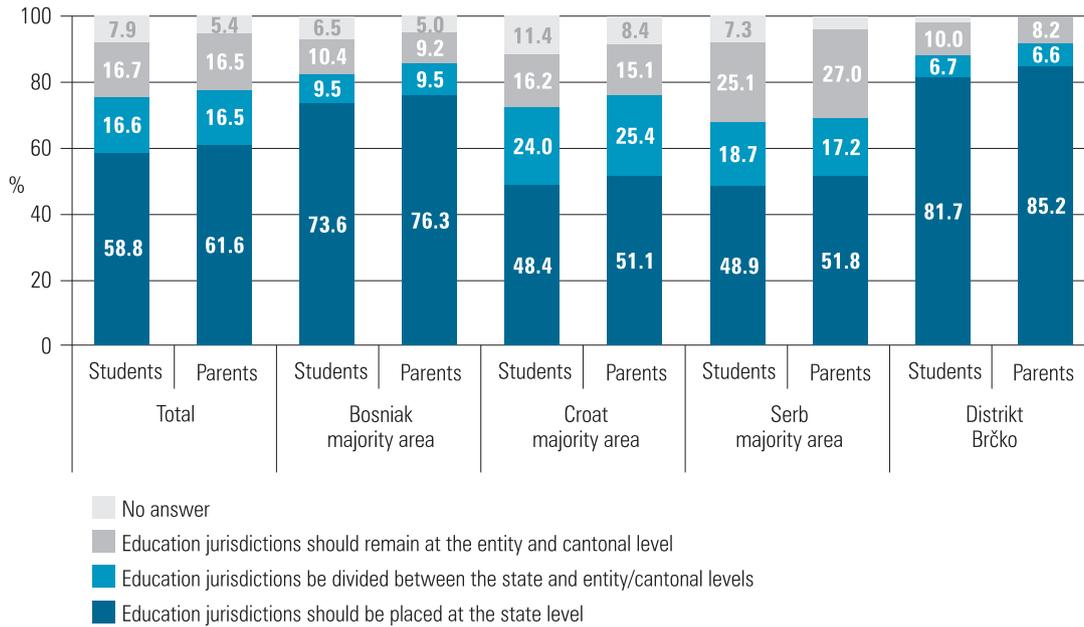


Figure 65  
Respondents' attitudes about the distribution of education competencies

and Serb respondents (more frequently than when they constitute minorities) think that education competences should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels (an attitude more frequently supported by Croat parents in the Croat majority area than by Serb parents in RS), as well as that they should be kept at the entity/cantonal level (more frequently supported by Serb parents constituting the majority than by Croat majority parents) (see Figure 66).

In the Functional overview of the education sector, made in 2005 within the EU CARDS Programme, it was reported that, „ Bosnia and Herzegovina has no institutions required for planning, monitoring and managing a sustainable and coherent education system, nor does it have institutions that might provide for fairness and equal access to education.<sup>60</sup> The Overview further pointed to the non-viability of an asymmetric decentralisation principle where, in one entity (the

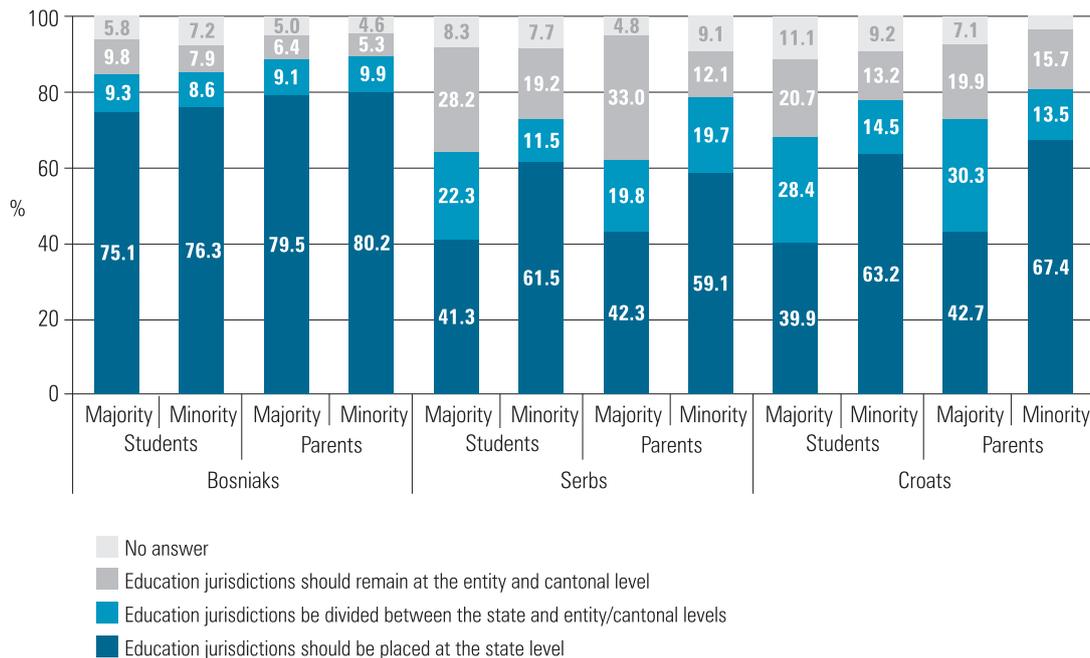


Figure 66  
Respondents' attitudes about the distribution of education competencies

<sup>60</sup> Functional overview of education sector in BiH, EU CARDS programme, 2005, p. 9.

Federation of BiH), education is decentralised and all the education responsibilities are at the cantonal level and, in the other entity (Republika Srpska), education management is completely centralised and all the responsibilities are at the entity level. These findings indicate the need to place part of education responsibilities at the state level, since it plays a crucial role in *“ensuring protection of education and minority rights which, in turn, contributes to social cohesion.”*<sup>61</sup> Respondents in all the areas agree with the need to place part of this authority at the state level, expressing stronger support for the attitude that education should fall within the state-level jurisdiction than for other proposed changes with regard to the transfer of responsibilities.

## Conclusion

The survey included questions eliciting students' and parents' attitudes towards the need for changing the current curricula and textbooks. The survey also offered possible directions with respect to changing the contents of the “national group” of subjects. Some of them derived from the Guidelines for production of history and geography textbooks,<sup>62</sup> and others from findings of various studies relating to education in BiH in the post-war period. They are based on the principles of education for an open society.

The findings of this survey indicate that one-third of students and parents believe that “national subject” textbooks should remain as they are. In contrast, 43% of the respondents do not agree with maintaining the current situation - mainly respondents from the Brčko District (75%), then respondents from the Bosniak area, then the Croat area and, finally, from the Serb majority area (32%). In all the ethnic majority areas in BiH there is a trend according to which respondents belonging to minority groups, more frequently than those belonging to the majority, think that the “national group” of subjects should be changed.

Respondents support the recommendations and directions for changing the current education practice, which also illustrates their attitude about the need to apply the relevant legal principles and incorporate them into the education system. Although their support for individual recommendations varies depending on the majority area and respondent category, the results indicate that, in principle, respondents from different parts of BiH want the same changes to the education system. The desired changes are the following ones:

- Textbooks should first teach about BiH and only then about each group individually or about the neighbouring countries;
- The contents of “national subject” textbooks should be changed so as to focus more on members of all three groups and on other ethnic minorities instead of on just one group;
- Textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH;
- Textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues;
- The current treatment of BiH historical development should be changed in the following ways:
  1. Reach agreement among all citizens on a common view of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks, and/or
  2. Give all the groups' perspectives while treating BiH historical development in textbooks;
- BiH history textbooks should also treat the period since 1992;
- There should be a single language policy resulting in agreement about the name of the language, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks;
- In addition to religious instruction, there should also be a subject in schools teaching about all the world religions in an objective and neutral way;
- The current distribution of jurisdictions for education should be reviewed.

<sup>61</sup> Minority Rights International, „Education in Multi-Ethnic Societies of Central and Eastern Europe”, at <http://minorityrights.org>

<sup>62</sup> Službeni glasnik BiH 05/07.

***Textbooks should first teach about BiH and only then about each group individually or about neighbouring countries***

Most students and parents in all the majority areas (54-75%) agree that textbooks should **primarily teach about BiH** and only then about each people individually or about the neighbouring countries. This recommendation is mostly supported by respondents from the Bosniak majority area, while respondents of the Serb and Croat ethnic backgrounds tend to support this concept if they are in the position of a minority people.

What is also compatible with these findings are the data relating to the selection of starting points for studying geography and history in primary and secondary schools in BiH. Namely, the results indicate that a majority of all the respondents think that the main starting point for studying geography and history in BiH should be **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. However, unlike geography – where this response is the most frequent one in all the areas, the attitude that BiH should represent the starting point for studying history is not the most frequent one in the Serb majority area where the option *historical events related to the group you belong to* is supported slightly less than the first one. This is also the second most supported option in the Croat majority area too, although this area can be said to be dominated by the opinion that BiH should represent the main framework for studying BiH history. The attitude that BiH should be the starting point for studying both geography and history is more frequently supported by the minorities than by the majority in a given area, though it is most frequently held by respondents of all ethnic backgrounds.

***The contents of “national subject” textbooks should be changed to focus more on members of all three groups and other ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone***

Most respondents (55-79%) support the recommendation that “national subject” textbooks should be changed **to focus significantly more on members of all three groups and other ethnic minorities** instead of on one group alone. This recommendation

receives more support from respondents in the Bosniak majority area and the Brčko District than respondents in the Croat and Serb majority areas. Changes to textbooks to focus significantly more on members of all three groups and other ethnic minorities instead of on one group alone are much more supported by minority students and parents than those representing the majority in a given area.

***Textbooks should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the groups in BiH***

Most of all the respondents (58-82%) state that the curricula and textbooks **should include more contents encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH**. A smaller number of respondents (8-32%) think that the amount of such contents should be kept at the current level, while only 3% of them think that there should be less such contents than there is now, where this attitude varies from area to area 0-10%. Although the need for such a change is supported by most respondents in all the areas, it receives somewhat stronger support from students in the Bosniak, Croat and Serb majority areas than in the Brčko District, and from parents in the Bosniak majority area than those in other parts of BiH. In comparison with majority respondents in the same area, minority respondents more frequently believe that the amount of contents developing mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among people in BiH should be *significantly* increased. It should be noted that this attitude is more frequently supported by female students than by male ones.

***Textbooks should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues***

The proposal that textbooks **should include different views on the same events, offer different interpretations of the same events and encourage dialogue about sensitive/controversial issues** is supported by somewhat less than half of all the respondents (41-61%). A minor part of the

remaining respondents (8-29%) is opposed to such a approach, while most of them do not have a definitive attitude, can not answer or do not know the answer to this question (30-45%). It should be noted that the support for the implementation of this recommendation does not imply statistically significant differences among students from different areas, with Brčko District parents expressing the strongest support for this idea and Serb majority area parents offering the weakest support for it. Minority respondents express stronger support for a multiperspectivity approach to the teaching process, while majority respondents are more frequently opposed to it. Within the focus groups, students and parents stated that the most common reason for not supporting this approach was their fear of the interpretation of seeing those "others" and their fear that children who had not been encouraged to have an analytical approach to textbook contents would not know "what to think". Respondents resist the introduction of new interactive methods into the teaching process, stating that schools should teach objective facts, without asking questions, relativising or discussing presented contents.

#### ***The current treatment of BiH historical development should be changed***

When asked about the way textbooks should treat historical development of BiH, respondents from all the ethnic areas, but not from the Brčko District, most frequently think that it is necessary to **reach agreement among all the stakeholders on a common view** of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks (39-59%), or that textbooks should treat BiH historical development **acknowledging/presenting different perspectives**, i.e. giving perspectives of all the peoples (25-44%). In the Brčko District, 27% of students and 41% of parents support the currently dominant practice of **offering the perspective of one people only**, the people whose national group of subjects history falls within, which is in turn supported by only a small number of respondents from other BiH areas (7-12%).

The attitude that agreement should necessarily be reached among all the stakeholders on a common view of BiH historical development, which should then be presented in textbooks, is most frequently held by respondents in the Serb majority area. The attitude that textbooks should treat BiH historical development giving perspectives of all the peoples is more frequently held by respondents in the Bosniak and parents in the Croat majority area. Minority and majority respondents equally support these two recommendations reflecting the principles of education for an open society.

#### ***BiH history textbooks should also treat the period since 1992***

Most respondents (49-73%) in all the ethnic majority areas (except the Brčko District) think that textbooks on BiH history should also treat the period since 1992 to the present day. Unlike them, most of the Brčko District respondents (72%) support the current practice within which, except for mentioning fundamental historical points, textbooks do not treat this historical period. This attitude is significantly less present in the remaining areas (20-43%). The disagreement with the current practice is most frequently present with students and parents in the Bosniak majority area. The attitude that textbooks should not cover the period since 1992 is most frequently held by respondents belonging to minority ethnic groups.

#### ***There should be a single language policy resulting in agreement about the name of the language, grammar, use and study of language in schools and textbooks***

The attitude that there should be a single language policy resulting in **agreement about the name of the language, grammar, use and study of the language in schools and textbooks** is held by most of all the respondents (48-78%), while a smaller number do not agree with the proposed change (3-25%). The idea about reaching agreement on a single language policy is most often supported by respondents in the Brčko District and Bosniak majority area. Respondents of Bosniak background, regardless of their area, in

more than half the cases support the proposal for reaching agreement on a single language policy, while Croat and Serb respondents support it to a greater extent if they are in the minority position.

There is another element in favour of the attitude that there should be a single language policy – reaching agreement on the name, grammar and use of the language, i.e. the fact that only 21% of students and 22% of parents throughout BiH agree with the current practice of studying only the literature of the group that the children belong to. Although not significant, the support for such a practice is more present with students in the Croat and Serb majority areas than those in the Bosniak majority area, as well as with parents in the Croat majority area than parents in the Bosniak and Serb majority areas. Most Brčko District parents remain neutral with regard to this issue.

### ***Children should learn all three official languages in school, not only one***

Most respondents (23-52%) do not agree with this idea. Agreement is somewhat broader in the Brčko District, whereas in all the majority areas most students and parents oppose such a solution to the “language issue” in BiH. However, even though most respondents belonging to minorities differ from those representing the majority, conditionally speaking, this is *only* to the degree of their support for the changes they favour or oppose. These categories of respondents have completely opposite attitudes when it comes to the proposal that all children in BiH should learn all three official languages in school - minority respondents more frequently support this while majority respondents oppose such a change to the language policy where all children in BiH schools would learn all three official languages.

### ***In addition to religious instruction, there should also be a subject in schools teaching about all the world religions in an objective and neutral way***

With regard to respondent attitudes about religious education in schools in BiH, most students and parents polled believe that schools should have subjects

related to religious education. Respondents express the strongest support for the following options:

- Schools should include both religious instruction (denominational instruction) and a subject teaching about all religions (e.g. culture of religions) (28-42%);
- Schools should include religious instruction only (24-40%).

Respondents belonging to the majority group and those belonging to the minority have different attitudes with regard to religious education in schools. Majority students and parents more often support religious instruction in schools (whether this subject is alone or together with “culture of religions”), while minority students and parents more often do not want to offer it in schools (whether or not they think that religious education should be included only within “culture of religions” or that neither subject should be included in the teaching process).

The attitude that schools should offer only religious instruction is most frequently held by respondents in the Croat majority area, while the one that schools should offer both religious instruction and a subject teaching about all religions is most frequently supported by respondents in the Bosniak majority area.

Most respondents (56-76%) who believe that schools should include religious instruction (whether as the only religious education subject or together with culture of religions) think that it should be offered as an optional course. This opinion is more frequent with respondents representing a minority ethnic group in a given area.

### ***Changes in jurisdictions for education***

In the Functional Overview of Education Sector, made in 2005 within the EU CARDS Programme, it states that, Bosnia and Herzegovina has no institutions required for planning, monitoring and managing a sustainable and coherent education system, nor institutions that exist which might provide for fairness and equal access to education.<sup>63</sup> The Overview further pointed at the non-viability of an asymmetric decentralisation principle where, in one entity (the Federation

<sup>63</sup> *Functional overview of education sector in BiH, EU CARDS programme, 2005, p. 9.*

<sup>64</sup> Minority Rights International, „Education in Multi-Ethnic Societies of Central and Eastern Europe“, at <http://minorityrights.org>

of BiH), education is decentralised and all the education responsibilities are at the cantonal level and, in the other entity (Republika Srpska), education management is completely centralised and all the responsibilities are at the entity level. These findings indicate the need to place part of the education authority at the state level, since it plays a crucial role in “ensuring protection of education and minority rights which, in turn, contributes to social cohesion.”<sup>64</sup> Respondents in all the areas agree with the need to place part of the responsibilities at the state level, expressing stronger support for the attitude that education should fall within the state-level realm than for other proposed changes with regard to the transfer of responsibilities

A small number of respondents (8-27%) included in the survey support the current distribution of education responsibilities. Namely, the above percentage of parents and students in BiH think that education should remain exclusively at the entity and cantonal levels, while approximately the same number (7-25%) hold that education responsibilities should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels. As opposed to this, most respondents believe that some jurisdiction for **education should be placed at the state level** (48-85%). A majority of respondents throughout BiH support this attitude, with Brčko District respondents and those from the Bosniak majority area expressing stronger support than others. The attitude that education jurisdictions should be divided between the state and entity/cantonal levels is more frequently supported by respondents in the Croat majority areas than by other respondents. The attitude that education responsibilities should remain exclusively at the entity and cantonal levels is more frequently supported by students and parents in the Serb majority area.

If they represent minorities, respondents more frequently support the attitude that education should fall within the state competences. An exception to this is the Bosniak majority area, where there are no significant differences between minority and Bosniak respondents with regard to the distribution of education responsibilities.

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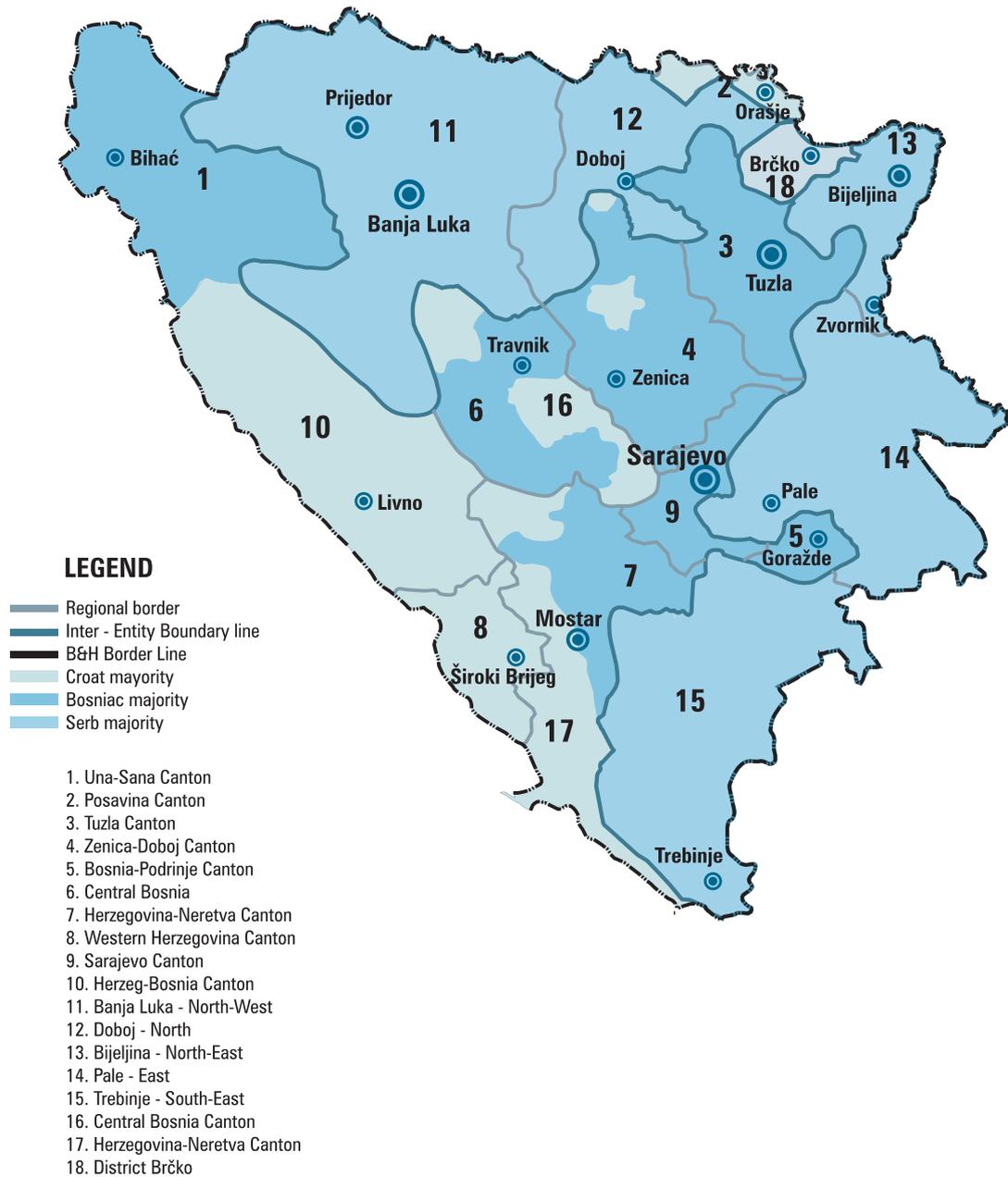


**Education Support Program**  
Open Society Fund Bosnia & Herzegovina



# Annex

Annex: **Map with a geographic presentation of the ethnic majority areas in BiH**







Open  
Society Fund  
Bosnia & Herzegovina