Assessment report on the effectiveness of PRTANs

Focused report on effectiveness of PRTANs among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children
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The views expressed in this assessment do not necessarily reflect the views of the Regional Cooperation Council or of its participants, nor of the European Union and the Open Society Foundations.”

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<td>KAS</td>
<td>Kosovo Agency of Statistics</td>
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<td>PRTANs</td>
<td>Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration</td>
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<td>KPC</td>
<td>Kosovo Prosecutorial Council</td>
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<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<td>MEST</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Science and Technology</td>
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<td>MoJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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<td>MLSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare</td>
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<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>KP</td>
<td>Kosovo Police</td>
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<td>CSW</td>
<td>Centre for Social Work</td>
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<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>EWS</td>
<td>Early Warning System</td>
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<td>MOCR</td>
<td>Municipal Office for Communities and Return</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The right to education is one of the fundamental human rights. There are various international conventions that guarantee this right. In line with these conventions, the Government of Kosovo has developed policies that guarantee this right. However, school drop-outs and non-enrolment continue to remain at a concerning level. In particular, this phenomenon is more pronounced among marginalized groups such as the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

To address the problem of drop-outs and non-enrolment in school, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has taken the initiative to establish and strengthen Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration (PRTANs) in pre-university education. These teams are established in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools, as well as at the national level in MEST. The operation of these teams has faced difficulties, which is reflected in problems in preventing school drop-outs and non-enrolment.

To have a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of PRTANs in preventing and responding to drop-outs and non-enrolment in school, an evaluation was conducted in May and June 2019 in various schools and municipalities, as well as in MEST.

Municipal Education Departments (MEDs) and schools have stated that these teams are already established in their institutions. However, the practical functionality of these teams is not at the adequate level due to the extremely low level of meetings that are held, as well as handling of cases. As a result, the cases that are identified are mainly handled outside the PRTAN mechanisms. Therefore, PRTANs remain largely uninvolved in identifying and treating school drop-outs, at-risk drop-outs, and non-enrolment cases.

Identification of drop-outs is mainly done by teachers in schools. They are also identified by CSOs that deal with issues of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and school drop-outs. Mostly, CSOs manage to identify drop-out cases from grading reports, where students who drop out of school are reported as ungraded. The issue of reporting, referral and handling these cases remains problematic. Information gathered on the field shows that there are cases, especially among students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, who are not reported for drop-outs. There are also cases that are reported late for school drop-out. As a consequence, these cases generally end with the loss of the school year. In the meantime, identification of non-enrolled cases at school is mainly done by CSOs that deal with issues of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Identification of these cases in areas that are not covered by these CSOs remains problematic.

School drop-out cases may have different conclusions. Some of them may remain unidentified or are identified late. As a consequence, these cases usually lose the entire school year and are not provided with accelerated learning to compensate the losses in learning. For these cases, MEDs are usually not kept informed. Cases of drop-outs involving delicts are referred to the custody body and other security and justice institutions. MEDs are usually kept informed for
these cases. Cases of students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are referred to
the community mediator or CSOs operating in the area dealing with drop-out issues and issues
of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Areas that are not covered by community
mediators and relevant CSOs remain a concern. For these cases, MEDs are usually not kept
informed.

The issue of non-enrolment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children who have reached the
evisaged age for first grade enrolment is of concern, but the school considers them psycho-
physically "immature". These children are not reported as drop-outs or non-enrolled cases at
school. As a result, these cases are largely not handled and lose at least one school year.

Despite the existence of a specific module in the Education Management Information System
(EMIS), called the Early Warning System (EWS), registration of cases in this system is extremely
minimal. Cases at risk of dropping out of school are almost never registered. In this system are
mainly recorded only the cases involving the custody body and other relevant security and
justice institutions. Whereas, other cases of drop-out and cases of school non-enrolment are
almost not registered at all.

Representatives of the institutions interviewed during this assessment stated that cases were
not registered due to: lack of computer knowledge and skillson EWS of persons in charge,
constant recruitment of teachers and directors, hesitation to report cases in order to avoid the
image of "failed school", etc.

Due to a lack of case registration, the EWS cannot provide any overview into the status of
school non-enrolment, drop-outs and the drop-outs at risk. Currently, the EWS can only provide
an overview of cases that have dropped out of school which are at the same time handled by
the custody body and relevant security and justice institutions.
KEY FINDINGS

Establishment of PRTANs

- PRTANs are established in compulsory education schools and at the municipal level. Their establishment was mainly done only administratively, while their practical functionality has not yet been sufficiently done.

- There is a lack sufficient representation of relevant CSOs dealing with drop-out issues in the municipal PRTANs.

- The meetings of school and municipal PRTANs are not held in accordance with provisions of the relevant administrative instruction. According to reports from field officials, these meetings at the school level are not held due to the lack of willingness of members of these teams. Whereas, at the municipal level, these meetings are not held due to insufficient number of MED staff to engage in various initiatives.

- Handling of cases is not done by school PRTANs or municipal PRTANs.

- In the absence of meetings, school PRTANs and municipal PRTANs are unaware of a considerable number of cases that are identified, referred and handled.

Identification of cases

- Standard procedures for identification, referral, handling and follow up of cases are not implemented.

- Identification of drop-outs is mainly done in schools by teachers based on student absences. However, cases that were identified late were followed by the loss of school year. Drop-out cases from students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are usually identified in grades’ reports on the basis of lack of grades. This identification is mostly initiated by CSOs dealing with drop-outs and issues of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

- Identification of school non-enrolment cases is mainly done by CSOs dealing with drop-out issues and issues of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. In areas where these CSOs do not operate, identification of non-enrolled children at school remains critical.

- The high level of repeated drop-outs by students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities remains a concern.

Referral and handling

- In cases of school drop-outs or at risk of drop-out among students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, their referral to the community mediator if practiced, in case he/she exists in that area, or to CSOs dealing with specific issue of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, as well as drop-outs. Otherwise, the school
contacts the student’s family by telephone or other alternative forms. Lack of referral and further treatment in areas where there are no community mediators or CSOs dealing with drop-out issues and issues of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities remains critical.

- The issue of non-enrolment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children who have reached the envisaged age for first grade enrolment is of concern, but the school considers them psycho-physically “immature”. These children are not reported as drop-outs or non-enrolled cases at school. As a result, these cases are largely not handled and lose at least one school year.

- Treatment of drop-out cases usually begins within the school and, if necessary, is referred to the custody authority and the police. However, the handling of drop-out students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities remains a concern. These students, if they do not have delinquency implications, are rarely referred to the relevant services. Referrals are most often made by the community mediator.

### Registration of cases in EWS - EMIS

- Registration of cases in the EWS of EMIS is extremely minimal. Only the serious cases, which include custodial, security and justice institutions, are registered in this system.

- Currently the EWS cannot provide a general overview of the drop-out status, drop-outs at risk and the non-enrolment at school.

- Students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities who start their first grade but interrupt it to resume first grade in the following year are not registered in the EWS.

- The reported reasons for non-registration of cases in EWS are: lack of knowledge and skills in computer of persons in charge, lack of knowledge on EWS, recruitment of new teachers and directors in schools, hesitation to report cases in order to avoid the image of “failed school”, etc.
INTRODUCTION

The right to education is guaranteed with various international conventions. In line with these conventions, Kosovo institutions have developed such policies through which they aim to guarantee this right. Based on them, institutional mechanisms have been developed to achieve education of all children in Kosovo. However, school drop-outs and non-enrolment continue to be present in Kosovo society.

Despite the existence of these mechanisms, the phenomenon of school drop-outs and non-enrolment remains at a worrying level. MEST reports that in the school year 2017/2018:¹

- in primary and lower secondary education 0.1% of students have dropped out of school in equal proportions for both genders
- in upper secondary education, a total of 1.8% of students dropped out of school, with 2.8% being male and 0.8% being female
- the transition rate from primary to lower secondary education is 99.4% in total, with 99.3% being male and 99.5% being female
- the rate of transition from lower secondary education to upper secondary education is 96.4% in total, with 99.5% being male and 93.3% being female.

Among the most affected categories are children of marginalized groups. It is suspected that the highest school drop-out and non-enrolment rates are among the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, as well as among children with disabilities. According to MEST, about 5% of children in Kosovo are not presented in the education system. In addition to the categories mentioned, this percentage includes children who have migrated, children who have been transferred to other schools or municipalities, etc. Drop-out and non-school enrolment is higher among students in upper secondary schools. According to MED and MEST officials, and CSO representatives, the highest drop-out rate in high schools occurs as a result of student engagement in work, inadequate professional orientation, influence of the setting and the family on selection of inappropriate education, involuntary enrolment in upper secondary school, etc.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has taken the initiative to establish and strengthen Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration (PRTANs) in pre-university education. These teams are established in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools, as well as at the national level in MEST. The operation of these teams has faced difficulties, which has also been reflected in efforts for preventing school drop-outs and non-enrolment.

According to MEST and Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) statistics, there are a total of 365.029 students in the pre-university education system in the 2017/2018 school year: 6.636 in kindergarten, 24.002 in pre-school, 24.4677 in primary and low secondary, and 89.714 in upper secondary school. By ethnicity, in the 2017/2018 school year there were: 35.0273 Albanians, 3.965 Kosovo Bosniaks, 2.002 Roma, 939 Egyptians, 3.729 Ashkali, 2.756 Kosovo Turks, 557 Gorani, 26 Kosovo Croats, 500 Kosovo Serbs (only in some schools of the Municipality of Kamenicë), and 282 of other ethnicities.²

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INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The right to education without discrimination is guaranteed by international conventions. The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) prohibits the exclusion of access to education on the basis of social origin, ethnicity, language, gender, nationality, economic status, etc. This convention promotes an inclusive school system that removes barriers that hinder the participation and achievement of all individuals, respects the different needs, abilities and characteristics, and eliminates all forms of discrimination in environments where the teaching takes place.

The Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (The Education 2030) for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 was signed in 2015 at the World Education Forum. Over 1,600 participants from 160 countries took part. This Declaration has set the new vision for education for the next fifteen years. Among other things, this Declaration envisages: ensuring access to education and completion of education for all for at least 12 years of primary and secondary education in public schools, equal quality and inclusive education, and promotion of opportunities for lifelong learning for all without distinction. To address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, this Declaration also foresees the necessary changes in education policies, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.³

The Hague Recommendations on the Rights of Education of National Minorities include guidelines for the education of minorities in their mother tongue and the inclusion of lessons on the history, culture and traditions of minorities concerned. To achieve this, states are required to establish centres for the development of minority curricula in their own language.⁴

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³Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656
LEGAL AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Inclusion of the excluded and marginalized groups, as well as provision of quality education for these groups, raises the need to develop and implement inclusive policies and programs. Based on international standards, the Government of Kosovo has developed policies that are in line with these standards. There are a number of laws that directly or indirectly affect the issue of promoting and involving all communities in education.

The Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Article Eight (8) on education guarantees that "all persons belonging to communities shall have the right to receive public education at all levels in one of the official languages of Kosovo of their choice. Persons belonging to communities are entitled to pre-school, primary, secondary public education in their own language, even if it is not an official language".  

The Law on the Use of Languages provides for the right of every person to choose for himself or his/her child the preferred official language for learning. In areas inhabited by persons belonging to the community whose mother tongue is not an official language, persons belonging to this community have the right to study in their mother tongue in public educational schools.  

The Law on Protection from Discrimination defines discrimination as “is any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference on any ground specified in Article 1 of this law, which has the purpose or impact of depreciation or violation of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and other applicable legislations of the Republic of Kosovo.” Education is one of the scopes of this law.  

The Law on Education in Municipalities defines the competences of municipalities at levels 0, 1, 2 and 3 of public education (preschool, elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary), where, among others, it specifies the competence of municipalities on enrolment and acceptance of students in compliance with the principles of non-discrimination under the law, as well as monitoring and reporting to parents or other authorities responsible for the educational and social attendance of students, as defined by the legislation.
Bylaws for the establishment and enforcement of PRTANs

In 2012, MEST issued Administrative Instruction no. 19/2012 on the Establishment and Empowerment of Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration in compulsory education (PRTANs). According to this Instruction, the role of PRTANs consists of:

a) preventing and responding to drop-outs in regular compulsory education by students
b) the issue of non-enrolment of children and school age youth in compulsory education.

This Administrative Instruction also sets out provisions for the establishment of PRTANs at the school level of compulsory education and at the municipal level.

Different from the abovementioned administrative instruction, the Administrative Instruction no. 08/2018 on the Establishment and Strengthening of Teams for Prevention and Response Against Drop-Out and Non-Enrolment of Students in Pre-University Education envisages establishment of PRTANs not only at the school level of compulsory education and at the municipal level (MED), but also at the school level of high secondary education and at the national level (MEST). With the entry into force of this Administrative Instruction in 2018, Administrative Instruction no. 19/2012 on the Establishment and Empowerment of Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration in compulsory education was abolished.

Both of the above administrative instructions define the drop-out student as follows:

a) A drop-out is that student who terminates schooling before the end of compulsory education by law.
b) A drop-out is that student who, after the end of compulsory education continues education but terminates it at a later period before the end of the aimed level.
c) A drop-out is also that child or young person who is not enrolled in school and does not attend compulsory education by law.

It is worth pointing out that the principles on which the PRTANs work should be based under this instruction are of crucial importance for the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. The following principles are set out in this Administrative Instruction:

a) equality
b) participation and inclusion
c) non-discrimination
d) survival and development

Provisions of the Administrative Instruction that entered into force on PRTANs at the school level include:

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a) School’s steering council establishes the PRTAN at the school level, which will have five regular members: school principal, a students’ representative, a parents’ representative. As needed, PRTAN can decide to integrate additional experts.
b) For all the identified and initiated cases, relevant manager reports every three months before the group as needed, regarding the development of a particular case handling.
c) The school’s PRTAN reports to PRTAN at the municipality level (MED) every six months and as needed, regarding the work of the group.

Provisions of this Administrative Instruction on PRTAN at the municipality level include:

a) MED establishes PRTAN at the school level, which is consisted of 9 members: two representatives from MED; one representative from the parents’ council, one representative from the students’ council, one school principal, one representative from the department of welfare, one from social and health care departments, Municipal Office for Communities and Return (MOCR), civil society that has expertise in the field of inclusion in quality education.
b) The municipal PRTAN meets every three months as needed, to review and handle all cases referred from the schools.
c) The municipality team reports to the municipal education director every three months as needed.
d) The chairman of municipal PRTAN informs school teams on the progress of dealing with concrete cases.
e) The municipal PRTAN reports to the PRTAN at the MEST level.

Provisions of this Administrative Instruction on PRTANs in MEST include:

a) MEST establishes PRTAN at the central level with this representation: MEST, MED, school, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Health (MH), Kosovo Police (KP), Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC), development partners and other groups of interest.
b) PRTAN at the central level is guided from MEST and represented from the representatives of relevant sectors responsible for addressing the right to education.
c) PRTAN at the central level compiles and supervises implementation of policies for prevention and response toward drop-outs and non-enrolment at the pre-university education.

Different from the previous Administrative Instruction, the Administrative Instruction that entered into force in 2018 envisages provisions from the Early Warning System (EWS) module in the Education Management Information System (EMIS). This is a special module in EMIS, which:

a) generates information on cases at risk of dropout, which identify, report and treat schools in the daily life.
b) links information from the school, MED and MEST, providing quantitative and qualitative information and indications of the situation on the ground and policy orientation at all levels: schools, MED and MEST.

c) corresponds and contributes with information and the register module of the violence cases in schools.

d) schools are obliged that in identified cases at risk of drop-out to register in Early Warning System (EWS) and hold responsible the relevant institutions which appear in the referral system and case handling.

d) for data insertion in EWS, school principal is responsible and access to system can have authorized persons from the principal (PRTAN members).

This Administrative Instruction envisages punitive and disciplinary measures in accordance with the legislation in force for non-compliance of the obligations set out in this Instruction.

In addition to laws and bylaws, relevant institutions have developed strategies and action plans that address the issue of drop-outs and non-enrolment in education, as well as the inclusion of marginalized groups.

One of the objectives of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan in 2017-2021 includes participation and inclusion. Among the expected results, this strategic plan includes:

- Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in primary education to increase by 10%, while in lower and upper secondary education by 20%;
- To have effective mechanisms in place to prevent drop-outs and non-enrolment in pre-university education;
- To have effective mechanisms and policies in place to promote diversity through an integrated education system.

Learning centres that operate under the management of different civil society organizations (CSOs) function with different curricula. This strategy has envisaged harmonization of these curricula and their adaptation to the community needs.

To overcome the difficulties in enrolment and attendance of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-university education, mitigation measures have been foreseen through this strategic plan. In addition, awareness raising activities have been planned for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities for timely school enrollment and attendance.

The Roma language has also been included in this strategic plan in order to ensure provision of elective teaching of Roma language.

Concerning the functioning of mechanisms, this strategic plan has foreseen effective mechanisms for preventing drop-out and non-enrolment in school. For this matter, it has foreseen capacity building of PRTANs at the school, municipality and central level, as well as extension of PRTANs at the higher secondary education level. It has also been foreseen to develop action plans to prevent drop-out and non-enrolment in all municipalities, as well as to provide accelerated learning for students who dropped out, or who have not enrolled in school.

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11Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/PLANI_STRATEGJK_I_ARSIMIT_NE_KOSOVE.pdf
An important aspect envisaged in this strategy is the improvement of data collection. This would significantly contribute to the development and implementation of respective policies. Similar to the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021, the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo Society 2017-2021 aims to increase inclusion and provide opportunities for development, training and qualitative education for members of the Roma and Ashkali communities through:

- Stimulation of preschool education
- Drafting action plans to prevent drop-out and non-enrolment in all municipalities
- Incentive measures to facilitate enrolment and attendance of Roma and Ashkali children in upper secondary education
- Development of individual plans for repatriated Roma and Ashkali students
- Development of special positive measures and preparatory programs for enrolment and keeping of students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from the ranks of Roma and Ashkali communities
- Supporting adult education programs
- Defining gender-sensitive indicators for Roma and Ashkali community members for EMIS
- Elimination of segregation and discrimination against children of Roma and Ashkali communities.
- Supporting community-based learning centres
- Providing complementary teaching for students who are lagging behind in learning
- Promoting Roma language learning
- Developing awareness programs for parents on early childhood
- Organizing awareness raising activities for Roma and Ashkali communities on the importance of timely enrolment and school attendance, with a particular focus on girls
- Awareness raising of the population on education of Roma and Ashkali communities.

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METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the effectiveness of PRTANs at the school, municipal and national levels, with a particular focus on their effectiveness among children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

The initial part of this report deals with examining international standards and the national legal framework that includes: children’s rights to education, prevention of drop-out and response to non-enrolment in education, inclusion of marginalized groups and promotion of diversity. In addition, the bylaws and relevant strategies that specify the role of the PRTANs have been studied. The next part of this report deals with gathering of information from the field. Three municipalities in different regions were involved for this: Ferizaj, Fushë Kosovë and Prizren. The central level and CSOs were also involved. The informants involved in carrying out this assessment were representatives of:

- Schools
- Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs),
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)
- CSOs

At the school level, school principals were interviewed - who provided first-hand information on how school PRTANs function. MED officials interviewed at the municipal level, who are directly involved in the composition of municipal PRTAN. At the central level, an official from the MEST was interviewed who is also involved in the composing structure of the PRTAN at MEST. Representatives of NGOs directly involved in addressing drop-out and non-enrolment of children in education were also interviewed. Collection of information is mainly based on the provisions of Administrative Instruction no. 08/2018 on the Establishment and Strengthening of Teams for Prevention and Response Against Drop-Out and Non-Enrolment of Students in Pre-University Education, Terms of Reference for school PRTANs and Municipal PRTANs, Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities in Kosovo society 2017-2021. The main topics of the interviews included:

- establishment of PRTANs at the school, municipal (MED) and national (MEST) level
- functioning of PRTANs
- identifying drop-out students
- identifying non-enrolled cases at school
- handling of non-enrolled cases at school, cases of drop-outs and at-risk drop-outs
- the manner of these cases referral and follow-up
- documenting the identification, handling, referral and follow-up of these cases
- use of the EWS.

The manner of collecting information consisted of individual interviews with the abovementioned informants. Statistical data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) were used for this report. These data relate to the number of students by ethnicity at the Kosovo and municipal level.

Data and information collection was done during May and June 2019.
PRTANs FUNCTION ANALYSIS

Establishment of PRTANs

While carrying out this assessment, MED officials in the contacted municipalities stated that PRTANs are also established at the municipal level. However, only the municipality of Fushë Kosovë has provided the relevant documentation for establishment of PRTAN at the municipal level.

MED and school officials stated that PRTANs are also established at the school level. In addition to primary schools, PRTANs have begun to be established in secondary schools, as well. It is worth pointing out that the list of PRTAN members is not updated with new members who become part of these teams, and no new decisions on establishment of PRTANs are issued after the expiry of their mandate.

Holding of meetings of municipal and school PRTANs is not done as set out in the Administrative Instruction no. 08/2018 on the Establishment and Strengthening of Teams for Prevention and Response against Drop-Out and Non-Enrolment of Students in Pre-University Education. Those responsible in MED report that holding of regular meetings is difficult and often impossible due to the limited number of staff in MED. They stress that there are many initiatives and projects in which these directorates are involved that there is not enough time to engage staff of these directorates in all these initiatives and projects, as it is required. Members of the municipal PRTANssay that from other institutions, they have never been invited by the MED to any municipal PRTANs meeting.

At the level of schools, officials in charge report that PRTANs meetings are difficult to be held due to the lack of willingness of members of school PRTANs to organise meetings and follow procedures as required by the relevant administrative instruction. These members consider this to be an extra commitment that adds burden to their work and that they are not materially compensated for that extra commitment. Besides this, they consider that this is a problem that the competent authorities should deal with problems of juveniles, such as the Centre for Social Work (CSW). As far as the issue of drop-out and non-enrolment of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is concerned, school PRTAN members consider this to be a cultural issue of these ethnic communities and the PRTANs are not competent to address this issue.

Therefore, based on information gathered in the field, it turns out that PRTANs, especially school PRTANs, are only administratively established. Reporting the case of drop-out or at risk of dropping out is done individually by the teacher or custodian of the respective classroom to the school principal. For addressing the drop-out cases from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students it is usually practiced to refer the case to the community mediator (if he/she exists at that school) and to the CSW. Usually the school PRTAN is not aware of the processing/handling of drop-out cases or at risk of drop-out.
Identification of cases

The Law on Pre-university Education defines the school drop-out as “early termination of compulsory schooling”\(^\text{13}\). Administrative Instruction no. 08/2018 on the Establishment and Strengthening of Teams for Prevention and Response against Drop-Out and Non-Enrolment of Students in Pre-university Education specifies the categories of drop-out. However, neither the Law on Pre-university Education nor the Administrative Instruction no. 08/2018 on the Establishment and Strengthening of Teams for Prevention and Response against Drop-Out and Non-Enrolment of Students in Pre-university Education does not include provisional drop-outs.

Identification of drop-out cases

Different from identifying non-enrolment cases at school, identifying drop-outs or at risk of dropping out is less problematic. Usually, cases of drop-outs or at risk of dropping out are identified by the school itself. Initially, it is the teachers the ones who are in direct contact with the students and are the first people to notice the students’ absence in the classroom. There is no criterion as to how long the student’s absence should take place before the teacher reports the case. It all depends on the individual judgment of the teacher as to when the case may be a potential for dropping out.

Among the students, especially from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, there is a regular school absence for various reasons:

- Lack of children’s supervision by the parents, presents a favourable circumstance for children to neglect their attendance.
- Family obligations of children to provide care, especially of girls to care for sick family members, make their regular attendance impossible for as long as the adverse health condition of the family member/s lasts.
- Visits of mothers to their kin together with children for several days or weeks make school attendance impossible for as long as the visit lasts.
- Engagement of children at work directly makes school attendance impossible for as long as they are working or indirectly causing them fatigue and lack of energy to go to school.
- Material rewards for attendance at school by various institutions/organizations have created dependence on those rewards. In case of termination of these awards, students will also quit their school attendance.

These examples of causes of regular student non-attendance cause confusion in categorizing cases as drop-outs or at risk of dropping out. Conditionally, these cases can be called “recidivist drop-outs”. This also affects the reporting of cases to EWS of the EMIS and the municipal PRTAN. Often these cases are not recorded in the EWS of the EMIS and are not reported to the municipal PRTAN. Usually, these cases remain ungraded and are not reported as drop-outs or at risk of drop-out. Consequently, their handling and monitoring may be inadequate and may lead to further recidivists of school drop-outs.

\(^\text{13}\)Article 2 of Paragraph 1.13 of the Law no. 04/L-032 on Pre-University Education in Kosovo, 16 September 2011, http://www.mashtgov.net/advCms/documents/03_Ligji_per_arsimin_Parauniversitar_anglisht.pdf
In schools, cases considered as potential for drop-out are reported orally or in writing to the school principal. There is no standard case evaluation and treatment procedure for case evaluation and handling. The most common practice is contacting family of the child, who is alleged to be a drop-out, by telephone and discussions with other students in the classroom or school who could potentially provide information about the student in question. This is done by the teacher or custodian of the respective class. In the case of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students, contacting the community mediator, if available at the respective school is practiced. The mediator usually assesses the case through site/family visits and tries to return the student who is considered a school drop-out.

**Identification of non-enrolled cases**

Identifying non-enrolment cases is more problematic. Identifying these cases requires the involvement of different stakeholders from school institutions and other institutions, CSOs and the community. CSOs have a key role in identifying non-enrolled children in school. Especially this key role is played by those organizations that have focused their activities in the community, and more specifically on the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

These organizations, which are often not represented in municipal PRTANs, carry out awareness campaigns to inform the community about the necessity of enrolling children in school. At the same time, some such organizations practice that through their community activities to identify children who are attending school, but they are not enrolled in school. By doing so, they compile lists of these children and compare them with lists of students enrolled in schools that have coverage in that area. Children who do not appear on the lists of students enrolled in school are assisted by these organizations to enrol in school.

These organizations also identify various barriers that prevent children from enrolling in school e.g. lack of documentation due to non-registration of the child in the civil registry, lack of relevant pre-schooling documentation for repatriated children, children of sick parents, etc. These organizations help overcome these barriers and their enrolment in school.

However, these organizations do not cover the entire territory of Kosovo with their activities. Moreover, they do not cover all areas inhabited by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. This implies that there are areas that do not receive such assistance and consequently the level of non-enrolment may be present at the high rate.

A concerning problem is the non-enrolment of children who have reached the age of enrolment for the first grade but are considered “immature” to start attendance of the first grade education. The staff members in schools consider these children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities to be psycho-physically immature to begin first grade education. There are children who have emotional and social difficulties in adapting to school during the first days or weeks of first grade. Such emotional state of these children may be worsened by the teacher’s inadequate approach. Relevant CSOs report that teachers' approach toward students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is not the same as the one toward students of other communities. It is often the case that teachers are not as committed to Roma, Ashkali and
Egyptian students as they are to students of other communities. It is also often the case that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students are not encouraged to engage in classroom and school activities. As a result of inadequate approach, these students become a potential for neglecting the learning and irregular school attendance.

These children who have difficulty adapting to first grade are recommended to wait another year to start the first grade. Consequently, delaying the start of first grade presents confusion in identifying and categorizing them. The school considers these children as non-dropouts because they consider that they have not reached the required maturity to enrol in the first grade. Whereas, CSOs consider these children as dropouts because these children have reached the school enrolment age, but do not attend school. On the other hand, these children are not evaluated for maturity by professionals in the relevant field e.g. psychologists, doctors, etc. In most cases, the cases of these children are not registered as dropouts in the EWS of the EMIS. This practice creates a gap that is reflected in municipal and national policies by avoiding addressing the issue of these children in the absence of systematic information gathering.

**Referral, handling and monitoring**

Not all the schools handle all cases at risk of dropping out or drop-out students. In some schools, at-risk drop-outs identified by the teachers are initially handled by the school itself. Teachers together with the school principal identify ways of contacting the parent of a student who has been absent for a period of time at school. Usually this period of time during which the student is absent from school without a justification is not specified. Therefore, it is up to the teacher or custodian to decide when the student should be treated as a potential case for dropping out or regular absence. Parents of these students are usually contacted by telephone from the teacher or through the other students of the neighbourhood. In very rare cases, teachers initiate a visit to the parents of such a student.

If the school’s efforts to return the student back to school fail, sometimes the school directly refers the case to other institutions. Usually, schools refer these cases to the CSW, and if delicts are involved, cases are referred to the Police as well. The referral procedures of the relevant institutions to which these students refer are applied to refer cases. The custodian body, which is the CSW, handles the case and monitors it throughout the treatment. This institution mainly provides counselling to students and their parents. If necessary, this institution refers the case for services of other institutions. However, this practice of referral and handling is not regularly implemented.

A worrying problem for schools is students who relocate to other schools, other municipalities, or other states. Such students receive passes from the previous school, but this school almost never receives feedback on their enrolment in another school. Therefore, it isn’t known whether such students were enrolled in another school, or they dropped out of school.
In the case of students at risk of dropping out or drop-outs from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the teacher or principal refers the case to the community mediator, if available at that school. The community mediator deals with identification of causes of discontinuation of school attendance, advising the student and his or her parents. In case the student needs assistance with various administrative procedures in other institutions or in the school, the community mediator offers advice, appropriate information and, if necessary, assists in these administrative procedures. For example, there are cases when a student has been ill and his/her parents have not been aware that a doctor’s certificate of the student’s state of health should be obtained and this certificate needs to be submitted to the school. The community mediator informs the student’s parents on the manner how to obtain a medical certificate and submit that certificate in the school. At the same time, the mediator monitors the student at all times until his or her regular attendance at the school is restored.

However, there are cases that the reporting of students at risk of dropping out is done late. This causes major difficulties in their return to school. Due to the long absence time, such students remain ungraded. Moreover, these students are not allowed to attend accelerated learning. As a result, these students lose a school year. Their return to school is made even more difficult by the fact that these children have to return to another classroom as repeaters where they can potentially encounter difficulties with their adaptation in the classroom. A concrete example is the case at the lower elementary school "Naim Frashëri" in the village of Zaskok in Ferizaj municipality, where 22 students, mainly from the Ashkali community, dropped out of school in the first months of the 2018/2019 school year. Within this school year, two students were able to return to school in 8th and 9th grade with the help of the learning centre in Dubravë village of this municipality. There are still 20 students who have remained out of school, of whom 11 should have attended the first grade. These students who remained out of school were integrated into learning centres, while their reintegration into regular school was not made possible. Moreover, there were no community mediators in this location to assist with these cases during this school year.

To identify and treat cases of dropout from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian students, a common practice of community mediators is to check the grading lists. These mediators identify ungraded students from the ranks of communities and initiate contact with their family members.

There are schools that report practicing return-to-school facilities for students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities who have quit school attendance. These facilities are related to tolerances made in procedural aspects in the school, non-expelling from school for very high number absences, and so on. This creates discontent among students and parents of other ethnic groups for bias and unequal enforcement of rules for students of all ethnicities. Schools also report difficulties they come across in identifying ethnicity among some students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. School officials report that documenting
ethnicity is necessary in schools. There are cases of parents of these students from these communities who state that they are not aware of which ethnic community they belong to. This makes a correct reflection of ethnicity in school, municipal and national statistics impossible. The vast majority of drop-outs and at risk of dropping out are not addressed to the school PRTANs. As stressed above, cases are not identified and handled, or, in cases identified, the teacher or class custodian in coordination with the school principal decides how to handle the case, where to refer it and how to monitor it. Also, the vast majority of cases are not addressed to the municipal PRTANs. In the vast majority of cases municipal PRTANs are not aware. Moreover, case registration in the EWS is extremely incomplete. Documentation is done by the relevant institution which handles the case according to the administrative procedures of that institution. MEDs report that they have no capacity to monitor treatment of drop-out cases or at risk of dropping out even for the cases reported to MEDs. In the absence of registration of cases in the EWS and reporting of drop-out cases and at risk of dropping out of school in the MED, these directorates are unable to put together accurate statistics. It is almost impossible to register unreported cases in school in the EWS due to flounders in identifying them.

It is generally practiced that only serious cases involving not only school drop-outs but also the delicts be referred to other relevant institutions, such as security and justice institutions. However, cases that do not deal with delicts are often not referred, handled or monitored.

Registration of cases in the Early Warning System (EWS) module in EMIS

Schools are mandated to identify cases at risk of dropping out using the instrument for identification of students at-risk of dropping out school. Application of this instrument is not at the satisfactory level. School staff members rather apply identification of these cases on a daily basis by tracking the student’s attendance. Cases that accumulate a significant number of absences are reported orally or in writing to the principal. But, it is usually not a practice for these cases to be registered in the EWS.

Since application of the instrument for identifying students at risk of dropping out is not done, the EWS lacks this information and consequently the overall school overview on the level of drop-out and the risk of dropping out is missing.

As far as the school drop-outs are concerned, especially of students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, they are usually identified as ungraded students in the school administration and are not registered in EWS. It is also the case that drop-outs are not timely reported. This causes such cases to lose one school year due to the relatively long absence from school and the lack of accelerated learning provision. A concrete example, as mentioned above, is the case of the students of “Naim Frashëri” elementary school in the village of Zaskok.
The cases of non-enrolment in the first grade are not registered in the EWS. This is especially pronounced for children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. This happens for two reasons. Initially, because these children who have reached the age of enrolment for the first grade but they do not appear at the school to enrol. Consequently, the school has no information about these children. Secondly, students who start the first grade, but drop out of school right from the beginning of first grade, are not considered drop-outs but as children who have to wait a year to reach the psycho-physical maturity to begin school in first grade. Consequently, these students are not reported as drop-outs and their cases are not registered in the EWS.

Among the reasons reported by the school for the lack of registration of cases in the EWS are:

- Lack of knowledge and computer skills of teachers and school principals
- Lack of knowledge about the EWS
- Newly-appointed school principals who have not had the opportunity to attend training on use of EWS
- Newly-recruited teachers who have not had the opportunity to attend training on use of EWS
- The reluctance to register cases in the EWS due to the possibility of identifying the school as a “failed school”

Another relevant reason for students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is the lack of declaration of their ethnic identity in some cases. In these cases, the data recorded in the EWS do not provide a realistic picture of drop-out and the risk of drop-outs in these communities.

As highlighted above, schools practice to register in the EWS mainly drop-outs or at risk of dropping out, which at the same time are involved in a delict and referred to the relevant security, custodian and justice institutions.

Lack of registration of cases at risk of dropping out of school in the EWS, a part of the number of drop-outs and cases not enrolled in the school creates a gap in terms of understanding of drop-out and non-enrolment at school. This makes it impossible to analyse potential situations that lead to drop-outs and lack of data needed to develop relevant policies. Consequently, this leads to inadequate policies to address drop-out and non-enrolment in school.
# RECOMMENDATIONS

## To establish PRTANs in all municipalities and all schools and ensure their functionality
- MEST to verify their establishment
- The role of PRTANs to be published on websites of municipalities
- Make the list of members of municipal PRTANs transparent and publish this list on the municipality’s website
- Update this list regularly for any changes it undergoes
- Municipal PRTANs and school PRTANs to hold regular meetings
- Engage student interns in the administrative and organizational tasks of municipal PRTAN meetings
- Provide material and moral incentives for schools and municipalities that are successful in addressing school drop-out and non-enrolment

## To expand representation of important stakeholders in municipal PRTANs
- Involve community mediators in municipal PRTANs in all municipalities
- Engage community mediators from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the municipal PRTANs
- Include in the municipal PRTANs all active CSOs dealing with issues of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and issues of school drop-outs and non-enrolment.
- Involve the psychologist in municipal PRTANs to provide psychological assessment and treatment for students who have learning difficulties as well as difficulties in adapting to school environments, who are potentially at risk of dropping out of school.

## To increase the level and quality of handling of cases of school drop-out, non-enrolments in school and those at risk of dropping out
- Case managers to be actively engaged in handling cases
- Develop a case handling plan in accordance with applicable legislation, bylaws and respective mechanisms
- Psychologist to provide psychological assessment and treatment for students who have learning difficulties, as well as difficulties in adapting to school environments
- Engage students of pedagogy, education and psychology in schools to provide learning assistance and other social integration activities for reintegrated children and children at risk of dropping out of school.
- Provide training for teachers on cultural sensitivity in teaching for different cultural and ethnic groups, with a particular focus on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities
### Assessment report on the effectiveness of PRTANs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To improve identification, referral and monitoring of cases of drop-outs, non-enrolment and at-risk dropouts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>•</strong> Quit the practice of providing material rewards to students to stimulate school attendance, with the exception of school supplies and clothing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>•</strong> School PRTANs to work closely with relevant institutions to identify non-enrolled children at school such as registrar offices, CSOs dealing with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, as well as issues on non-enrolment in school</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> Refer cases to relevant services as soon as they are identified</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> All cases that cannot be handled at the school level should be reported to the municipal PRTANs for handling</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> The municipal PRTAN should be kept informed of all cases referred through the EWS</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> To register in EWS all the relevant information regarding identification, referral, handling and monitoring.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> Establish a mechanism within EMIS that would allow the previous school to follow up students who move to another school.</td>
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<th>To improve documentation of cases of dropouts, non-enrolment and at-risk drop-outs in the EWS</th>
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<td><strong>•</strong> Provide constant training for school PRTAN members to document in the EWS all cases of school drop-out, non-enrolment and at risk of dropping out.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> To record in the EWS all cases of school drop-out and non-enrolment.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> Through the list of risk indicators, make a regular identification of cases at risk of dropping out of school and register them in the EWS</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> All information related to the identification, referral, handling and monitoring of cases to be recorded in the EWS.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong> Competent authorities to conduct regular inspection of documentation in EWS.</td>
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<th>To increase the level of communication between PRTANs and the community</th>
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<td><strong>•</strong> Functionalize a hotline at MEDs to provide information for citizens facing difficulties in enrolling or returning children to school, and vice versa, to be available for citizens to report cases of school drop-out or non-enrolment from the community they live in or beyond</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>•</strong> Hold periodic meetings of school and municipal PRTANs in neighbourhoods that have high levels of school drop-outs and non-enrolment. e.g. neighbourhoods with inhabitants of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and having such cases at a relatively high level</td>
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<th>To carry out awareness-raising activities on the</th>
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<td><strong>•</strong> To raise the awareness of citizens about the presence of school drop-outs and non-enrolment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>•</strong> To inform citizens about the hotline available to the citizens for providing relevant information and reporting</td>
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### Issue of drop-out and non-enrolment in school, as well as promotional activities for PRTANs

- Carry out activities in community on the role of municipal PRTANs and school PRTANs.

### Education Inspectorate to inspect activities of municipal PRTANs and the very school PRTAN

- Set the criteria and penalty procedures for the complete non-performance of municipal PRTANs and school PRTANs.
- Conduct regular inspections in each municipality and each school.
- Community-measured indicators, such as the number of identified children in the community who do not attend school, to also be included in inspection of PRTANs.

### MEST to conduct regular analysis and reporting on data and information collected in the EWS

- Periodically analyse data and information in the EWS.
- Publish report analysis of these data and information that include reporting on findings based on age, gender, ethnicity, municipalities, etc.
- These reports to contain indicators based on qualitative and quantitative data.
- Distribute these reports to all municipalities, all schools and relevant CSOs.
- These reports to include examples of successfully handled cases identifying the respective schools and municipalities.
Assessment report on the effectiveness of PRTANs