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EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KOSOVO EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2021 INSUFFICIENT ACHIEVEMENT



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Evaluation of the Implementation of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021

Insufficient achievement

This report was prepared by:

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May 2021,
Prishtina

Published by the one-year programme "Quality, Accountability and Inclusiveness in Education 2021"

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This report was prepared with the support of the one-year programme "Quality, Accountability and Inclusiveness in Education 2021", funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo, as part of the Framework Partnership Agreement signed between KEC and the EU Office in Kosovo in November 2019. The contents of this publication will in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

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List of Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AI	Administrative Instruction
ASSET	USAID After School Support for Teens Project
AVETAL	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning
CESPT	Council of Experts for School Programs and Textbooks / MESTI
CVETAE	Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
DTPD	Department for Teacher Professional Development
DCSA	Division for Curriculum, Standards and Assessments/MESTI
EESP	External Evaluation of School Performance
EI	Education Inspectorate
EIMS	Education Information Management System
ESIP	Education System Improvement Project
EU	European Union
GIZ CDBE	GIZ Project "Capacity Development in Primary Education"
GIZ	German Association for International Cooperation
GRR	Gross Registration Rate
HEIMS	Higher Education Information Management System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRA	IRA
ISCED	International Standards for Classification of Education
CAA	Kosovo Accreditation Agency

KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
KEC	Kosovo Education Center
KEEN	"Kosovo Education and Employment Network" Project
KESP	Kosovo Education Strategic Plan
KPI	Kosovo Pedagogical Institute
MED	Municipal Education Directorate
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MLSW	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NQA	National Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Evaluation
PRTAN	Prevention and Response Team for Abandonment and Non-registration
SAT	Self-Evaluation Team
SBASHK	United Trade Union of Education, Science and Culture
SCTL	State Council for Teacher Licensing
SCTPD	School-Based Teacher Professional Development
SDP	School Development Plan
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
UNDP	UNDP - United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational education and training

1. Introduction

In December 2016, the Government of Kosovo approved the Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 (KESP),¹ a document in which it had worked for more than a year and which determined the path for education development in the five-year period. The mission of KESP was "to develop an education system based on quality, inclusive approach and accountability, which enables the upbringing of individuals in accordance with international standards and best practices." KESP had set seven strategic objectives in the following areas: 1) Participation and inclusion; 2) Management of the education system; 3) Quality assurance; 4) Teacher development; 5) Teaching and learning; 6) Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education; and 7) Higher education. For each strategic objective, the expected results, possible measures, as well as success indicators that serve to monitor the implementation of KESP were set. These were summarized in an action plan for the implementation of KESP.² Also, the KESP budget was calculated, which reached a total amount of € 176.94 mil.

This report provides an evaluation of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Education in Kosovo 2017/21 and aims to provide a detailed evaluation of the implementation of the planned activities/measures, the achievement of defined indicators and the achievement of strategic objectives during these years of KESP implementation. The report was written by being based on two preliminary reports prepared by KEC assessing the implementation of KESP.³

In order to carry out this evaluation, in addition to the analysis and review of available data, including strategic documents, analysis, statistical data and published reports, additional data were collected from MESTI, public institutions and other sources, which have helped greatly to understand the perspectives of all stakeholders. Furthermore, the degree to which objectives were met during the implementation of KESP is analyzed, in relation to the achievement of defined indicators, and in relation to the implementation of measures provided for in KESP. Within this report numerous recommendations are provided that can be used in the case of future planning in education, as well as a platform for improving the quality of education in Kosovo.

Note: The term "female" in this report is used in accordance with the source terminology and without any derogatory implication from a gender perspective.

1 http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/PLANI_STRATEGJIK_I_ARSIMIT_NE_KOSOVE.pdf

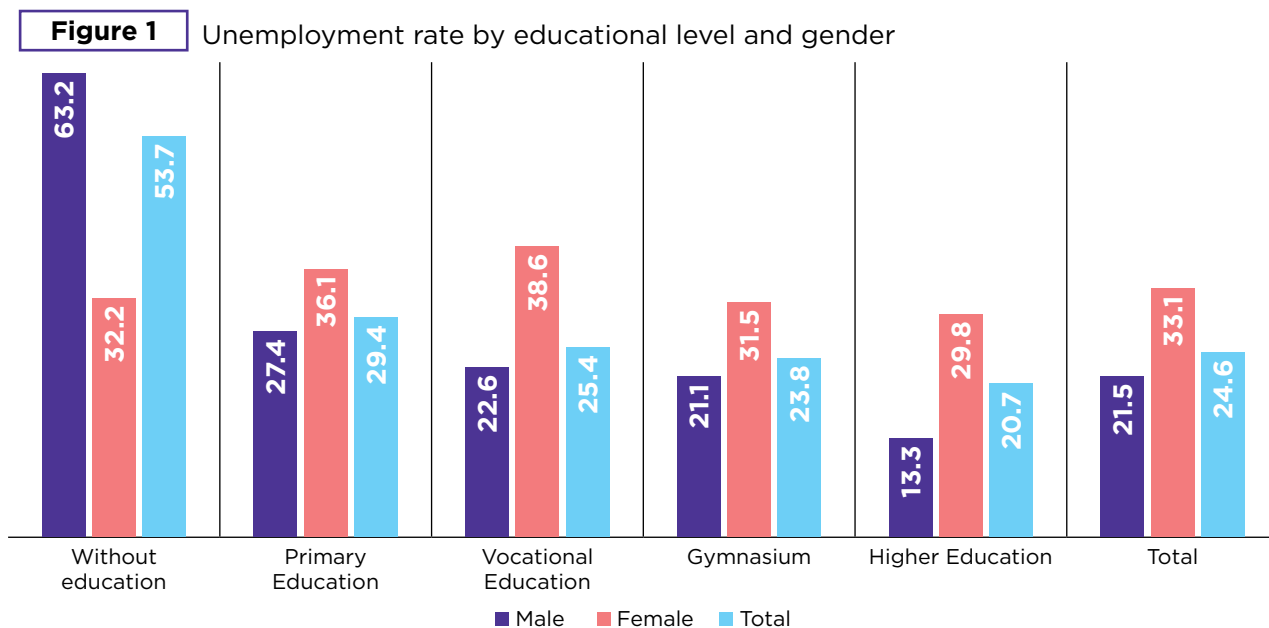
2 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/02/20161006-plani-i-veprimit.pdf>

3 KEC (2017). Evaluation of the Strategic Plan for Education in Kosovo in 2017. Evaluation Report.
KEC (2019). Medium Term Evaluation: Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Education in Kosovo 2017-2021.

2. The context

Kosovo has seen solid economic growth in recent years - 4% of GDP on average. However, Kosovo continues to have one of the lowest GDP per capita in Europe, while the country's economy relies heavily on remittances and foreign aid. This dependence, together with the structural shortcomings of Kosovo's economy, puts pressure on competitiveness and productivity, limiting job creation and business expansion.

According to the Labor Force Survey, in the third quarter of 2020, two thirds of Kosovo population are of working age (15-64 years), while of the working age population, 60% are inactive (men - 41.1%, women 78.5%). The employment rate is 30.1% (men - 46.2%, women - 14.4%). Kosovo still faces high unemployment rates - 24.6% (men - 21.5%, women - 33.1%). Youth unemployment is very high in Kosovo. Among persons aged 15-24 and in the labor force, 46.9% are unemployed (males - 40.8%, females 61%). The number of young people aged 15-24 who do not attend school, are not employed and do not attend any training (NEET) is 37.7% (males - 37.4%, females - 38.1%). The data show that low level of education diminishes chances for employment. Unemployment rate is closely linked to the educational level. The lowest unemployment rate is among those with tertiary education (20.7%) and those with vocational education (25.4%).⁴

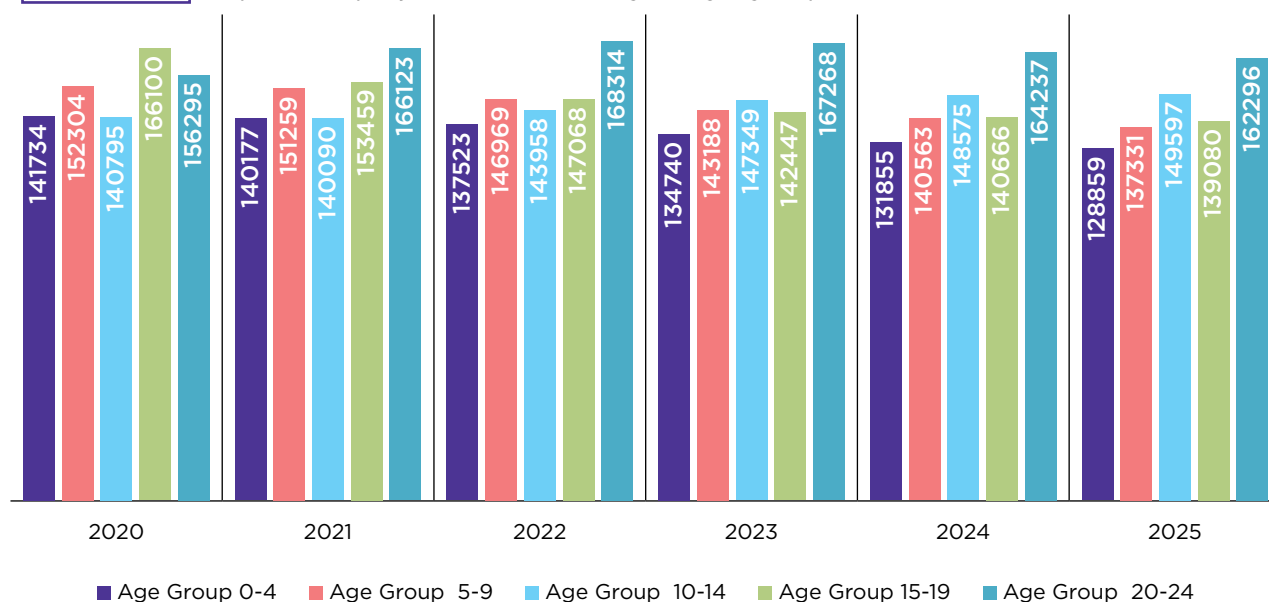


Source: Labor Force Survey T3 2020, KSA

4 <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5826/anketa-e-fuqis%C3%AB-pun%C3%ABtore-afp-tm3-2020.pdf>

The effects of the declining school-age population are beginning to manifest in the decline of the total number of students in pre-university education. Based on the projections of KAS 2020-2025, Kosovo is expected to have a significant decline in the age group 0-4 (preschool) due to the decline in the birth rate of the population. A similar trend is foreseen for the age groups 5-9 years of pre-primary and primary education.

Figure 2 Population projections according to age-groups 2020-2025



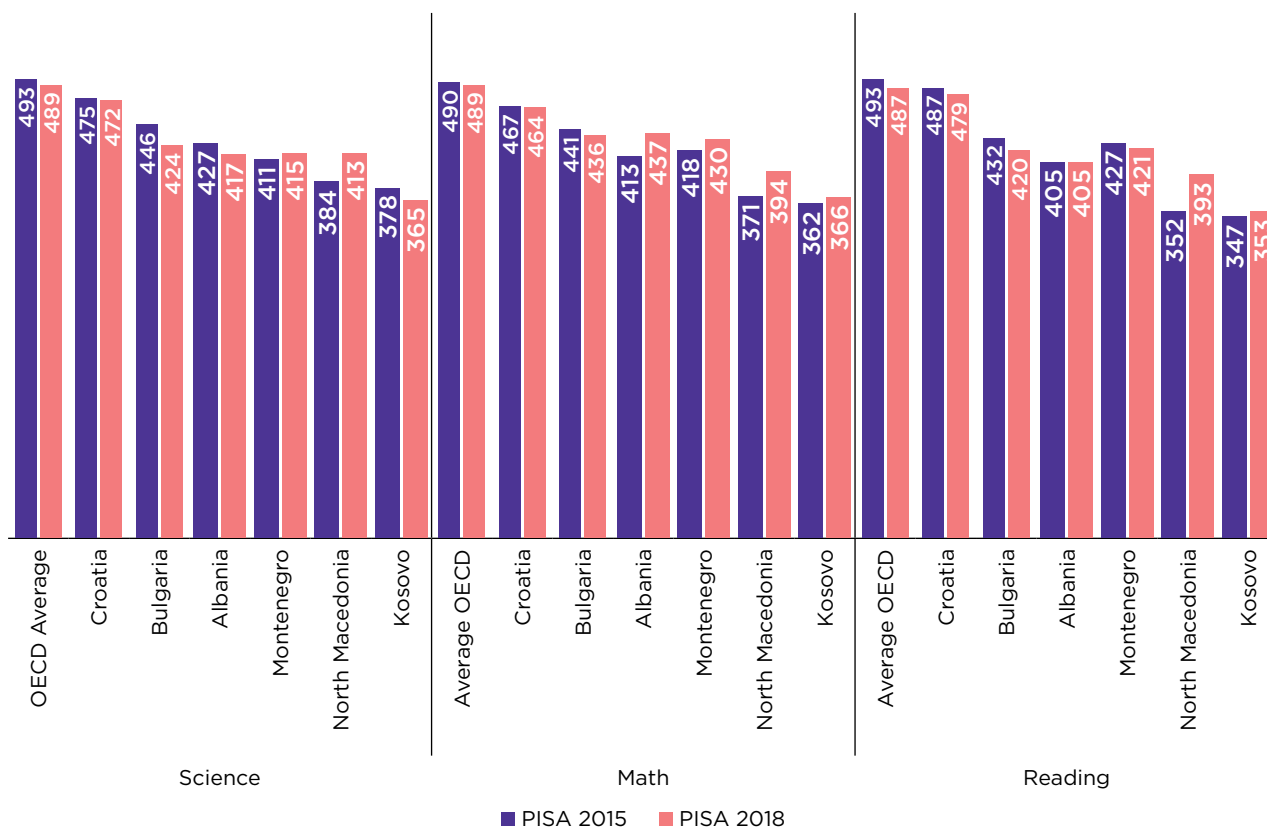
Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Medium variant

The number of students in lower secondary education is projected to increase by 2025, while in upper secondary education the largest decline in the number of students is projected. Whereas, the number of age groups corresponding to higher education is projected to increase. These developments will significantly affect pre-university education and higher education in Kosovo. MESTI and municipalities should reflect on these developments in infrastructure planning, human resources and funding.

In the modern economy, education is a basic precondition for economic growth and improvement of living standard. Kosovo's effort to achieve these goals is related to the level of labor force productivity. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) assessed the rates of return to education in Kosovo and concluded that they are in line with the hypothesis that low quality of education is an obstacle that conditions economic growth. This indicates that the problem of skills gap is related to levels of participation in education, to specific competencies and skills such as foreign languages, computer skills or so-called soft skills, and to the overall quality of education. The quality, the degree of inclusion and the number of years of schooling, not only have an inevitable impact on improving human capital and creating preconditions for social and economic development, but also provide the basis for improving employment opportunities.

In 2018, Kosovo participated for the second time in the Program for International Student Evaluation (PISA). The PISA test assesses the ability of 15-year-old students to apply their acquired knowledge in the field of reading, mathematics and science in everyday life situations. Based on the comparative analysis of the achievement results in PISA, Kosovo has not shown any progress in student achievement compared to four years ago. 15-year-old students continue to have low achievements in math, science and reading compared to the regional average and are well below the OECD average. In 2018, student achievement scores in math and reading were minimally better than in 2015, while scores in science were worse. The average achievement in science in Kosovo is 365 points, which is 124 points below the OECD average. The average reading achievement in Kosovo is 353 points, which is 134 points below the OECD average. The average achievement in mathematics in Kosovo is 366 points, which is 123 points below the OECD average.⁵ Such results show that 15-year-old students in Kosovo are approximately 4 years behind in school, compared to their peers in OECD countries. Our 9th graders on average can be compared, in terms of their ability to apply knowledge in life, to 5th graders in OECD member countries.

Figure 3 PISA 2015-2018 Average student achievement in science, math and reading

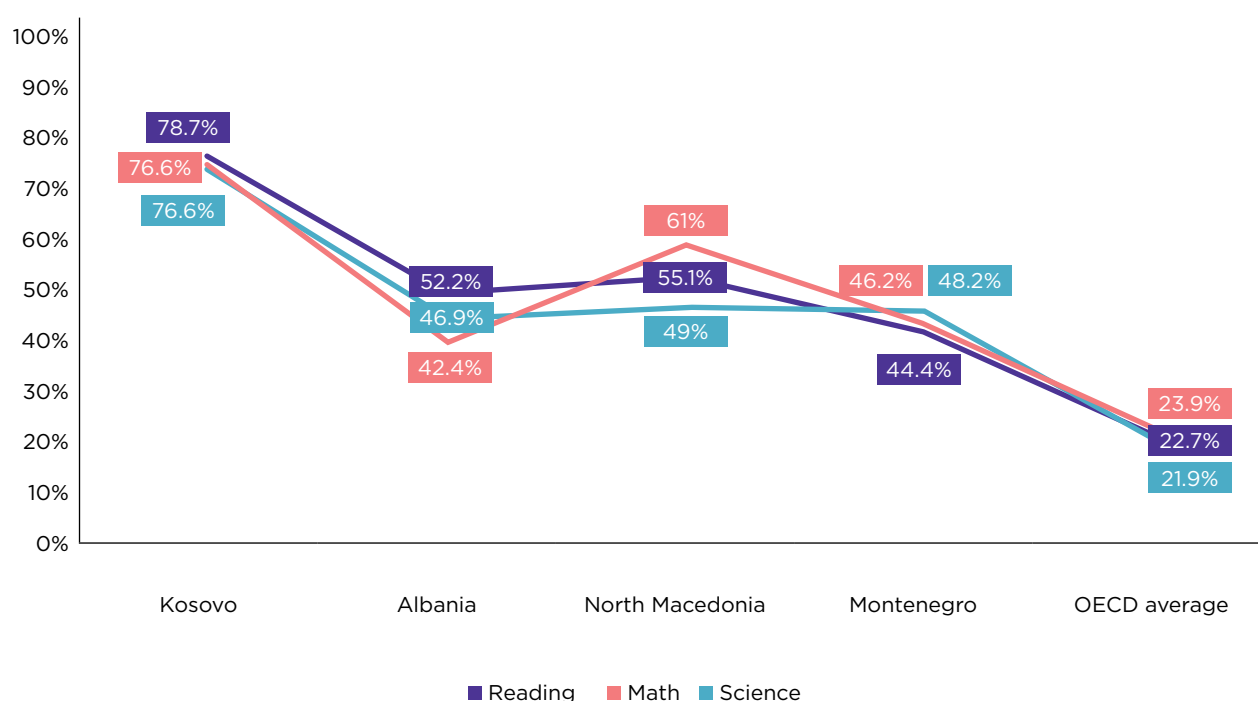


Source: OECD

5 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5f07c754-en.pdf?expires=1620417488&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=-2362B92E5C68479B14087D185FABAAE3>

The result of the PISA 2018 test confirmed once again that the state of education in Kosovo is not at all satisfactory. In addition to Kosovo's poor ranking compared to other countries, a huge concern is the enormous percentage of students who have not reached the minimum level of skills to use knowledge in life - in Reading: 78.7% (OECD average: 22.7 %, Albania: 52.2%, North Macedonia: 55.1%, Montenegro: 44.4%); in Mathematics: 76.6% (OECD average: 23.9%, Albania: 42.4%, North Macedonia: 61%, Montenegro: 46.2%); in Natural Sciences: 76.6% (OECD average: 21.9%, Albania: 46.9%, North Macedonia: 49.4%, Montenegro: 48.2%).⁶ This level is considered the basic level of skills needed for successful participation in economic and social life. Of particular concern is the low achievement in reading, since the reading ability, comprehension and correct interpretation of what one reads are the basis skills for achievement in other areas.

Figure 4 PISA 2018 Percentage of students who have not reached the minimum skills level



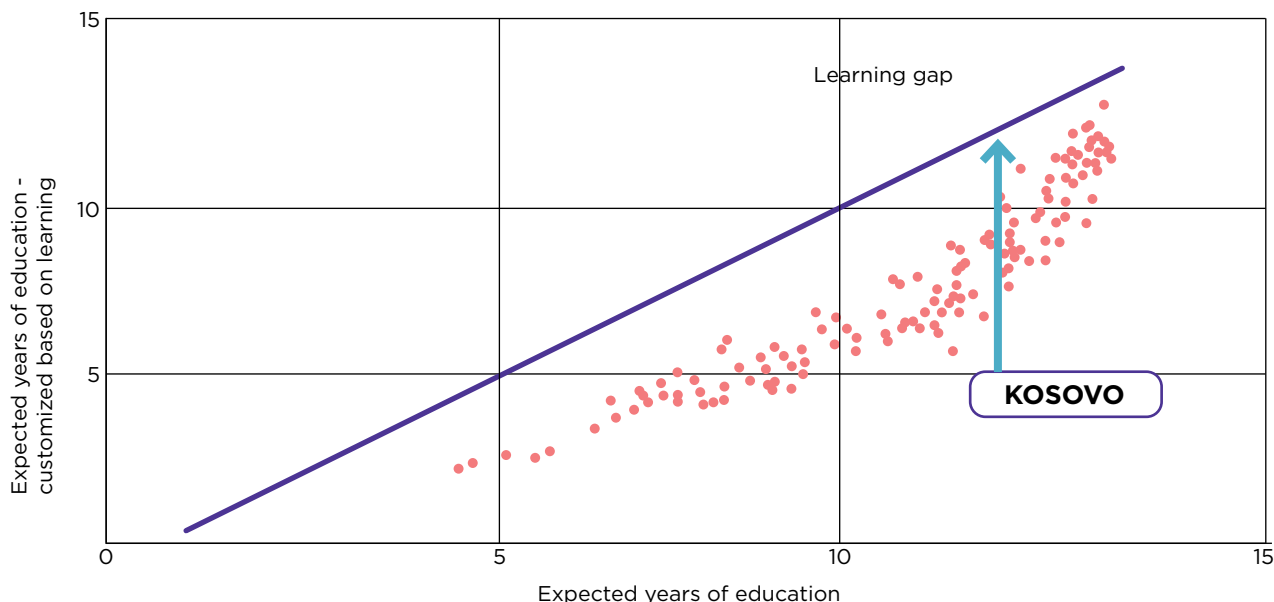
Source: OECD

Students in Kosovo achieve relatively high rates of years spent in schooling, approaching EU countries. In 2020, the average number of years spent in schooling is 13.2 years (in pre-primary, primary and secondary school up to the age of 18). However, years spent in schooling do not necessarily have a significant effect on student achievement. The World Bank Report on the Human Capital Index, published in 2020, when incorporating student achievement in harmonized international tests estimates that the years of schooling adapted for learning in Kosovo are 7.9 years.⁷ Such a gap of 5.3 years of schooling means that an 18-year-old Kosovar student has the skills, knowledge and intellect of a 13-year-old.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/hci/HCI_2pager_XKX.pdf?cid=GGH_e_hcpexternal_en_ext

Figure 5 Learning gap (World Bank)

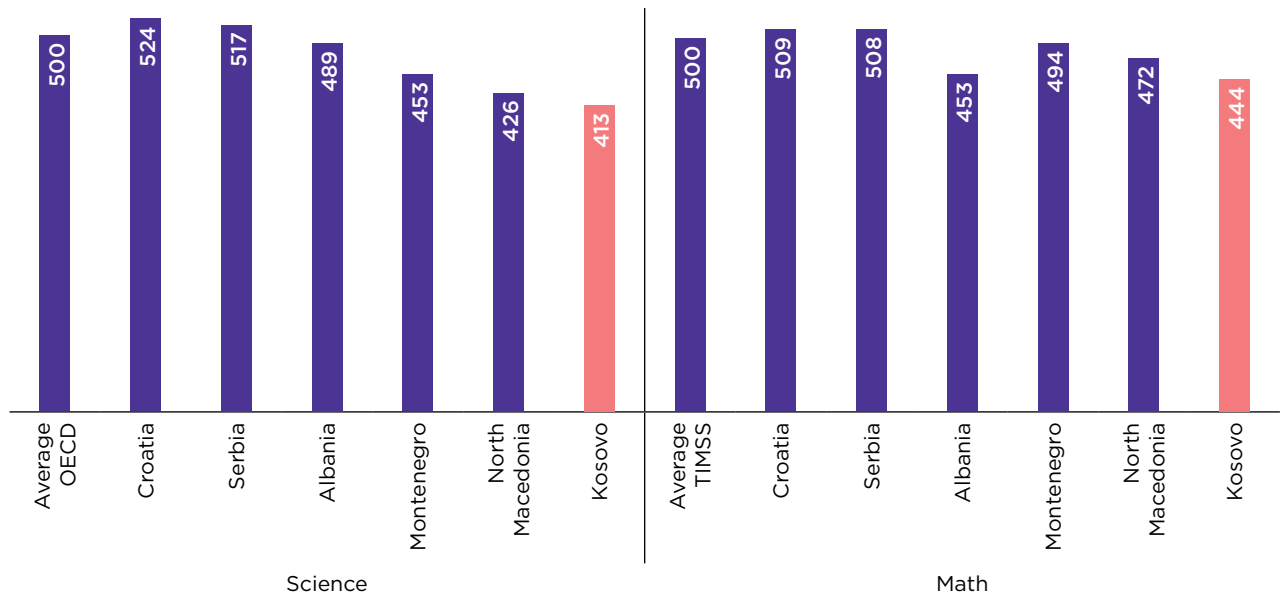


On the other hand, TIMSS 2019 (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) is an international study that assesses student achievement in math and science every 4 years by administering tests on a sample of fourth- and eighth-grade students. Kosovo participated for the first time in TIMSS 2019 only in the fourth grade evaluation. The test was attended by 4,496 students from a total of 219 selected classes in 150 schools. The results of the TIMSS 2019 test highlight the stagnation in achievement in mathematics and science for Kosovar students in 4th grade (10 years old). In both areas they perform below the international average.

According to this result, in mathematics out of a total of 1,000 points, Kosovo students received 444 points, 56 points less than the international average and 181 points less than the first place, Singapore. Kosovo is ranked 49th out of 58 participating countries. In science the students got 413 points, 87 points less than the international average and 182 points less than the first place, Singapore. Kosovo is ranked 52nd out of 58 countries.⁸

⁸ <https://timss2019.org/reports/wp-content/themes/timssandpirls/download-center/TIMSS-2019-International-Results-in-Mathematics-and-Science.pdf>

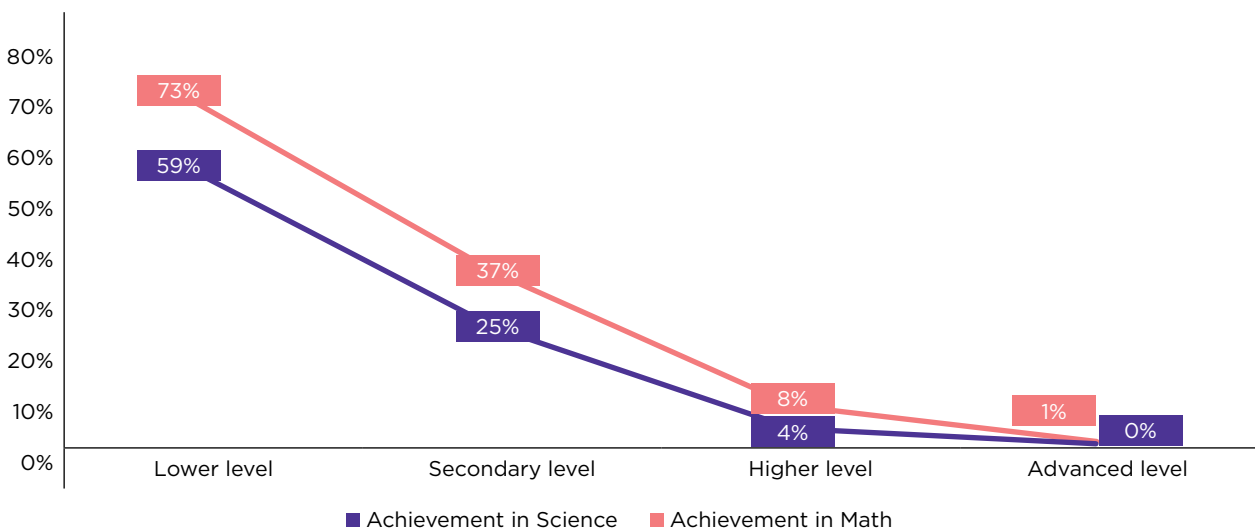
Figure 6 TIMSS 2019 Average student achievement in science and math



Source: TIMSS 2019

According to international standards of achievement in mathematics, the achievement of Kosovar students is 73% of students at the lower level, 37% at the secondary level, 8% of students at the higher level and 1% at the advanced level. Whereas, according to international standards of achievement in science, the achievement of Kosovar students is 59% of students at the low level, 25% at the secondary level, 4% of students have reached the high level and 0% the advanced level.⁹

Figure 7 TIMSS 2019 Percentage of Kosovar students who achieve international standards of achievement in science and mathematics



9 Ibid.

TIMSS 2019 has also conducted a survey with the parents of 4th grade students who participated in the test regarding their satisfaction with the work of the school in educating their children. Kosovar parents ranked 5th in the world for positive perception of school (84% answered that they are very satisfied). Kosovar teachers are the most satisfied in the world with their profession, with 94% of them being very satisfied with the teaching profession. According to self-confidence in their mathematics skills, Kosovar students ranked in the 3rd place (51% said they have a lot of confidence in their skills in mathematics). Similarly, Kosovar students ranked 13th in terms of self-confidence in their skills in science (47% said they have a lot of confidence in their skills in science). This self-confidence conflicts with their achievement on the TIMSS test.¹⁰

Analysis and use of the results of external policy evaluations, in order to improve the quality of education, remains one of the weakest points of the quality assurance system.

2.1 Education in Kosovo during the COVID-19 Pandemic¹¹

The COVID-19 virus escalated into a global pandemic in March 2020 and as a result, governments around the world took various measures to prevent the spread of the virus and protect the health of citizens. In this sense, in addition to measures of social isolation and distancing, governments closed schools and switched to distance learning, mainly using information technology (digital technology combined with more traditional technology such as radio and TV) but also other approaches that support distance learning. This way of organizing the teaching process required a quick reaction, without prior planning, and as a result, the quality of organizing the teaching process and student learning was influenced by different factors, depending on the country and their previous developments.

The Government of Kosovo took the decision to close schools on March 12, 2020 and move to distance learning in the coming weeks, which was initially organized for students in primary education (grades 1-5), and later for students in lower secondary education (grades 6-9). Distance learning for these levels of education included the broadcasting of video lectures on public television. Meanwhile, for the upper secondary level, grades 10-12 (gymnasiums and vocational schools) the organization of distance learning was left to the responsibility of the municipalities. During the same period, MESTI in cooperation with development partners launched two online platforms, namely, the platform for early childhood education for the age group of 0-6 years¹² and the platform for inclusive education.¹³ In addition, MESTI developed various guidelines for the implementation of distance learning, which continued until the end of the school year 2019/20.

Meanwhile, not being an ordinary year, the new 2020/21 school year in Kosovo started late with conditions of restrictions, with protective masks, temperature measurements, disinfection of hands and environments,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ema Rraci (2020). Editorial prepared based on the public discussion on the same topic organized by KEC, which brought together representatives from MESTI, municipalities, schools, parents, students and representatives of civil society organizations in Kosovo, to discuss various aspects related to education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹² <https://edukimihershem.rks-gov.net/>

¹³ <http://arsimigiiitheperfshires.rks-gov.net/>

as well as physical distancing. The educational authorities at central and local level envisaged the organization of the learning process according to three scenarios: Scenario A - school teaching; Scenario B - combined teaching and scenario C - distance learning, defined in the general guide of MESTI for the organization of the school year 2020/21¹⁴ in the conditions and circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this way of organizing learning in pandemic conditions, whether within the school or as a combined or distance learning, has been accompanied by many challenges, for both teachers and parents, as well as students and the educational community in general. This is because our education system was not prepared for such modality of teaching and learning.

The measures taken by the decision-making institutions to organize distance learning through the public broadcaster during the last year are considered as fast and in accordance with the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic to enable the continuation of the school year and access to education for all children in Kosovo. However, the quality of this distance learning organization remains debatable, including the quality of the video materials and the quality of the teaching approaches that teachers have employed and continue to employ during distance learning.

With the closure of schools and the organization of teaching in pandemic conditions, teachers in Kosovo have faced the challenge of switching to distance learning, which requires good knowledge and skills in using the ICT for quality and effective teaching. In this regard, although accurate data are lacking, a significant number of teachers are estimated to have no previous experience in organizing distance or combined teaching, while the use of technology during the teaching process was extremely low and posed a challenge for the education system in Kosovo even before the outbreak of the COVID-19. Also, given that distance learning depends on access to various technological devices and the internet, their lack has further increased the inequalities in education, widening the knowledge gap between advantaged children and those from vulnerable groups, including those children with low socio-economic status, those with special educational needs and children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, who for various reasons (lack of technological equipment and internet access, parent engagement and education, appropriate learning environment, etc.) failed to get involved in the distance learning process. Here it is important to mention that there have been some limited initiatives by different parties to provide, free of charge for schools, teachers and students, different digital devices (computers, laptops, tablets, smart TVs, etc.), in order to organize distance and online learning.

According to the data from MESTI, it is estimated that a total of 9,070 or 2.8% of children were not involved in distance learning organized last year during the period March-June.¹⁵ As a result, all these challenges which are related to the access and quality of education as a result of the pandemic result in learning loss of students, which will have long-term impacts on the education and future of children.

Taking immediate action in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic is essential, but their effectiveness depends on the investment and human capacity developed in previous periods. During the last year of dealing with the pandemic, it was noticed that the energy is focused on organizing the learning process and the well-being of the students and the educational staff. As a result, a number of activities envisaged under KESP 2017-2021 can be assessed as not being implemented for this reason. However, KESP started its implementation in 2017 and for the first three years a series of measures were envisaged, the successful implementation of which would have some impact on reducing the above challenges, including the development of teachers'

¹⁴ https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/08/udhezuesi-final-file-10-09-2020_1.pdf

¹⁵ https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/08/udhezuesi-final-file-10-09-2020_1.pdf

capacity to use the ICT, the electronic material, the internet access provision in all educational and training institutions, the supply of schools with technological equipment, the subsidizing of teachers with laptops, etc. The stagnation in the implementation of defined policies, including KESP, proves that the education is given importance in strategic planning, but there is lack of will and commitment to implement strategic measures by MESTI and municipalities and properly coordinate between them.

Given that this is the last year of KESP implementation, it is vital that the new education development strategy in Kosovo for the next five years include educational measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the post COVID-19 period, including clear implementation plans to compensate for learning losses and mitigate inequalities in education, digitize education, develop teacher capacity, and develop student competencies and skills deemed essential to their success in the future.

Last but not least, it is estimated that while facing the pandemic very little emotional counseling and support was provided to children. Given the low number of psychologists and pedagogues in schools nationwide, the Government should consider investing not only in the increasing the number of psychologists in schools, but also in their continued professional development and oversight of their services.

3. The main findings of the evaluation

General:

- During the KESP implementation period (2017-2021), Kosovo has organized three central elections and one local election, which, to a large extent, have shifted the attention from education problems, but have also resulted with stagnation in the implementation of planned educational policies as well as change and initiation of various unplanned and unprepared measures and activities.
- The education system in Kosovo did not function as a system based on responsibility and accountability, and as such is distinguished for non-implementation of legislation, strategies, policies and established standards. Accountability and responsibility mechanisms are lacking almost in all levels and institutions responsible for education. Moreover, MESTI has so far failed to build a sustainable education system, where the Ministry focuses only on realizing its tasks and responsibilities for policy-making, support and supervision/evaluation. As a result, municipalities are largely not held accountable for the state of education by their community, despite the power and responsibilities they have with the legal and strategic framework for pre-university education.
- Stagnation in the implementation of defined policies in education, including KESP, is not only related to the lack of funding, but also to a large extent to the lack of commitment, lack of human capacity and other issues of organizational nature, where special commitment is required in order to implement the strategic measures by MESTI, as well as a high degree of coordination between central and local level institutions.
- Despite the fact that a large number of measures were planned in the KESP to be taken for the development of the education system, the actions of the MESTI were not coherent, often deviating into unplanned and short-term policies. Thus, most of the planning carried out by KESP consists of investments made to improve the school infrastructure and of protracted processes for drafting and reviewing various legal and strategic documents and activities that have been carried out by the projects supported by international development partners in education.
- Although KESP was drafted as part of a strategic planning process, the approach to implementation has been traditional, with a lack of accountability and involvement of key stakeholders, lack of focus on monitoring and evaluation, and lack of flexibility in implementation, combined with an insufficient commitment and limited capacity of MESTI.
- After almost 5 years of implementation, KESP remains far from fulfilling its mission: the development of quality-based education system, inclusive approach and accountability, which enables the upbringing of individuals in line with international standards and best practices.

- Out of 48 targeted results within the 7 strategic objectives of KESP, to date only 2 have been fully achieved as planned (4%), 16 have been achieved only partially (33.5%), while 30 results remain far from being achieved as planned (62.5%).
- Out of 264 measures planned within the 7 strategic objectives of KESP, to date only 19 have been fully implemented as planned (7%), 87 have been only partially implemented (33%), while 158 planned measures remain far from being achieved as planned (60%).

The following are the main findings of the evaluation according to the seven areas covered by KESP.

Participation and Inclusion

- Kosovo has achieved an enviable degree of participation in compulsory education (90.5%). The challenge remains the very low level of inclusion of children in preschool education, where the inclusion rate of children aged 1 to 5 is 8.5%. In general, children living in rural areas and those from marginalized groups do not have access to institutionalized preschool education. The inclusion rate of children in pre-primary education is 79.4%. According to official data, school dropout is low and as a phenomenon is considered more prevalent among the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. However, data on school dropout remain quite incomplete, as reports of school dropouts from schools themselves remain questionable. Currently due to lack of funds, many Learning Centers are not functioning and are not sustainable. Children with special needs and children with special talents remain the most marginalized categories in pre-university education.
- In recent years, there have been significant demographic changes, and as a result, the total number of students has decreased significantly (19.95% or 87,884 students), while schools in urban areas have faced overcrowding. The decrease in the number of students is marked in all municipalities of Kosovo.
- The design of the core curriculum for preschool education has not been completed. In 2019, the revision of the Law on Early Childhood Education began, although it has not yet been finalized.

Management of the Education System

- Despite the good intention to improve the quality of service delivery through decentralization of education, the quality of service delivery in education remains poor. The decentralization process has been largely challenged, mainly due to the lack of proper preparations to implement it, and lack of a clear plan and orientation. The municipal level, namely the MEDs, have not been prepared, did not and still do not have sufficient human and professional and financial resources to carry the full burden of competencies and responsibilities that decentralization has delegated to MED for efficient institutional management and quality assurance of education. MED staff is insufficient and unprepared to fulfill all duties and responsibilities belonging to MEDs according to the legislation and strategic framework for pre-university education. Despite this, MESTI has continuously increased the responsibilities of MEDs in establishing mechanisms for supervision, support and quality assurance of education at municipal level.

- In recent years, with the aim for efficient management, it is estimated that hundreds of initiatives, training programs, workshops and other forms oriented towards building and increasing capacity for education management at various levels, central and municipal were run. However, they were not developed as planned, they were fragmented and unsystematic, and as such insufficient and with limited effects on capacity building for effective education management.
- The school management model in Kosovo is characterized by lack of autonomy and limited responsibilities for school management and teachers. School directors are limited in administering the spendings, student admissions, and disciplinary action. They do not perceive that it is their responsibility to engage in course content, student evaluation rules, budget planning, staff selection and evaluation. There is a general and well-founded impression that school leaders, in many cases, are politicized and appointed to their positions by party influences that govern the respective municipality. There is no proper licensing system for school leaders. Several steps have been taken to operationalize mechanisms for selecting school leaders that relate to the preparation of the legal framework for procedures and criteria for their selection and performance appraisal. However, their implementation remains in the initial stage, while there is a lack of will for their implementation and the capacities remain very limited.
- The absence of a professional institution which would coordinate the career development of school leaders, as well as lack of commitment among MESTI and Municipalities to depoliticize the selection of school leaders and strengthen the capacities for education management at municipal level, have left the management of the pre-university education system in a significant number of schools challenged by ineffective leadership.
- Although there is a legal framework for the functioning of the parents' council, in many schools and municipalities they are not functional. Parents are not motivated to be active and engaged in overseeing the school work, but are also unaware of the importance of their role in educating their children. School directors prefer to run the school without any parental support, as this does not hold them accountable to them.
- In most schools, School Governing Boards continue to be registered only formally, as they are neither active nor vocal in overseeing the work of the school. Part of the responsibility lies with school directors, as they often do not organize board meetings adequately. This situation has in most schools resulted with the dysfunctionalization of a body of great importance which represents the interests of the school and the community.
- The total number of students has decreased significantly, while schools in urban areas have faced overcrowding. Currently, about 60% of schools have less than 250 students, and over 200 separate schools/classes operate with less than 50 students or about 4 students per class. Many schools/classes in different villages have been left with very few students, and even working in combined classes. As such, they may not provide a conducive environment for quality education. Despite these changes, MESTI has not addressed this problem at all, not even at the level of conducting a comprehensive analysis regarding the reorganization of the school network. The challenges and problems raised by the initiative of the Municipality of Kamenica in the attempt to reorganize education at the municipal level are a bad warning for the continuation of the school reorganization reform in other municipalities.

- The increase in teachers' salaries, although necessary, was not strategically planned to improve teachers' performance and increase the quality of education. The failure of this policy to improve the quality of education is mainly due to the fact that the salary policy was not based on a meritocratic system, which would serve to reward good teachers and encourage them to improve performance. Teachers' pay increases were exploited by politics, mainly as a means of electoral gain. In addition, the salary increase prevented teachers from demanding better conditions in the classroom as they were quite satisfied with their salary increase.
- In addition to low per student spendings, expenditures on pre-university education are characterized by a lack of efficient management. Despite the great need to allocate more budget in areas related to the quality of education delivery, expenditures on pre-university education are mainly focused on two categories, salaries and wages and capital expenditures. Low funding for education and inefficient management pose challenges for municipalities and schools in implementing policies and standards adopted by central institutions. Investments in quality-related projects in education, implementation of curricular reform, creation of support services for students and teachers, professional literature, school libraries and ICT equipment are negligible. As such, current funding for pre-university education does not meet the needs of schools for necessary improvements as well as for the implementation of policies/reforms at the school level. In addition, the same formula of funding applies to all schools regardless of their needs. The process of reviewing the funding formula of pre-university education has not yet begun and this is due to numerous negligences and excessive bureaucracy.
- Schools generally have very little control over their budgets. The lack of practice for fully functionalizing the school boards and work plans, combined with the lack of budget and financial management skills at the level of school directors, further hamper the decentralization process. In such a situation, MEDs serve as procurement centers for the school network, thus diverting the attention from strategic issues of the education sector at the local level, such as policy planning and monitoring.
- Legislation in pre-university education is characterized by a lack of coherence, numerous conflicts between primary and secondary legislation, and between bylaws among themselves. Administrative instructions for pre-university education are not structured or arranged according to a logical model, to make their implementation more meaningful and easier. The Law on Publishing Textbooks and School Supplies, School Reading and Pedagogical Documentation and the Law on Preschool Education have not been reviewed/approved. The revision of these two laws is included in the Government's legislative program for 2021.
- A significant proportion of students are subject to bullying in schools. Students report being frequently subjected to threats, beatings, gossip, and ridicule from other students. Bullying has a negative impact on learning and potentially long-term impact on children's personal development.
- In the last decade, the trend of investments in education has been characterized by large investments in the improvement of educational infrastructure through the construction, renovation and expansion of educational institutions. However, no long-term analysis of the population trend has been conducted to determine the trend of students in the coming years as to whether it will increase or decrease, and to understand whether the investments in school constructions have been worth it. It remains unclear whether the money invested in building the schools were investments that have improved the quality of education. The educational community in Kosovo (school directors and teachers) emphasizes the importance of reorienting

funding and investment in textbooks, libraries, laboratories and technological equipment. Lack of physical infrastructure and inadequate infrastructure, especially lack of reading rooms for students, are the primary challenges. No progress has been made in equipping schools with technological equipment.

Quality assurance

- In recent years, significant progress has been made in completing the legal and regulatory framework for consolidating the quality assurance system. The process for implementation of this framework continues to face many challenges, both in defining quality coordinators, at school and municipal level, as well as in building their capacities, in the functionalizing teams at school level for internal performance evaluation, and in conducting internal evaluation. At least formally, most schools have a Quality Coordinator. In practice, the appointment of quality coordinators is often formal without a full understanding of the coordinator's roles and responsibilities. In some cases, teachers are assigned to this position only to meet the teaching hours, while there are also many cases when teachers assigned to this position are not released from the volume of teaching hours.
- Although professional activas exist in most schools, in many cases their operation is relatively informal and without any major impact on the quality of school teaching. MEDs do not allocate budget for the support and empowerment of professional activas. Another challenge is the fact that the quality coordinator at the MED level, due to lack of sufficient human resources is not relieved of other duties and responsibilities in the MED and as this makes it difficult for them to carry out the supervisory and supportive role from the management to the municipal level in school.
- Development plans that would help schools focus on measures to be taken to improve the quality of education delivery do not exist in all schools. Even when they do, it is estimated that they are often only formal template documents (copied from other schools) and therefore do not properly address the specifics, needs and requirements of the respective school, and therefore are not properly implemented, respectively do not perform the role and the function they are supposed to perform in terms of good school management and governance. Regarding the monitoring of the implementation of development plans, no systematic or continuous process of supervision and support of schools in implementation has been carried out. In the same line, the development of the quality assurance portal has not been accomplished.
- The capacity of the Education Inspectorate for quality assurance is more than limited. Many of the processes related to quality assurance, such as external evaluation of the school and evaluation of teacher performance, have to be carried out with complex methods and require good knowledge of quality areas. The Education Inspectorate, in addition to lacking profiled specialists in the fields and levels of education, also lacks professional leadership and efficient management. It is surprising how, on the one hand, very important and sensitive areas and aspects of quality assurance in pre-university education have been assigned to this institution, and on the other hand, poor professional capacities and inefficient management of this institution have been tolerated over the years, and the situation remains the same. Efforts to improve the quality of pre-university education in Kosovo are to a large extent and directly related to the quality and results of the work of the Education Inspectorate. Moreover, although more than two years have passed

since the entry into force of the new Law on the Education Inspectorate, inspectors are still not divided into pedagogical inspectors and administrative inspectors.

- External evaluation of school performance is one of the most important processes towards development of schools in pre-university education. Besides that this process has begun its implementation, its dynamics is not at the expected level. The first cycle of external evaluation of all schools is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021, while by 2020 external evaluation was carried out only in 68 schools or less than 7% of all schools. In this regard, the process of external evaluation of school performance is characterized by slow and fragmented dynamics, as well as, a lack of interconnection with other quality assurance mechanisms in pre-university education. The low number of pedagogical inspectors and the limited capacity to fulfill the new functions are the reasons for the delay in concluding the external evaluation of schools. However, the quality of the implementation of the external evaluation process of schools, with the existing capacities of the Education Inspectorate, will be quite debatable.
- No steps have been taken towards the establishment of the Agency for Curriculum, Evaluation and Standards, despite the fact that this agency is provided by law since 2011. Fulfilling such an important legal obligation has dragged on from one year to the next as this agency would cover the most sensitive areas of the education system, on which the quality of learning outcomes directly depends.¹⁶ Administration continues to be the weakest point of national test management. Even after many years, MESTI has not taken effective steps to improve the administration.
- The disturbing results of Kosovar students in the PISA 2015, PISA 2018 and TIMSS 2019 test, which assess the cognitive skills of 15-year-old students, including writing and reading and mathematics, as well as competencies such as critical thinking and problem solving, are not turned into a mobilization for the implementation of immediate measures in order to improve the education system.
- Despite the role of the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute (KPI) as the main public research institution in the field of pedagogy, the capacities of this institution to provide professional services to MESTI and educational institutions of all levels, through research, training, counseling, monitoring and evaluation, as well as, through professional publications in various fields of education are quite limited. The role of this institution remains unnoticed and without any impact. KPI, in addition to the fact that it lacks profiled specialists of research sectors, also lacks professional leadership. While, on the one hand, very important and sensitive areas and aspects of quality assurance of pre-university education, require the commitment and support of KPI, on the other hand the leadership of this institution has been held hostage, suspended, and also tolerated inadequate professional capacities that do not meet the legal requirements regarding the qualifications and experience for leading and organizing scientific research.

¹⁶ The establishment of this Agency shall be based on the Public Administration Reform for Rationalization of the Agencies.

Teacher Development

- The teaching staff has remained largely the same in number. The average age of employees in pre-university education is 45 years old. The average number of years of working experience, not only in education, of all teachers is 16 years. Of the total number of teachers, 40% have less than 11 years of work experience. In the next eight years, an average of 640 teachers will retire each year. The teacher-student ratio at the country level is 1:14. Unfavorable situation is presented in the unbalanced distribution of students in schools at municipal levels.
- The professional development of teachers remains at the level of document development and their frequent review, at the administrative level of implementation and does not result in any substantial improvement of the quality of services for TPD, or the change of teachers' approach towards their professional practice, and the development of their competencies related to the implementation of the new curriculum. The constant setbacks in this regard show that the institutions with a primary role and responsibility in this field have failed to understand in content the spirit, the philosophy and the importance of teacher development in order to increase the quality of teaching and learning. The teaching entry phase, the state exam, as well as the financing of teachers' professional development are segments that have not yet been regulated.
- Teachers' professional development continues to be driven by supply rather than the needs of the teachers. The selection of training provided depends largely on the perception of MESTI officials, MEDs, donors, and not on school-based evidence. The main focus of MESTI in recent years is to provide training for curricula and educational leadership. On the other hand, school-level mechanisms for identifying teacher professional development needs are missing. Dozens of providers organize various training programs, while none or very few of them are monitored by MESTI.
- In terms of TPD financing, there is still no framework that would clearly define how sustainable TPD financing could be achieved, which would enable the implementation of the teacher licensing process. Also, there is no accurate database on the number of training hours conducted by teachers, despite the fact that all certificates for teacher training are signed by the MESTI. In the absence of a TPD database there are no evaluations that would enable better planning to guide teacher involvement in training programs and other TPD-related analyzes.
- The level of teachers' involvement in professional development has decreased steadily in recent years, due to declining funding for professional development and lack of a sustainable funding model. MEDs, due to their limited human and financial capacities, face difficulties in fulfilling their role for TPD, with particular emphasis on setting priorities for TPD at the municipal level, providing and allocating budget for TPD, including budget for schools, as well as managing data for teacher involvement in training and other professional development activities.
- Teacher Performance Evaluation has started several years ago, but has not yet managed to implement and perform the intended function, especially the function of teacher licensing. In the absence of implementation capacities, especially at the central level, it seems that VPM is not well and clearly understood by schools and teachers, and consequently we have diversified implementation of this process from school to school, despite the fact that VPM is supposed to be a unique process for all teachers. Furthermore, VPM

should also serve for the categorization and promotion of teachers, in accordance with the results of their performance proven within the evaluation process. However, this does not happen because no teacher has been promoted based on performance appraisal.

- The process of teacher performance evaluation, although started, continues to lag behind the foreseen time-frame. By 2020, the total number of teachers who have undergone performance appraisal is approximately 450 (2% of the total number of teachers). The dynamics of teacher performance appraisal is not in line with the KESP plan, which provided for the VPM to be accomplished for all teachers during the 2017-2021 period, or with 20% each year. Furthermore, there is still no report with feedback that could be used for improvement, and teachers are not informed about the content and process of their performance evaluation.
- Teacher licensing is another process that has begun and continues to be just a formal process without the proper weight and importance it should carry. Almost all in-service teachers who have applied for a license have acquired one, while many new teachers enter the teaching process without a license in the absence of proper regulation of this issue. The process of licensing teachers according to the grading system provided by the legal framework has not made any progress. Furthermore, lack of teacher information on TPD programs, and the licensing system in general, jeopardizes the efforts to build a sustainable TPD system.
- MESTI delays with regulating school-based TPD have led to school activities being ad-hoc, unorganized, without initiatives based on the needs of teachers. Despite the plans that by 2021, TPD will be provided at 70% by training program providers and 30% by school-based TPD, and from 2021 onwards TPD will be 50% offered by program providers and 50% school-based, these plans were not achieved due to lack of planning, coordination and leadership of the TPD by MESTI and the local level. A positive development in regards to the implementation of the approach for school based teacher professional development is the organization and financing of school based TPD for all primary level teachers by the Municipality of Drenas.
- With the Law on Regulated Professions, the teaching profession at all levels of pre-university education is part of the regulated professions. However, this law in force has not yet started to be implemented by the MESTI. On the other side, The Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina has raised the standard of student admission and this has resulted in attracting better students who are proving even better success during their studies.

Teaching and learning

- Curricular changes in Kosovo, initiated in 2008, were developed without proper preparation and very rapidly. Instead of bringing positive changes this had led to disruptions in the education system. From then on, the implementation of curricular changes has been characterized by a fragmented and incoherent approach. The implementation of the new curriculum in all schools in Kosovo started in 2017, with a lack of textbooks and concretization tools needed for the implementation of the new curriculum. The development of subject curricula has not yet been completed and the implementation of the curriculum in all grades has not been extended. The conducted research and analysis testify to challenges in leading the implementation of the curriculum, in the acceptance of the new curriculum by schools and teachers, in the

practical implementation of the new curricular approach, in the insufficient support of teachers and directors for the implementation of the curriculum, as well as challenges in the absence of oversight, support and accountability mechanisms in the curriculum implementation process. Monitoring the implementation of the new curriculum by schools, municipalities and MESTI remains the most sensitive part of the process of implementing curricular changes.

- The quality of lesson plans still remains a challenge in itself. Treatment of lesson planning by a large number of teachers and school leaders, as administrative work; lack of creative approach to planning; the tendency of template planning, lesson planning based on textbooks (although the textbooks are from previous years, not designed according to the new curriculum) not in subject curricula and core curricula, etc., continue to affect the quality of lesson plans and in using them to guide teaching and student work in implementing the new curriculum. The teaching methodology largely continues to be inadequate, and as such does not arouse curiosity and interaction between teacher and students.
- The law on the publication of textbooks, teaching aids, textbooks and pedagogical documentation has not been revised after the approval of the Curriculum Framework., despite the fact that it should be completed long ago in order to precede the process of drafting new textbooks. Textbooks that were prepared in 2019, will not be used in Kosovo schools, since MESTI at the end of 2020 has reopened the competition for new textbooks and teaching materials for all grades. Textbooks were not prepared and conceived in accordance with the spirit of the new curriculum, despite the fact that the implementation of the new curriculum throughout the country has begun. Moreover, there have been many remarks about the quality of textbooks for scientific, substantive and interpretive inaccuracies, overload, inadequate language for age groups, as well as discriminatory and prejudicial language and content. As such, the textbooks currently in use do not contribute to the development of students' critical thinking and do not encourage the application of contemporary teaching and evaluation methods. Furthermore, taking into account the fact that the relevant textbooks are provided free of charge by the MESTI, the possibility of selecting textbooks and other resources by the school itself is limited.
- Infrastructure investment policy is mainly focused on the construction of school buildings. Kosovo lags behind in all parameters of internal infrastructure and means of concretization. Most schools in Kosovo do not provide adequate teaching equipment including libraries, laboratories, computers and textbooks. A total of 16.2% of public schools and 84.8% of shared classrooms do not have internet access at all. This results in the impossibility of using the internet for teaching purposes. The ICT course is offered at the superficial applied level and does not reflect creative thinking and programming (coding) as the main skills in ICT. The technologies and programming languages taught in high schools are old and unattractive to students. In 2021, the Strategy for Digitalization of Education in Kosovo 2021-2026 was prepared in order to put technology in function of improving teaching and learning.

Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning

- Vocational secondary education is supposed to train and prepare students in many different professions and trades to enter the labor market upon completion of vocational secondary education. But all estimates show that vocational secondary schools in Kosovo do not satisfactorily meet this goal. Although the interest of young people in vocational education schools has increased in recent years, with about 52.4% of all high school students in Kosovo attending vocational schools, in general the situation and quality in these schools is not at the desired level because they face many challenges and problems, such as lack of proper cooperation with businesses, insufficient adaptation to the labor market, insufficient infrastructure and equipment, lack of laboratories and workshops, professional internships, lack of teaching materials, etc. Vocational schools continue to generally remain a second choice, especially for students who have not been able to enroll in gymnasiums.
- The most sought out profiles for students are in the field of engineering, manufacturing and construction as well as business, administration and justice. About 59% of students enrolled in vocational education and 47.1% of all girls enrolled in vocational schools attend classes in these two areas. The general enrollment of students in agriculture, forestry, fishery, veterinary medicine and services is extremely low. Discrepancies can be noticed between the regional economic potential and the orientation of students in vocational schools at the regional and municipal level. Municipalities are very non-flexible in changing profiles in vocational schools, in order to not create the problem of technological redundancies among teaching staff.
- Despite the fact that the development of the core curriculum for vocational education has been among the main objectives for several years, the VET curriculum is still missing. The development and approval of the core curriculum in vocational education should also include the revision of curricula in all fields of study. In recent years, several steps have been taken to review and design the curricula for some of the profiles and the same have been piloted and continue piloting in some vocational schools.
- Internal quality assurance mechanisms for vocational schools are not consolidated and self-assessment processes are carried out formally as fulfillment of obligations and without any significant impact on quality improvement. In this matter, the interest of vocational schools in conducting internal evaluation of the school has decreased.
- The quality of teaching is considered a major obstacle in most vocational education schools. Teaching and learning methods are theoretical with limited access to practical teaching in schools. Recently, a package of legal frameworks has been adopted regarding the organization and support of workplace learning. Vocational school leaders testify that cooperation with employers in the implementation of workplace learning varies according to the profiles offered by the school. For the profiles that are most in demand in the market, the cooperation of schools with employers is better, while for the less demanded profiles there is a lack of cooperation or it is very weak.
- Career counseling and guidance remains a challenge and the services provided are still limited in some municipalities. In some municipalities there are career counseling and guidance centers or career counseling and guidance offices located within schools. These were made possible mainly by various project initiatives,

and not as a result of a comprehensive plan. No progress has been made in appointing counselors for career counseling and guidance.

- The vocational education and training sector has not had and continues to not have any financial support from the state. The main financial support for this sector is provided by donors. The current formula of financing vocational education is generalized according to the orientation per student and not with any differentiation of expenses according to the specific requirements of the profiles.

Higher Education

- In recent years the number of students in higher education is declining and this decline is greater in public institutions of higher education in Kosovo. The gross enrollment rate in higher education is 56.7%, while the number of students per 100,000 inhabitants is 5,295. The timely graduation rate of students is not satisfactory. The number of qualified academic staff in higher education institutions is insufficient, while the proportion of "academic staff-students" at the national level in public institutions is 1:45.
- The development of study programs that do not reflect the real needs of the labor market remains a structural shortcoming of higher education. These programs also lack interdisciplinarity, practical training, as well as connection with scientific research. The mismatch of labor market needs with the knowledge gained in higher education is identified as one of the main obstacles to employment growth and economic development in the country. About 60% of study programs are in the fields of education, arts and humanities, social sciences and services. The largest number of students and educational programs are in the category of social sciences and law studies. Student orientation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics remains low. The degree of student orientation in the fields of social sciences, humanities, business and law is very high compared to market dynamics.
- Public institutions of higher education do not, to a large extent, have functional offices for quality assurance, are challenged due to limited staff capacities for quality assurance, with processes of self-evaluations being carried out only for the purpose of accreditation and not for the internal improvement of the institution, and quality assurance instruments are limited only to the formal evaluation of the academic staff by the students. Moreover, they lack academic staff, research and scientific capacities, financial autonomy, internationalization and exchange of students and academic staff. Political influences on selection of rectors, academic staff and other governing structures within public institutions of higher education continue to be present.
- The accreditation process is based on the quality assurance approach by meeting the minimum quality criteria. A system based on the quality enhancement approach or quality culture does not apply as it does in developed countries of Europe. Apart from the accreditation process which is followed by many challenges, the monitoring system is not applied, in spite of being a continuous quality assurance process which controls whether the institution continues to maintain the quality standards with which it was initially accredited. The dysfunctional internal quality assurance system is one of the weakest segments of public institutions of higher education in Kosovo, which also reflects in the quality of teaching. Moreover, the exclusion of the KAA from the two main quality assurance mechanisms in Europe, ENQA and EQAR, has created irrepara-

ble consequences for the higher education system. Political interventions in independent quality assurance institutions testify to the fragility of the higher education system.

- Higher education institutions continue to lag behind the region's institutions in international rankings. The 2021 edition of Webometrics ranks the University of Prishtina in 3,022th place, while all other higher education institutions in the country are ranked below. The University of Prishtina remains far behind other public universities from the capitals of the Balkan countries, with the exception of universities from Tirana. The main challenges for scientific research in higher education institutions are related to limited human resources, infrastructure and dysfunctional equipment. The lack of adequate infrastructure for research is a challenge for participation in the "Horizon 2020" program.
- Since 2011, the Assembly of Kosovo has never managed to secure a consensus to appoint members of the National Council of Science. Currently, Kosovo does not have a functioning ANC and lacks the implementation of an updated science program. Furthermore, MESTI has not yet established the State Agency for State Examinations, a body which should be the main institution for the implementation of the Law on Regulated Professions in Kosovo, approved towards late 2016.
- The process of starting the revision of the Law on Higher Education has been protracted and this has greatly influenced the dynamics of the drafting of other acts. The Law on Scientific Innovation, Knowledge Transfer and Technology was adopted in November 2018, while the draft law on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency has not yet been completed. Furthermore, no methodology has been developed for the financing of higher education institutions and this financing is not done on the basis of a performance plan which would enable the monitoring of the institutions' work, encouraging the creation of a culture of responsibility and accountability.

4. Suggestions for the future

Suggestions for the next education plan:

- The preparation of the next plan should take into account the human capacities and financial resources for implementation. Furthermore, the next plan (part for pre-university education) should be prepared only after the completion of two very important processes in pre-university education: the process of external evaluation of schools and the process of performance evaluation. The results of these two processes, if implemented properly, will provide an evaluation of the needs of schools, school leaders and teachers, which should be turned into measures and activities in the field of pre-university education in the education plan. This plan would thus be a school-based one and would avoid over-planning practices that do not recognize, and do not take into account the real needs of schools and teachers.
- The plan for the next term must be prepared for a period of 10 years and it must be submitted to the Assembly of Kosovo for approval.

Suggestions for ensuring participation and inclusion:

- The Government and Municipalities should allocate financial resources for infrastructure investments (kindergartens and nurseries) and staff (leaders, nursery carers and educators), in order to increase the involvement of children in preschool education. Given that inclusion is extremely low at this level, major investments are needed in order to achieve greater inclusion of children aged 0-5 throughout Kosovo in the coming years. In this regard, public-private partnership alternatives and the adaptation of suitable private houses for kindergartens and nurseries should be encouraged, as this would reduce the financial cost of constructing kindergarten and nursery facilities. The changing approach to preschool education should be reflected in curriculum development and revision of the preparatory class plan, providing a comprehensive and integrated approach where learning takes place through play and interactive activities. Moreover, the capacities for pre-primary education should be increased and preparation at this level should become mandatory. Mechanisms for quality assurance at the preschool education level should be functionalized, providing the service of pedagogues and psychologists to support quality development.
- Learning centers should be supported to provide supplementary classes and organize other educational activities for children in need as according to the AI No.19/2018 for their establishment and functioning. In addition, scholarships should continue to be provided to high school students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities.

- MESTI should establish clear and sustainable mechanisms for organizing teaching in the diaspora, through support with reformed curricula, providing qualified and trained teachers, and coordinating with foreign countries for the integration of Albanian language and culture teaching within optional curricula, or other forms organized within the school.

Suggestions for improving the education system management and accountability:

- Plans should take into account the improvement of the human capacities of MESTI and MEDs, in order to ensure the exercise of their role effectively. The trained staff would enable better monitoring from the central level, to ensure the implementation of policies as well as coordination between schools and municipalities. Better implementation and coordination of policies would contribute to quality improvement.
- Functional review of MEDs is essential for quality assurance and more effective school management. Based on a comprehensive and objective evaluation, MEDs should review their organizational structure, job systematization, description of competencies and responsibilities in order to allocate sufficient human resources, prepared to perform tasks and responsibilities for delivery of pre-university education. In this regard, MEDs should invest in capacity building of their staff for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of TPD, quality assurance in schools, implementation of the new curriculum and other aspects related to their role. To support this initiative, MESTI should be engaged in the preparation of the Guide/Standards for the organization and management of MEDs.
- The school management approach needs to be reviewed to advance the role of school leaders and teachers in the learning process. Autonomous decision-making at the school level in budget management, and in staff recruitment needs to be strengthened. Further decentralization, in line with the implementation of sound school development plans would contribute to the depoliticization of the process of recruiting school leaders and teachers, as they would no longer have to be accountable to the municipal levels but to the community.
- Good and professional management directly reflects on the performance of the school, therefore the school leadership should be responsible and accountable for the performance of the school. In this regard, school governing councils, parents' and students' councils should be strengthened. Strengthening school support management bodies by providing support and monitoring their work would help better manage education and improve the quality of service delivery. Parents should be encouraged to actively participate and contribute to improving school outcomes. In this regard, mandatory awareness programs and other activities should be organized that bring parents closer to schools and their children's education.
- MESTI and Municipalities should start reorganizing the school network, closing schools with few students and transferring students to the nearest schools. The operation of these schools/classes should be considered, not only because of the pronounced financial inefficiency, but above all because of the quality of teaching that can take place in these schools/classes. Optimizing the number of students in the classroom, school and reorganization of the school network should be an immediate priority that should not be ignored in the future, as it directly affects the quality of teaching and learning.

- The linear wage increase of education staff should be discontinued because it has no positive effect. To encourage teachers to do better, the teacher licensing system should be operationalized as a matter of priority, and salary increases should be linked to teacher performance.
- Capital investment in pre-university education should focus on internal infrastructure and school resources, which include areas from which students would directly benefit, such as reading rooms, textbooks, libraries, technology, the outdoors environment, these being resources that would help turn schooling into learning. The pre-university education funding formula that takes into account the needs of the school should be prepared as a matter of priority. Furthermore, the investment plan at central and local level should be reviewed to reflect the declining student population and the infrastructural and human capacity of schools should be weighed against demographic projections and other aspects of internal population movements. School spaces freed from the reorganization of the school network should be made available to preschool institutions, thus expanding involvement in preschool education.
- Legislation in pre-university education needs to be systematized, harmonized and supplemented to ensure coherence and eliminate inconsistencies that affect their implementation. Adequate involvement of MEDs and the educational community should be ensured in these processes and the practices of developed countries should be taken into account. Furthermore, capacities for data collection and processing in education need to be increased, through the advancement of the EIMS system and their use for policy making.

Quality assurance suggestions in pre-university education:

- The position of Quality Coordinator in the municipality and in the school should be special. The appointment of quality coordinators should not be formal, and the role of quality coordinator should be assigned to the best teachers, after an effective training that helps them fully understand the role and responsibilities of the coordinator. The coordinator should not be appointed only by the school director, but in cooperation/consultation with the Governing Board or the Teachers' Council. Furthermore, MESTI should support municipalities in securing funding to support and empower professional staff.
- Schools and municipalities should be monitored to prepare and implement education development plans, which would help identify development priorities and serve as a basis for school monitoring and performance evaluation. Development plans should not only focus on segments related to external financing, but on those that can actually be improved by municipalities and schools. School planning should be fully linked to development plans for education at the local level, and the latter to the development plan for education at the central level.
- Capacities for external evaluation of schools and teacher performance need to be urgently upgraded. In this regard, the main focus within a year should be on developing the organizational and human capacity of the Education Inspectorate. MESTI should initiate the general reorganization of the human capacities of the Inspectorate of Education and the creation of conditions for the attraction and employment of prominent specialists in the field of pedagogy in this institution.

- The process of external evaluation of schools can be carried out neither in time, nor substantively with the existing capacities of the Inspectorate of Education. For this purpose, MESTI should consider the possibility that for a transitional period this essential process for quality improvement be organized in cooperation with specialists of the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute and the Faculty of Education, ensuring the identification and engagement in these processes of the best teachers and directors (as external experts). Thus, the process of external evaluation of schools could be dynamized, and this would contribute to the evaluation of the current state of the education system and the identification of the necessary measures to be taken by the MESTI, the MEDs and the schools for providing essential conditions for the implementation of the new curriculum and quality assurance. On this basis, an operational plan for quality enhancement should be prepared through the implementation of all elements of curricular reform, ensuring a reasonable and grounded dynamic of implementation, support, oversight and accountability. The results of the external evaluation of schools should be made public and used to improve the school, and as a means of ensuring accountability.
- Capacities for external students' evaluation need to be improved through effective measures for the improvement of the administration of national tests. Student's evaluation results should be transparent and the analysis of results should be presented according to subjects, municipalities, schools, gender, income and social status of students. In this regard, MESTI should immediately establish and make operational the Agency for Curriculum, Evaluation and Standards.¹⁷ Participation in international evaluation tests should continue.

Suggestions for teacher development:

- MESTI should complete the legal and organizational framework for regulating the entry phase into the teaching profession and regulating sustainable funding mechanisms for TPD. The state entrance exam for the teaching profession should start to be implemented as soon as possible. Furthermore, professional practice for entering the teaching profession should be supported and sanctioned.
- Teacher professional development should be guided by teacher needs and school-based evidence, and not by the perception of MESTI officials, MEDs, donors and NGOs. Teacher involvement in professional development programs should be increased, but above all it should be directly related to the results of the school's external evaluation and the results of the teacher performance evaluation. Furthermore, professional development should also be linked to curricular changes and student achievement outcomes. School-based TPD is more effective and this approach needs to be implemented.
- Ensuring the quality of professional teacher development programs is essential to achieving effective results. In this regard, MESTI should develop standards and instruments to monitor and evaluate training programs, and take measures to monitor their implementation. In addition, MESTI should develop a system for managing information for professional teacher development in order to contribute to the licensing system, identify teacher development needs and design relevant professional development policies.
- Teacher professional development must be continuous and sustainable. In this regard, MESTI should develop a sustainable funding system for professional development programs that combines the contribution from the

¹⁷ The establishment of this Agency shall be based on the Public Administration Reform for Rationalization of the Agencies.

state budget and the individual contribution of teachers aiming at career promotion. Financing of professional development from the state budget should be accomplished through MEDs and the role of MESTI should be supportive and supervisory. In addition to providing sustainable TPD funding for the municipal level, MESTI should prioritize the evaluation and classification of vocational development programs according to the types of licenses, and address deficiencies in the VET of education and vocational training.

- The long-invested teacher licensing system should have no alternative and should be implemented in accordance with established principles. In this regard, MESTI should urgently focus on the professionalization of the Education Inspectorate, while MEDs on capacity building for the full implementation of this system. Furthermore, measures should be taken to inform teachers about TPD programs and improve transparency and accountability for the licensing system.
- The criteria for admission to educational faculties should be raised in favor of attracting the best students in the profession and this should be applied by all higher education institutions. Moreover, for a transitional period, the provision of teacher training programs should be limited to the Faculty of Education of the University of Prishtina, while other institutions of higher education should be supported to build capacities to provide educational programs. Faculties of education, in addition to the increased commitment to improving the quality of in-service teacher preparation in the spirit of curricular change, should also be more proactively engaged in overseeing the implementation of curricular change and providing suggestions for improvement.
- Similar to the process of external evaluation of schools, the process of teachers' performance evaluation can be carried out neither in due time, nor substantially with the existing capacities of the Inspectorate of Education. Teacher Performance Evaluation should be a unique process for all teachers and, among others, should serve to categorize and promote teachers, in accordance with the results of their performance proven within the evaluation process. For this purpose, MESTI should consider the possibilities that for a transitional period, this very important process for quality improvement be realized in cooperation with the specialists of the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute and the Faculty of Education, ensuring the identification and engagement of the best teachers and directors (as external experts). Thus the process of evaluating teacher performance could be dynamized, and this would contribute to the evaluation of teachers' professional development needs and all relevant priority measures that can be taken after this evaluation. Furthermore, MESTI should begin informing teachers about the content, criteria and procedures for evaluating their performance in advance, and also improve their awareness of the importance of this process in addressing the developmental needs of teachers.

Suggestions for the improvement of teaching and learning:

- MESTI should engage with priority in consolidating mechanisms to lead the process of implementing curricular changes, monitor their implementation and provide assistance to schools in implementing change. The development of professional capacities for the implementation of the curriculum does not mean only several days of training as they do not guarantee the success of the implementation of the curricular changes. Rather, the commitment should be oriented towards continuous and sustainable professional support for teachers and other stakeholders. In this regard, the full support of professional teams at the municipal

level and school-based professional development should be the focus of the MESTI in the implementation of curricular changes. Moreover, without strong professional mechanisms, curricular changes at the school level cannot be successfully implemented. Therefore, MESTI and MEDs should ensure that school governing bodies take concrete actions to strengthen quality coordinators and professional assets, clearly describing the role and responsibilities, as well as providing conditions and environment for work and engagement with teaching staff, with students and parents, as well as creating opportunities and facilities for capacity building in order to exercise their role. Increased attention is needed in supporting and encouraging schools for an innovative approach to the design of curricula for specific subjects and in the selection of teaching content and resources for the effective implementation of learning processes.

- The revision of the Law on the publication of textbooks, teaching aids, reading books and pedagogical documentation should be done on the basis of the principles of the Curriculum Framework. Also, the review of textbook evaluation standards and indicators should pay due attention to certain aspects of textbook quality.
- Quality textbooks should be provided, guaranteeing a credible process of their design and selection. In this regard, one should start with the translation and adaptation of textbooks from foreign languages, in particular in the field of mathematics and natural sciences. Special attention should also be paid to textbooks for teachers. Teachers, schools and school councils should be encouraged to engage actively in textbook selection and the provision of alternative textbooks.
- The digitalization of the education system is impossible if schools do not possess adequate technological equipment and do not ensure their effective use. Schools should be supported to provide internet access within the teaching spaces and with enough bandwidth to meet the needs of contemporary teaching. In this regard, schools should be equipped with computers and other accessories, as well as demonstration equipment such as interactive whiteboards, smart TVs or projectors. Determining the standard package of ICT tools and other concretization tools needed for the effective implementation of the school curriculum should be treated with priority. For more, the development and use of digital teaching materials should be supported in order to increase the quality of teaching and learning, while coding should be included as a separate subject in school curricula from grade VI.

Suggestions for secondary vocational education:

- MESTI in cooperation with MEDs, in order to increase the quality of this level of education, should begin the complete reorganization of the network of vocational high schools and the profiles they offer, streamlining the network of schools. Vocational schools should offer programs closely related to vocational standards. Certain profiles for which there is no demand in the labor market and there is no capacity for the qualitative development of practical teaching and professional practice, need to be closed and reorganized. Moreover, certain institutions of secondary vocational education should gradually be placed under the direct authority of the central government, namely the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education.
- The development and implementation of the core curriculum in vocational education should include the revision of profiles in all areas of study. Vocational education profiles should be reviewed in such a way as

to include the competencies of the profession in the teaching curriculum, teaching staff and infrastructure. Furthermore, it should start with training of teachers for the implementation of the curriculum for vocational education and the development or adaptation of teaching materials based on the VET curriculum.

- Profiles in vocational schools need to be constantly reviewed to ensure they are in line with labor market demands. Furthermore, school career guidance and counseling services at municipal and national level need to be operationalized, providing information on labor market demands.
- As the vocational school accreditation process has recently begun to be implemented, vocational standards and curricula are essential for accreditation. In this regard, MESTI should focus and support the drafting of profession standards and their verification according to the need and demand of the labor market.
- Vocational school program offerings need to be less diversified. If diversification is needed, then it should be in the form of a specialization in the final year (as implemented by the Competence Centers) or in cooperation with employers. Vocational schools should be authorized to offer short courses if required by employers. Furthermore, the choice of programs and courses offered by vocational schools should take into account the available facilities/spaces and equipment and/or cooperation agreements with employers.
- An employer liaison officer should be deployed in each vocational school to facilitate cooperation between vocational schools and employers, and to better understand the labor market. On-the-job training should be provided, but should be limited to sectors that have a high demand for skilled labor and to sectors that are willing to cooperate with vocational schools. In this regard, the importance of involving the private sector in the curriculum development process and in the implementation of on-the-job learning should be promoted. Students of vocational schools that offer programs in agriculture and/or (food processing) should be actively engaged in the daily activities of farms/greenhouses/orchards to maintain them and run their agricultural business. Vocational schools that offer programs in health should offer them in cooperation with the local hospital under the auspices of the Ministry of Health.
- Funding for the public VET sector needs to be increased. The funding formula should be prepared and take into account the specific needs of vocational schools in general, and the specific needs depending on the specific programs offered (consumables). The funding formula should be differentiated according to fields and profiles, and structured in such a way as to encourage studies in deficient profiles, differentiate profiles according to requirements, reward performance and link profiles to the labor market. Revenues generated by vocational schools should not be deducted from public school funding. Furthermore, each vocational school should be provided with new equipment every five years for at least one laboratory and support for equipment maintenance and renovation of facilities, in order to provide the necessary conditions for practical training.

Suggestions for higher education:

- The government should prepare a plan based on the analysis and propose to the Assembly the reorganization of public institutions of higher education into universities and universities of applied sciences (vocational). This should be done through a consultative and comprehensive process, with the involvement of universities and with the aim of profiling higher education institutions in different regions.
- Accredited institutions to offer doctoral level studies should aim to increase international cooperation and develop/promote joint doctoral level study programs. Funding should be provided to support doctoral studies to meet the needs of public institutions of higher education. Furthermore, Centers for Teaching Excellence should be established and operational in all institutions.
- In order to restore lost status in international mechanisms such as EQAR and ENQA, the KAA must demonstrate independence in decision-making, and implement transparent processes while being open to accountability to the public. In this regard, the Law on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency should be finalized and approved. Furthermore, the strengthening of the KAA should be done through the increase of its human and financial capacities. KAA should develop the methodology for quality monitoring in higher education institutions and build capacities for the implementation of continuous monitoring of higher education institutions.
- Public institutions of higher education should develop clear policies for academic advancement, defining acceptable journals for promotion. HEIs should encourage staff to publish their scientific work in credible international and indexed journals. The universities must create all the conditions for the Ethics Councils to function in a transparent manner and to take all necessary measures to protect academic integrity.
- Higher education institutions should establish and promote collaborations aimed at greater mobility of students and academic staff. In this regard, public institutions of higher education should prepare professional capacities for engagement in international projects. Furthermore, higher education institutions need to develop capacities for efficient management of scholarships and mobilities, calls for support of projects and funds, as well as timely informing of academic staff and students about these opportunities.
- Development of the financing formula of public institutions of higher education and their financing through performance agreements based on defined and measurable objectives. Also, MESTI should substantially review the Fund for research and science, as well as improve transparency and accountability for the management of this Fund.

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION



5. Performance appraisal - Objective 1: Participation and Inclusion

Participation and Inclusion is the first strategic objective in KESP with the aim of increasing the inclusion and equal opportunities for development, training and education of each individual in pre-university education. For this strategic objective, 8 targeted results and 42 strategic measures are foreseen, as well as success indicators that serve to monitor their implementation. The activities for the implementation of these measures are summarized in an action plan and the budget for implementation is calculated, which for participation and inclusion reaches the total of € 2,691,927 or 1.5% of the total budget of KESP 2017-2021.

The main priorities in this area are increasing the inclusion in preschool and pre-primary education, increasing the inclusion in education of children with special needs and children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, repatriated children and the diaspora, prevention of dropout, support of children with tremendous potential, as well as the promotion of diversity.

The right to education and equal opportunities for the development of the full potential of every child/student is one of the fundamental rights and as such is guaranteed by the Constitution of Kosovo. Accordingly, the legal framework governing pre-university education in Kosovo supports a comprehensive approach and includes specific guidelines for the inclusion of all children in education, combating compulsory school dropout and ensuring equal access to education regardless of ethnicity, gender, race, economic status, etc.

In general, the participation of children at all levels of education, especially in compulsory education is satisfactory, with a gross enrollment rate of 90.5%, although the remaining challenge is the very low level of involvement of children in preschool education. On the other side, the most vulnerable groups for non-inclusion at all levels of education are children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as well as children with special educational needs.

5.1 Involvement of children in preschool education

Although preschool education is considered to be the basis that determines students' success in further education, this level has not been treated as a priority in educational policies. This is best evidenced by the challenges facing preschool education in Kosovo, including: inadequate distribution of preschool institutions in the country (only 23 out of 34 municipalities in Kosovo have at least one public kindergarten up to the age

of 6), the small number of public pre-school institutions (only 44 public pre-school institutions throughout the country), lack of appropriate infrastructure for children's age, lack of didactic material and consumables needed to organize activities that enable learning through play, etc.

In general, children living in rural areas and children from marginalized groups do not have access to institutionalized preschool education. Educators working in rural areas have a lower level of professional development compared to those in urban areas. Unqualified staff (nurses) take care of children aged 0 to 3 years. Moreover, the budget allocated to municipalities for preschool level is quite low and has not increased in recent years.

The inclusion of children in pre-school education, especially the 0-5 age group is extremely low and as such it is a challenge at the national level. In this regard, despite the significant progress made in recent years compared to other countries in the region, Kosovo continues to remain the country with the lowest rate of children's participation in preschool education (age 0 - 5 years). The many challenges faced by this level of education are mainly related to the lack of infrastructure, financial aspects but also ensuring the quality of services provided by preschool institutions.

In this sense, KESP envisages that by the end of 2021 the gross inclusion in preschool education will increase to 20%. However, the latest data from education statistics show that this goal is far from being achieved and that given the latest development trends, the goal of increasing inclusion to 20% by the end of 2021 is unattainable. Table 1 presents data on the participation of children in preschool education divided by age group.

Table 1 Participation of children in preschool education by age groups

Age group	Number of children involved in public and private preschool institutions in the school year 2019/2020	Kosovo Population Forecast 2017 - 2061 (middle version) according to KAS for 2020	Inclusion rate in % in relation to the population forecast
1 to 2 years old	1,702	28,241	6%
2 to 3 years old	1,939	28,566	6.8%
3 to 4 years old	2,730	28,892	9.4%
4 to 5 years old	3,022	28,120	10.7%
Total 1 to 5 years old	9,682¹⁸	113,819	8.5%

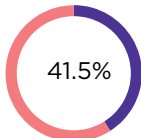
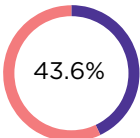
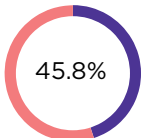
Source: KSA/EIMS (2019/2020)

¹⁸ There are also 289 children from Serbian educational institutions that are not divided according to age groups.

According to the data presented in the table above, it is estimated that the inclusion rate of children from 1 to 5 years old is 8.5%. 56% of children attend pre-school education in private institutions. Until April 2021, when the data for the compilation of this report were collected, a total of 159 private preschool institutions are licensed.¹⁹ On the other hand, there is no data on the inclusion of children in institutions that are not licensed, and in Learning Centers which also offer preschool education programs, mainly for children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Meanwhile, the inclusion rate of children aged 4 and 5 in preschool education and pre-primary education during the school year 2019/20 is 45.8%, compared to the target set in the KESP of 55%.

Table 2 Participation of children aged 4 and 5 in preschool and pre-primary education

Age group	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Age 4	2,064	2,701	3,022
Age 5	24,002	23,749	23,650
Total	26,066	26,450	26,672
Population aged 4 and 5 (medium variant)	62,835	60,640	58,239
Enrollment rate	 41.5%	 43.6%	 45.8%

Source: KSA/EIMS (2017/2018; 2018/2019; 2019/2020)

It is worth noting that in order to increase the involvement of children in preschool education, the Municipality of Prishtina has implemented for the first time the model of preschool institutions known as the model of community-based kindergartens. So far there are a total of 8 kindergartens that operate from the community, in which over 750 children aged 0-5 are involved. Community-based kindergartens are established and operate through a board of parents who elect a community leader from the community. The municipality usually provides the space while the parents manage the garden. Community-based kindergartens present a good opportunity to increase the number of children in preschool education given the budget constraints of central and local authorities for opening new preschool institutions.

¹⁹ Licensed Preschool Educational Institutions. MESTI. <https://masht.rks-gov.net/divizioni-per-arsim-privat-parauniversitar>

Furthermore, KESP is not only focused on increasing the inclusion of children in preschool education, but also on quality assurance. In this regard, a training program has been drafted for in-service educators working with children aged 0-3, and according to data from MESTI, during the 2017 - 2021 period, about 100 educators have benefited from this program.

Also, in order to increase the involvement of children in preschool education, MESTI in cooperation with various organizations such as Save the Children, UNICEF and other local organizations have organized various awareness campaigns about the importance of preschool education and its impact on academic development of children in the future.

On the other side, the design and piloting of the core curriculum for preschool education has not been completed. During this period, two drafts of the Preschool Curriculum for 0-5 years old were worked on, with two working groups without the participation of civil society and parents.²⁰ Although in September 2019 the final draft of the Preschool Curriculum was approved by MESTI, this decision was followed by numerous reactions from preschool institutions and civil society for lack of information on reviewing, supplementing and addressing the comments provided during the public discussion. As a result, the decision to approve the curriculum was requested to be annulled and its implementation was suspended. In the absence of the curriculum, other foreseen activities such as curriculum piloting, drafting of guidelines for educators, and training of educators have not been implemented.

During 2018, a concept document was drafted for education in early childhood for 0-6 years of age,²¹ while during 2019, the revision of the Law on Early Childhood Education has started, although it has not been finalized yet.

In recent years, MESTI with its financial resources or with the funding of development partners has built over 10 preschool institutions. Determining locations for new public kindergardens remains a challenge for many municipalities. Municipalities do not have urban places for the construction of kindergardens, such as e.g. Fushë Kosova, Prishtina and Lipjan, that have lost grants due to lack of required locations according to the criteria.

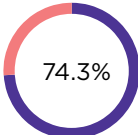
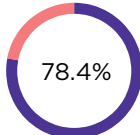
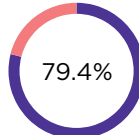
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5.2 Involvement of children in pre-primary education

The rate of involvement of children in pre-primary education or preparatory class during the school year 2019/20 is 79.4%, which represents a slight increase compared to the previous two years. KESP predicted that by the end of 2021, all children aged 5 years will be included in pre-primary education, however current data and trends of recent years prove that this target has not been met. The transitional provisions of the Law on Pre-University Education provided that pre-primary education from 2015/2016 be made compulsory if the conditions are created.

Table 3 Participation of children in pre-primary education

Type of Institution	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Group aged 5-6 Preschool (kindergarten)	2,344	2,543	2,786
Group aged 5 - 6 Pre-primary	21,658	21,206	20,864
Total	24,002	23,749	23,922 ²²
Population aged 5 (medium variant)	32,315	30,307	30,119
Registration rate	 74.3%	 78.4%	 79.4%

Source: KSA/EIMS (2016/2017; 2017/2018; 2018/2019)

During the 2017-2020 period, pre-primary classes were opened, but the target of 100 planned in KESP was not achieved. However, the participation of children does not necessarily mean the quality of educational programs. In this regard, despite what was foreseen, teaching and didactic materials for the pre-primary class have not been drafted in accordance with the core curriculum for the preparatory class and pedagogues and directors of educational institutions have not been trained to monitor educators according to competencies in order to monitor quality in preschool education. With the support of development partners during the 2017-2019 period, over 150 pre-primary classes have been provided with inventory and teaching materials.

²² There are also 272 children from Serbian educational institutions, not divided according to age groups..

5.3 Involvement of students with special needs

Involving students with special educational needs remains a major challenge nationwide. To start with, data on the inclusion of children with special needs in the education system remain controversial for many years now. This is due to the fact that the evaluation of all children with special educational needs who are included in regular classes by professional teams at the municipal level has not yet been done. The latest data for the 2019/20 school year show that a total of 3,903 children with special needs are enrolled in regular classes, and 349 in resource centers. Compared to the data from previous years, it is noticed that there is an increase in the number of students in the attached classes and a decrease in numbers in the Resource Centers.

Table 4 Participation of children with special educational needs

Number of students	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Students with special needs in Resource Centers	315	365	349
Students with special needs in attached classrooms	4,451	3,645	3,903
Total students with special needs in pre-university education	4,766	4,010	4,252

Source: KSA/EIMS (2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019)

In KESP it is planned that by the end of 2021, 50% of children with special educational needs be included in pre-university education. However, in the absence of accurate data on children with special educational needs at the national level, it is impossible to assess the accomplishment of this goal. However, there is an agreement among stakeholders in education that the participation of children with special needs in education is not of satisfactory level. Another challenge faced by children, parents and schools is the low number of support teachers and assistants who work with children with special educational needs. Currently, nationwide there are 52 support teachers and 86 assistants working with children with special educational needs.²³ In the absence of sufficient assistants, parents are obliged to undertake the engagement of assistants with their own financial means.

Hiring assistants to work with children with special needs is a new policy in the specific grant for funding pre-university education and to be sustainable this policy should be included in the funding formula. Hiring support teachers and assistants to work with children with special needs remains a challenge in itself, due to

23 Support teachers are the traveling teachers of the Resource Centers (former special schools) who are engaged by the MESTI in co-operation with the municipalities to support children with special needs and their teachers in regular schools. Whereas Assistant for students/children with special educational needs are the candidates who have successfully completed the 5th level of qualification in the Competence Center in Ferizaj. Assistants for students/children with special educational needs are a new policy planned with a budget line that is employed by municipalities/respectively MEDs.

the fact that some municipalities do not plan needs in time and send plans and requests to MESTI, to ensure the possibility that their plans be included in the specific education grant.

On the other hand, regarding the goal for the functioning of pedagogical evaluation teams, which includes the development of instruments for evaluation of pedagogical needs of children with special needs and training of teachers, psychologists and teachers for evaluation of these needs, evaluation instruments were developed during 2017, and the same were piloted in 7 municipalities and 14 schools. The program for training experts to assess the pedagogical needs of children with special needs was also developed. Between the period 2017-2020, around 2,300 teachers, educators and MESTI and MED officials, as well as, 230 evaluation teams have been trained for inclusive education on behalf of the projects supported by development partners in education.

Finally, regarding the conversion of attached classes into resource rooms for individual work, meetings with parents and various activities, during the 2017-2021 period, it is reported that attached classes at national level have been reduced from 76 to 18. These classes are expected to be converted into source rooms according to AI 02/2018 on the conversion of attached classes into source rooms.²⁴

5.4 Inclusion of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education

Children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities continue to face various challenges in terms of their access to education. In this sense, although there is progress in increasing their inclusion at all levels of pre-university education, compared to the national average this participation remains low. This is evidenced by the latest data of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019-2020 for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo published in November 2020 and presented in the following table, which show that inclusion of children/students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, especially in pre-school education, pre-primary education, lower secondary and upper secondary education, continues to be extremely low compared to the national average.

²⁴ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/04/02-2018-ua-per-qendrat-burimore-x.pdf>

Table 5 Gross inclusion of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education²⁵

Index	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian - Inclusion (%)	Total (%)
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in preschool education	7.6%	8.5%
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary education	44.9%	79.4%
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in primary education	84.1%	88.3%
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in lower secondary education	63.7%	93.4%
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in upper secondary education	31%	88.8%

The causes of low participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in the education system vary by level. In public preschool education the opportunities are limited, while in private preschool institutions the cost is high; the number of Learning Centers is limited and they do not enjoy any institutional support. Central and local authorities have not taken any measures to facilitate the registration and attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children at preschool level, despite this being provided for in the KESP. Pre-primary education is provided free of charge in public schools, but again the enrollment rate of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children is lower than the Kosovo average.

The decrease in the participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in lower secondary education, especially in upper secondary education, is related to economic factors, namely the inability of families to cover the education costs of their children, by giving up the income the children can bring to the family at this period of their lives. Many children due to the difficult economic situation are forced to drop out of school to become a workforce for their families. However, it is positive development that a number of families in these communities who have children being educated receive various assistance as support for their children's education.

In addition to the unsatisfactory level of inclusion of children/students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the levels of pre-school, primary and upper secondary education, another concern is the poor success of students in these communities compared to the average of the overall success of majority community students.

²⁵ https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Europe%20and%20Central%20Asia/Kosovo%20under%20UNSCR%20res.%201244/2019-2020/Survey%20findings/Kosovo%20%28UNSCR%201244%29%20%28National%20and%20Roma%2C%20Ashkali%20and%20Egyptian%20Communities%29%202019-20%20MICS-SFR_English.pdf

In various municipalities in Kosovo where Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities live, Learning Centers have been established in order to include the children of these communities in the education system. Initiatives for the establishment of Learning Centers by local and international non-governmental organizations take into account the low level of attendance and completion of schooling by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, the unsatisfactory level of their performance in school and the lack of social inclusion. The role of the Learning Centers is to provide additional educational services for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in the locality where they operate, in order to include and improve their performance in school and their integration into the wider society. Learning Centers operate mainly through financial support from donors, and this support is not sustainable. Most parties confirm that Learning Centers have a very important role to play in increasing inclusion in education, preventing school dropouts and improving the success of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students in school.

From the above and taking into account the role and importance of education in the social inclusion of children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as well as the fight against discrimination and poverty, the KESP envisages the implementation of a series of measures that would contribute to improving the access to and the inclusion in education, including harmonizing Learning Centers programs, facilitating enrollment and attendance at preschool and upper secondary education, training Roma language teachers, and raising awareness of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities on the importance of school enrollment and regular attendance.

Initially, in the framework of the goal for the harmonization of Learning Centers, AI 19/2018 on the Establishment and Functioning of Learning Centers,²⁶ was drafted and approved in 2018, recognizing the work of Learning Centers in improving students' academic performance and school attendance, and also regulating the process of their establishment, management and sustainable funding. Despite the fact that some measures have been taken towards the implementation of this AI, such as the drafting of the guide and other accompanying documents, MESTI have not allocated a budget for the centers, which is affecting their functioning. Currently due to lack of funds many Learning Centers are not functioning, while others function through donor financial support, which is not sustainable.

On the issue of drafting of regulations by municipalities to facilitate the conditions of enrollment of children/students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in preschool and upper secondary education, according to data a very small number of municipalities have developed these regulations. Meanwhile, in order to support young people from these communities and increase inclusion in upper secondary education, some municipalities offer scholarships, although there are no accurate data at the national level, while MESTI in cooperation with development partners (REF, KFOS, VORAE) during the 2017 - 2021 period has awarded over 500 scholarships on an annual basis, designed specifically for students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities enrolled in upper secondary education.

In the framework of the teacher training activity for teaching in Roma language, which is planned to be offered on an annual basis, according to data from MESTI, the training program was offered during the school year 2017/18 with the support of non-governmental organizations, however there data are lacking regarding the number of teachers who have participated in this training and the continuity of this activity in the other two school years. Finally, as foreseen in the action plan, MESTI in cooperation with municipalities and various non-governmental organizations organizes various awareness campaigns on the importance of timely school enrollment and regular attendance, with a special focus on girls.

²⁶ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/12/ua-nr-19-masht-per-themelimin-dhe-funksionimin-e-qendrave-mesimore-x.pdf>

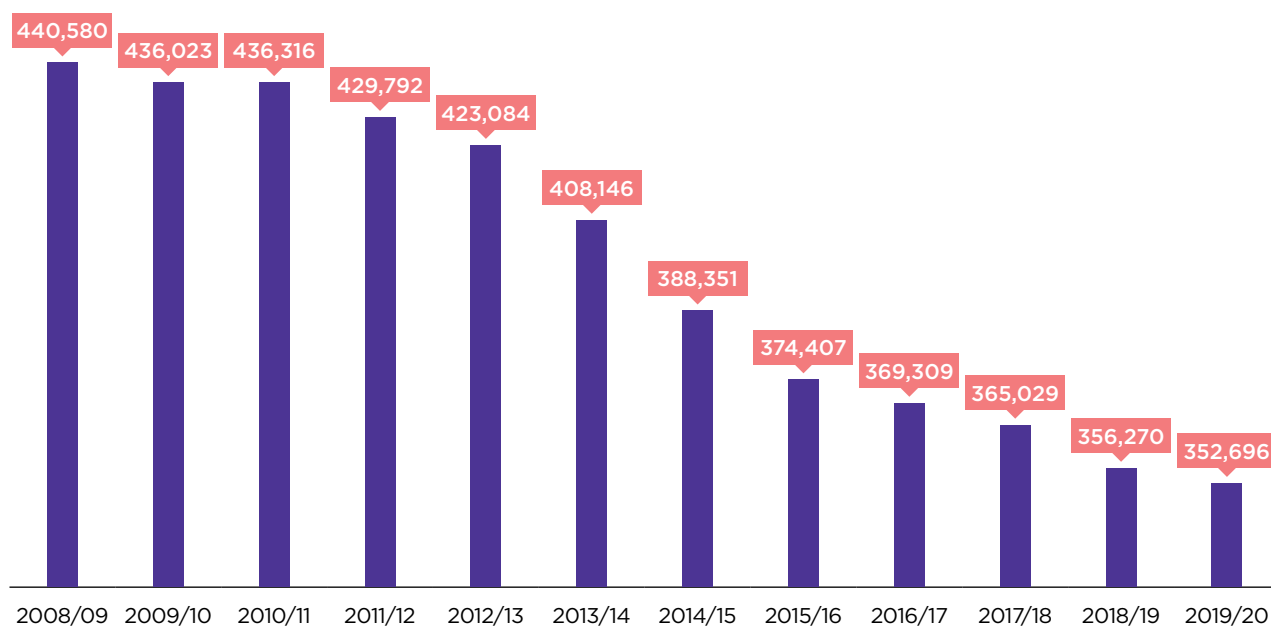
5.5 Trends in inclusion in pre-university education

The gross enrollment rate in primary and lower secondary schools is 88.3% and 93.4% respectively, while the gross enrollment rate in upper secondary schools is 88.8%. The gender equality index for inclusion in education, which tries to assess gender equality in enrollment in education, is quite equal (0.95). The transition rate in upper secondary education is 96.8%.

The latest statistics of 2019/20 show that the total number of students in pre-university education is 352,696. The pre-university public education system in Kosovo operates through a network of 44 preschools, 927 primary and lower secondary schools and 123 upper secondary schools. In addition to public institutions, there are 159 pre-school institutions and 28 licensed primary and secondary schools operating in the private sector.

In the 2008-2019 period the number of students in pre-university education has decreased significantly by 19.95% or 87,884 students. This decrease in student numbers is attributed to changes in demographics, particularly migration and declining birth rates. A decrease in number of students is evident in all municipalities. The largest decrease was recorded in the municipalities of Kamenica (-44%), Junik (-42%), Viti (-39%), Dragash (-39%), all these being border municipalities with mountainous territory. Dividing this decline by enrollment rate into different levels of pre-university education, we see a large decline in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. However, the number of students enrolled at the preschool/pre-primary level has increased over the years.

Figure 8 Total number of students in pre-university education 2008/09 - 2019/20



Source: Education Statistics 2019/20, MESTI

5.6 Involvement of repatriated children and organization of education in the diaspora

In order to monitor the implementation of legislation on repatriates by the MESTI monitoring group, monitoring of language courses for the integration of repatriated children in the education system has been carried out. The MESTI monitoring group reports that every year it has conducted preparatory meetings for the beginning of supplementary education for repatriates, in the municipalities where cases have been identified and reported to the system. Also, MEDs in all municipalities that have had cases of returned and repatriated students have drafted individual plans for students in certain areas according to applicable law.

Furthermore, during 2017/18 the program for repatriates was reviewed, municipal officials and teachers working with repatriated children were trained, and the revised materials were published. MESTI collects data on repatriated children, but the data are not published in the reports generated by the EIMS, just as the data on the number of students who migrate and continue their education in the other countries are not published. During the period 2016/2020 over 2100 repatriated students were reported by the school to the EIMS.

During the supervision of the process of inclusion of repatriated children, several challenges were identified such as: timely identification, lack of documentation of students who migrated abroad, upon return students did not have relevant school documentation for the level of education completed, and lack of the budget to provide individual programs for repatriates.

Regarding supplementary education in the diaspora, the data show that the unification of the Curriculum for teaching the Albanian language and culture in the diaspora has been completed, and standards have been prepared for Diaspora teachers which will serve as a reference model for the register of Diaspora teachers. MESTI has prepared 3 textbooks and 19 workbooks for learning the Albanian language. In addition to textbooks for the diaspora, reading materials, maps and other art books have been distributed through teachers' associations and embassies.

MESTI in official statistics does not publish data on the number of Albanian students involved in supplementary education in the diaspora, as it has not published on its official website reports on the organization of activities for diaspora students, despite the fact that these activities are planned in KESP.

5.7 Preventing dropout and non-enrollment in school

In order to combat school dropout, teams for prevention and response to school dropout and non-enrollment (EPRBM) have been established at the central, local and school levels. The establishment and functioning of these teams is regulated by AI 08/2018,²⁷ which in addition to compulsory education provides for the estab-

²⁷ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/06/8-ua-masht-nr-08-2018-per-themelimin-dhe-fuqizimin-e-ekipeve-parandalimdhe-kbm-napu.pdf>

lishment and operation of these teams in high schools. The role of these teams is to prevent cases of dropout and non-enrollment in educational institutions and cooperate with relevant institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders in addressing cases that are difficult to manage by schools. However, despite the fact that the establishment and functioning of such groups is regulated by sub-legal act, its implementation in practice remains controversial. In this regard, there is no accurate data to show that these teams are established and functional in all Kosovo schools and municipalities, however it is estimated by various NGOs involved in this field, that many schools and municipalities do not have functional teams, in the sense of their involvement and fulfillment of tasks and responsibilities assigned to them in the relevant legislation. A challenge in this regard is the still scarce reporting by schools in the Early Warning System within the EIMS. This system serves to extract information on cases that are at risk of dropping out of school and to synchronize the information of schools, MEDs and MESTI.

In order to increase the capacity of teams at municipal and school levels, according to data from MESTI, it is estimated that there have been continuous trainings, and information sessions on the use of approved documents and instruments. On the other hand, despite what is foreseen by KESP, no action plans have been drafted to prevent abandonment and non-registration in all municipalities of Kosovo so far. The organization of accelerated learning for students who have dropped out or are not enrolled in schools has made no progress. MESTI has not drafted an AI on Accelerated Learning as planned in the KESP. For the elementary curriculum for grades 1-5 there is a “Window of Life” program designed with support from UNICEF, which continues to be used for cases identified as being in need of accelerated learning. Early identification of cases and the readiness of schools and municipalities to handle cases under applicable law remains a challenge.

5.8 Supporting children with extraordinary potential

In order to identify and provide support to children with exceptional intellectual potential and special talents, during the four-year implementation period of KESP, AI 14/2019 was approved for children/students with extraordinary abilities and talents, along with a guide for its implementation.²⁸ However, the implementation of this AI remains a challenge due to the lack of capacities for student identification and evaluation, as well as the lack of specialized public institutions to support this field. In this regard, as foreseen by KESP, a training program has been drafted for the training of psychologists and teachers for child labor with extraordinary potential and special talents, and according to the data, a total of 220 teachers and psychologists have benefited from this program.

Based on data from the ATOMI Institute, during 2017-2020 period, based on the criteria and test results, 116 students with extraordinary intelligence, talents and gifts have been identified and supported. The ATOMI Institute during 2017-2019 period has been financially supported by the MESTI, but no funds have been allocated for this Institute during 2019/20.

28 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2019/09/udhzimi-administrativ-me-nr-14-2019-per-fnxajdht-rotated.pdf>

5.9 Promoting diversity

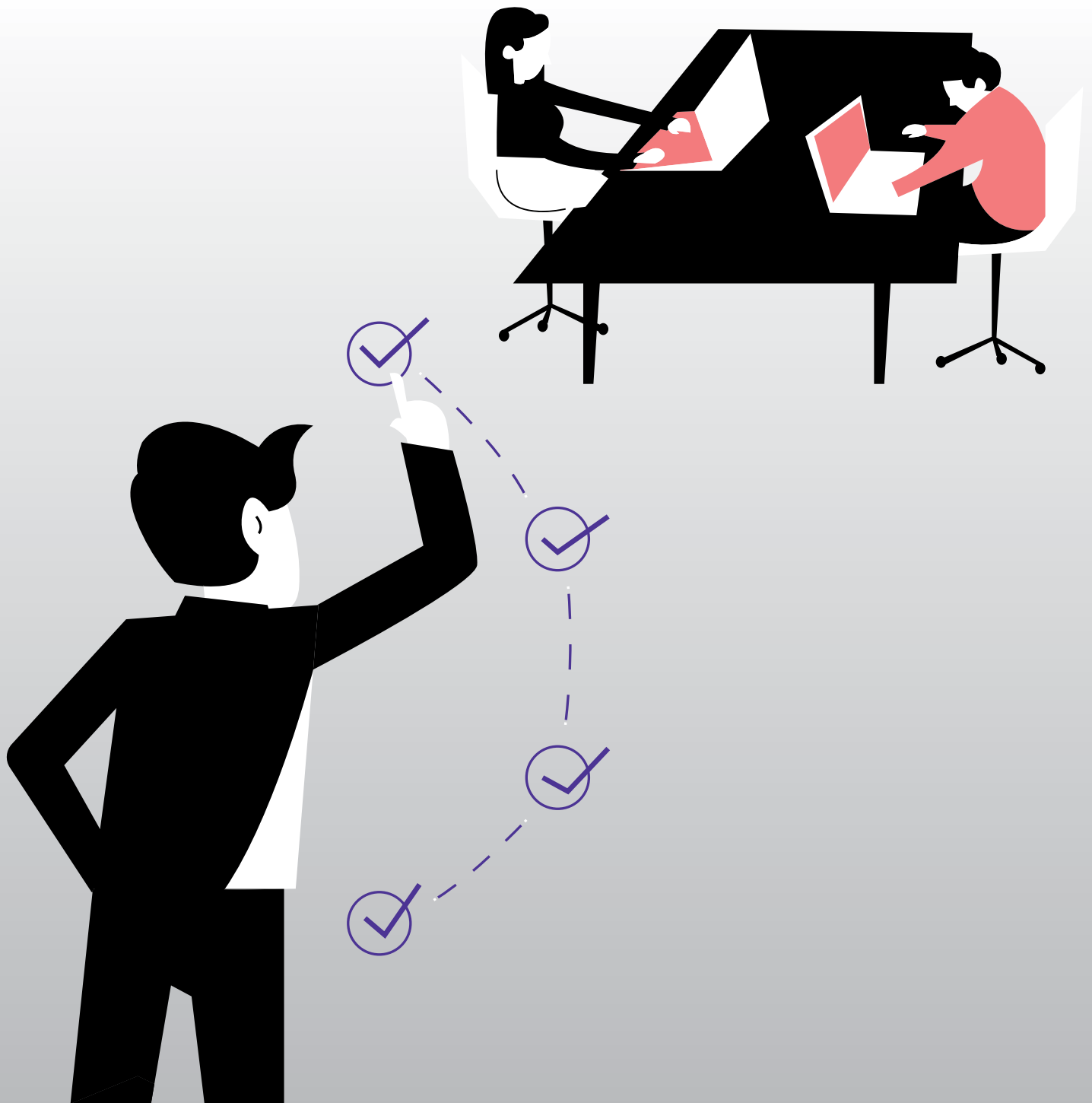
The Government of Kosovo has approved the AI on Foreign Languages in the study program of the second or third cycle.²⁹ During the data collection process for this report it was noticed that no AI is drafted for teaching local languages, as an activity foreseen in the KESP. Professional development of teachers for Albanian as a second language; Compilation of relevant teaching materials; and Needs evaluation for the development of community-specific education modules, are other activities planned in KESP, but not implemented.

The Guide to Diversity and Inclusion for the Pre-University Education System in Kosovo, drafted in 2016 under the Twinning Program, to some extent completes the framework of guidelines for schools and teachers on how to start developing their schools and classes to become inclusive and promote diversity.³⁰ However, the roadmap does not compensate for the Strategy for Promoting Interethnic Dialogue and Inter-Community Contacts, as envisaged with the KESP, or other activities set out in this plan to provide effective mechanisms and policies for promotion of diversity through an integrated education system.

29 <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=16130>

30 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/05/udherrefyesi-per-diversitetin-dhe-gjithperfshirjen-ss-checked.pdf>

MANAGEMENT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM



6. Performance appraisal - Objective 2: Management of the Education System

Education system management is the second strategic objective in KESP with the aim of building a quality and efficient education management system based on transparency and accountability. For this strategic objective, 8 targeted results and 55 strategic measures are foreseen, as well as success indicators that serve to monitor their implementation. The activities for the implementation of these measures are summarized in an action plan and the budget for implementation is calculated, which for the management of the education system reaches the total amount of € 98,030,760 or 55.4% of the total budget of KESP for 2017-2021 .

The main priorities in this area are capacity building for effective and responsible management at the central, municipal and school levels, the development of professional standards for school management staff, the implementation of a functional mechanism for financing pre-university education, the collection of data, publication of EIMS reports and their use for policy making, harmonization and consolidation of legislation on pre-university education, creation of safe, friendly and healthy environments, as well as improvement and effective management of school infrastructure.

With the entry into force of the Law on Education in Kosovo Municipalities more than a decade ago, education in Kosovo has undergone a major decentralization, whereby many competencies and responsibilities have passed from the central level to the municipal one, with the aim of some of them to be carried forward to school level. Unfortunately, although more than a decade has passed since the beginning of the implementation of decentralization in education in Kosovo, a comprehensive and objective evaluation has not yet been made of how this decentralization was implemented, what were the challenges and difficulties, what were its positive and negative consequences, what was done well and what has failed, what needs to be changed and what needs to be improved. In the absence of such an evaluation everything remains at the level of general and subjective evaluations regarding the success or shortcomings of decentralization of education in Kosovo.

Despite the lack of such an evaluation, one thing can be said with great certainty: the municipal level, namely the MEDs in Kosovo were not prepared, did not and still do not have sufficient human and professional and financial resources to carry the entire burden of competencies and responsibilities that the decentralization has delegated to MEDs. In addition, the decentralization of education has provided for many competencies and responsibilities to be transferred to the school level, but even in this case it can be said that most schools have lacked internal human and professional resources to exercise these competencies and responsibilities. As a result, many important processes related to education have stalled and they all reflect on the poor quality of education in Kosovo.

6.1 Capacities for effective management of the education system

The development of management capacities at the central, municipal and school levels is directly reflected in the management of the education system, the implementation of financial and professional autonomy, and the fulfillment of decentralization requirements.

The capacities of the municipal directorates of education to fulfill their role are too limited, despite the fact that their responsibilities in establishing mechanisms for supervising, supporting and ensuring the quality of education at the municipal level are constantly increasing. The salaries of MED staff are lower than the salaries of teaching staff and this makes these positions unattractive. On the other hand, the MEDs themselves do not have any organizational structure to cover the various functions of the school. They do not have any specialists for the curricula, professional development of teachers or specialists in other fields. All evidence speaks of lack of capacity and a small number of employees in the MED, which make it impossible to exercise their functions effectively and meet their responsibilities.

Despite the ongoing efforts to provide training and other forms of capacity building to MEDs staff, including training for quality coordinators at the municipal level, and workshops/trainings provided to the MEDs Collegium, there is no evidence that MESTI has led a capacity development program for MEDs staff and there has been no restructuring of the MEDs organization in accordance with the decentralized structure of the education system. On the other hand, the drafting of regulations and supporting guidelines for the management of education at the municipal level was done mainly through the integrated approach for the development of bylaws which define the responsibilities of MEDs, and through supporting guidelines for schools. Guidelines for the use of the EIMS for the municipal level have been prepared.

There was no analysis of the professional development needs of MESTI staff, which would focus on policy-making and monitoring training, as provided in the KESP. Meanwhile, the regular meetings between MESTI and MED are of a routine nature and mainly discuss the current tasks of these institutions. These do not take the form of meetings addressing complex education topics, as envisaged in the KESP. Coordination between MESTI and municipalities in the implementation of KESP has not been systematic.

Based on the report for functional review of MESTI, during 2018 a new organizational chart of MESTI was developed along with the Regulation on Job Systematization, which has foreseen the restructuring of departments and divisions. The restructuring implementation process has encountered significant opposition from MESTI staff and this has led to the non-functioning of the new structure. The organizational structure had shortcomings and job descriptions were unusual in some cases. A significant proportion of donors in education have noticed that this process had a significant impact on the implementation of activities and coordination.

In order to increase the capacity of the administrative staff and members of the governing bodies of the school for governance and educational leadership, trainings were organized for candidates for directors according to MESTI programs. During the 2017-2020 period, around 730 individuals (most of them teachers) have been trained for governance and educational leadership. Leadership and strategic planning training in pre-university education is also provided by SBASHK and during the 2017-2019 period, over 1,100 participants from schools of different levels of pre-university education were trained. Similarly, the British Council has provided

training and support to over 400 school leaders and teachers to further develop their management and leadership skills, with a focus on the two-day program for 21st century schools.

The Kosovo Parents' Council has been established and a regulation has been drafted for its functioning. The strengthening of the role of parents in decision-making is also reflected in AI 151/2020 on the Duties and Responsibilities, Procedures and Criteria for the Election of the School Director and Deputy Director, which enables the Parents' Council at the municipal level to be represented in the selection committee approved by the Municipal Assembly. This AI is in its initial stage of implementation.³¹ There is also a legal framework for the functioning of the Parents' Councils, but in many schools and municipalities they are not functional. There is a lack of awareness among parents about the importance of their role in educating their children. In addition to lack of awareness, parents also lack motivation to be active and engage in overseeing school work, as the school does not provide any incentives from within. It seems that school leaders prefer to run the school without any parental support, as this does not hold them accountable or meet the requirements that parents may have. Monitoring the work of parents councils is provided by the KESP, but this has not been done.

It is estimated that school governing councils (SGC) are functional in almost all schools, but the formal existence of SGC is no evidence that these bodies function properly and perform all duties and responsibilities provided by law and other bylaws at central and local level. In most schools, SGC continue to be registered only formally, as they are neither active nor vocal in overseeing the work of the school. Part of the blame lies with school directors, who often do not organize council meetings and, according to the legal framework, if the council does not convene within six months, then the director assumes its function. For most directors this favors them, as it means they do not have any oversight body overseeing their work. This de-functionalizes an important body that represents the interests of the school and the school community. Trainings for SGCs in recent years are only very rarely organized. This support mechanism is not monitored by the municipality to find out if it is functional in every school and this is due to the lack of human resources in MEDs.

Regarding the creation of a network of cooperation and communication between schools in the field of leadership and professional development of teachers (Learning Community), MESTI has through the AI on Professional Activities oriented the creation of professional networks at school and municipal level. However, it has not established any special mechanism to support municipalities and schools in building professional networks.³² Similarly, no initiative has been taken to support existing communities, either by allocating a separate budget, or by sharing responsibility for a TPD official within the MESTI as a reference point for coordinating and initiating the building of professional networks in municipalities.

With the initiative of development partners, 21 Learning Communities have been established and supported to function, with the inclusion of 102 schools from 8 municipalities in Kosovo. Communities are made up of community-based school directors, school teachers, and representatives from School Governing Boards. The entire work of Learning Communities is characterized by reciprocal exchange to offer and receive good experiences and practices. In this regard, schools involved in learning communities have benefited professionally from joint activities and meetings with participating schools. However, it is worth noting that most

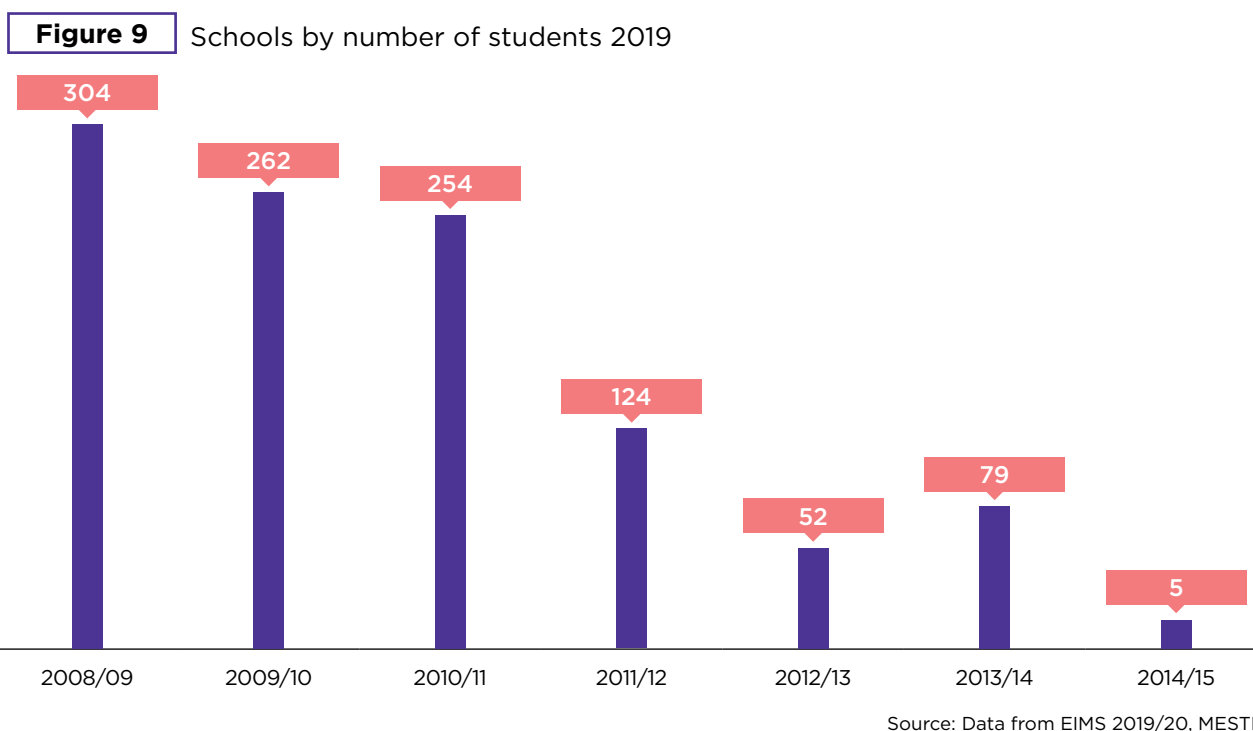
31 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/12/ua-nr-151-per-detyrat-dhe-pergjegjesit-e-drejtorve-dhe-te-zvdrejtorve-te-institucionit-publikdedukativo-arsimor-dhe-aftsuse-parauniversitare-ne-republiken-e-rosovese.pdf>

32 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/12/22-ua-nr-22-2016-per-aktivitetet-profesionale-te-shkollave.pdf>

communities have functioned only with the initiative and support of donors.³³ Another initiative in creating a network of cooperation and communication between schools in the field of leadership has been promoted again by projects of development partners, in the program Access to Integrated Development of the School.

6.2 Reorganization of the school network

Significant demographic changes have taken place in recent years, where in addition to reducing the decline in population as a result of declining birth rates and migrations abroad, there have also been large displacements of residents from rural to urban areas. The total number of students has decreased significantly, while schools in urban areas have faced overcrowding. Currently, about 60% of schools have less than 250 students, and over 200 separate schools/classes operate with less than 50 students or about 4 students per class. Many schools / classes in different villages have been left with very few students, even working in combined classes (students of different classes together). As such, they may not provide a conducive environment for quality education. Despite these changes, MESTI has not addressed this problem at all, not even at the level of conducting a comprehensive analysis regarding the reorganization of the school network.



33 Selim Mehmeti (2018). Report on the work of learning together communities in Kosovo schools (2013-2018) (Achievements, challenges, needs and opportunities to improve student outcomes).

While there is a decrease in the number of students, the educational staff (teachers, administrative and support staff) has increased by 2% in the 2008-2019 period. The increase has occurred in support staff, while there has been a decrease in the number of teachers. If we look at it based on municipalities, from school year 2013/14 to school year 2019/20 the number of staff has increased in some municipalities and decreased in others. For example, in the Municipality of Viti, where the number of students has decreased by 39% since 2008/09, the staff has increased by 10%; in the Municipality of Junik it has increased by 22%. On the other hand, in the Municipality of Fushë Kosova there is a decrease in educational staff by 1%, while an increase in students by 17%.³⁴

The challenges and problems raised by the initiative of the Municipality of Kamenica in trying to reorganize education at the municipal level are a bad omen for the continuation of the school reorganization reform in other municipalities. The Municipality of Kamenica, in 2019 has taken the initiative to reorganize primary and secondary schools in its territory. The decrease in the number of students in the Municipality of Kamenica is the highest in Kosovo, where since the school year 2008/09 the number of students has almost halved (-44%). In order to reduce costs, increase student welfare, increase professionalism and provide adequate spaces for learning, since the school year 2019/20 the Municipality of Kamenica decided to hold classes in 8 schools, organizing transportation for students. Even after the reorganization, half of the students would not need to travel; 23% of students would travel a distance of less than five kilometers, while 20% of students would travel a distance of less than 10 kilometers. The Municipality plans to use the facilities left empty after the reorganization of schools for other purposes; either as preschool institutions or for the needs of the community. The biggest challenge foreseen by the Municipality is related to the surplus teachers, which it intends to solve by resettling them in other countries or by reaching collective agreements in accordance with the Labor Law. This initiative / strategy of the municipality of Kamenica has encountered resistance from the community, parents, political parties and has not had the support of MESTI. A large proportion of parents stopped their children from traveling, causing them to miss part of the school year.³⁵

Also, the Municipality of Drenas, in September 2018 has closed three schools in three villages of this municipality, due to the small number of students, the large number of teachers in these three schools and the high costs for their maintenance. About 200 students from these villages have been transferred to the city's primary schools, providing transportation.³⁶

In 2020, MESTI has approved AI 104/2020 on the criteria and procedures for the establishment and termination of activity of pre-university education institutions.

6.3 School leadership

The school management model in Kosovo is characterized by a lack of autonomy and limited responsibilities for school management and teachers. School teachers have the impression that their responsibility is limited to

34 GAP (2021). Excess schools? - Restructuring the network of pre-university educational institutions. https://www.institutigap.org/documents/54395_shkolla_te%20teperta.pdf

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

teaching, student evaluation and disciplinary measures and have no responsibility in determining the curriculum, course content and textbooks. School directors are limited in administering the spendings, student admissions, and disciplinary action. They do not perceive that it is their responsibility to engage in course content, student evaluation rules, budget planning, staff selection and evaluation.

School directors are the key people who bear the main burden and responsibility of school management. Due to existing legislation but also due to bad practices in most municipalities of Kosovo in relation to school directors there is a general and well-founded impression that they are often politicized, and appointed to their positions by the party influences that govern the respective municipality. The appointment of school directors is done under the influence of municipal government and consequently the position of school director is not a stable professional one which could provide a safe and long-term career for interested persons with a tendency for such positions. As a result, many teachers who are prepared and interested in school directors decide not to run for office and are not elected as school directors because they fear that changes in local government could easily remove them from the post.

In accordance with the legislation in force, directors continue to be appointed by mayors for 4-year terms, based on criteria and procedures set by the MESTI. Directors are only licensed as teachers, and to apply for the post they must be qualified according to the professional norm for general education and be trained in an accredited educational leadership program. There is a lack of determination for the director to be a professional, whose post does not depend on the will of the mayor. This is why there is no proper licensing system for school leaders.

Within the goal of functionalizing mechanisms for the selection of directors and deputy directors, including the training of selection committees, MESTI in 2020 approved AI 151/2020 on tasks, responsibilities, procedures and criteria for selection of director and deputy director of the school.³⁷ The instruction is in the initial stage of implementation. However, there have been many contradictory reactions and non-acceptance by municipalities regarding this sub-legal act, which have affected the process of drafting the Instruction started in 2019.

The establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the performance of directors and deputy directors was oriented after the approval of the Law on Education Inspectorate, with AI 106/2020 for the evaluation of the performance of directors and deputy directors of public schools. This Instruction is also in its initial stage of implementation. Procedures and instruments for evaluating the performance of directors have been piloted in three different municipalities. Regarding the development of the career management system of directors and deputy directors based on applicable standards, there was no initiative, consequently no activity developed to create a licensing system for school managers and no training was provided with advanced programs for directors, according to the KESP plan.

The implementation of professional standards for leadership in education in the context of educational leaders in Kosovo continues to be challenged by insufficient knowledge of professional practice standards for school directors in Kosovo, despite the fact that they were drafted in 2012.³⁸ In order to increase the capacity of school directors to implement these standards, to understand the practical implications of the decentralization process in education and their roles and responsibilities in the management of education at school level, MESTI has

37 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/12/ua-nr-151-per-detyrat-dhe-pergjegjesit-e-drejtorve-dhe-te-zvdrejtorve-te-institucionit-publikdedukativo-arsimor-dhe-aftsuse-parauniversitare-ne-republiken-e-rosovese.pdf>

38 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/05/udhezim-administrativ-04-2012-shqip.pdf>

provided training for all directors of schools. However, the performance of school directors leaves much to be desired in relation to expectations. The focus of their engagement remains on the administrative aspects, while the level of engagement and capacity of school directors to manage the curriculum implementation process remains a concern.³⁹

The lack of a professional institution for coordinating the career development of school leaders, as well as lack of commitment by MESTI and Municipalities to depoliticize the selection of school leaders and strengthen capacities for education management at the municipal level, have resulted in the management of the pre-university education system in a significant number of schools being challenged by ineffective leadership.

6.4 Funding of pre-university education

Although the policies for increasing teachers' salaries were justified by the explanation that higher salaries will affect the improvement of the quality and performance of teachers, however, salary increases were not strategically planned to improve teacher performance and increase the quality of education. The fact that this policy is not well planned is evidenced by the factual state of education, which shows that even after the increase in salaries, there have been no positive results in improving student learning. The failure of this policy to improve the quality of education is mainly due to the fact that the new salary compensation scheme was not based on a meritocratic system, which would reward good teachers and encourage them to improve performance. Thus, the decision to increase salaries was used by politics, mainly as a means of electoral gain. In addition, the salary increase prevented teachers from demanding better conditions in the classroom as they were quite satisfied with their salary increase.

In addition to low student spending, spending on pre-university education is characterized by a lack of efficient management. Despite the great need to allocate more budget in areas related to the quality of education delivery, expenditures on pre-university education are mainly focused on two categories, salaries and wages and capital expenditures. Low funding for education and inefficient management pose challenges for municipalities and schools in implementing policies and standards adopted by central institutions. For example, the distribution of responsibilities included the professional development of teachers from MESTI to municipalities. However, this distribution of competencies was not accompanied by an appropriate allocation of funds from the central to the local level.

Investments in quality-related projects in education, implementation of curricular reform, creation of support services for students and teachers, professional literature, school library and ICT equipment are negligible. Revenues generated by the municipalities themselves are usually low and therefore municipalities cannot allocate funds to fund teacher professional development or other quality-related projects in education. The current funding of pre-university education in Kosovo does not meet the needs of schools for necessary improvements and for the implementation of policies/reforms at school level. In addition, the same funding formula applies to all schools regardless of their needs.

In 2019, public spending on pre-university education as a percentage of GDP was 3.51%.

³⁹ Boshtrakaj, L., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2018). Challenges of implementing curricular reform in pre-university education in Kosovo. KEEN.

Table 6 Public spending on education a percentage of GDP, according to pre-university education levels 2019

	2017	2018	2019
Level of preschool education	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Level of pre-primary education	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Level of primary education	1.2%	1.3%	1.3%
Lower secondary education level	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Higher secondary education level	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%
Pre-university education as % of GDP	3.4%	3.48%	3.51%
Total education as % of GDP	4.1%	4.2%	4.3%

Source: Annual statistical report with educational indicators 2019/20, MESTI

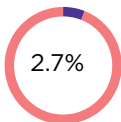
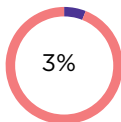
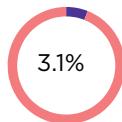
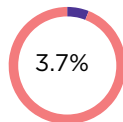
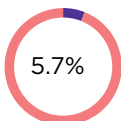
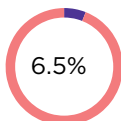
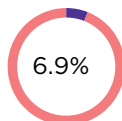
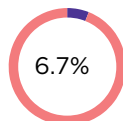
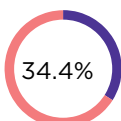
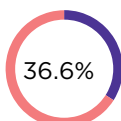
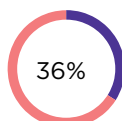
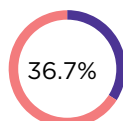
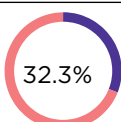
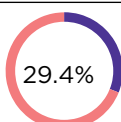
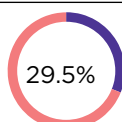
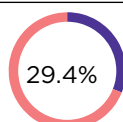
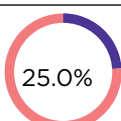
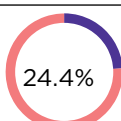
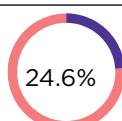
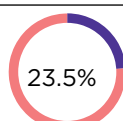
Public expenditures for pre-university education in 2019, as a percentage of total Government expenditures account for 11.6% of expenditures.

Table 7 Public spending on pre-university education as a % of government spending, according to pre-university education levels 2019

	2017	2018	2019
Level of preschool education	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Level of pre-primary education	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Level of primary education	4.5%	4.3%	4.3%
Lower secondary education level	3.6%	3.5%	3.4%
Higher secondary education level	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Pre-university education as a % of government spending	12.2%	11.8%	11.6%
Total education as % of government spending	14.9%	14.5%	14.6%

Source: Annual statistical report with educational indicators 2019/20, MESTI

Table 8 Expenditures by education levels as % of expenditures on pre-university education 2019

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Level of preschool education	 2.7%	 3%	 3.1%	 3.7%
Level of pre-primary education	 5.7%	 6.5%	 6.9%	 6.7%
Level of primary education	 34.4%	 36.6%	 36%	 36.7%
Lower secondary education level	 32.3%	 29.4%	 29.5%	 29.4%
Higher secondary education level	 25.0%	 24.4%	 24.6%	 23.5%

Source: Annual statistical report with educational indicators 2019/20, MESTI

On average, public spending on pre-university education per student reaches around € 756 for 2019.

Table 9 Expenditures on pre-university education for students 2019

	2017	2018	2019
Level of preschool education			
Level of pre-primary education	622€	726€	773€
Level of primary education	602€	645€	715€
Lower secondary education level	582€	657€	723€
Higher secondary education level	607€	710€	786€
Pre-university education	610€ ⁴⁰	683€ ⁴¹	756€ ⁴²

Source: Annual statistical report with educational indicators 2019/20, MESTI

The specific grant for pre-university education for 2021 has been approved in the amount of € 194.8 million, of which € 175.5 million are salaries and allowances, € 14 million are goods and services and € 2.5 million are capital expenditures. The Specific Education Grant is based on an open funding system, taking into account the criteria in the MESTI pre-university education formula for 2020. The formula deals with the level of pre-primary, primary and secondary education, taking into account the number of students, the student-teacher ratio for primary education (1:21), the student-teacher ratio for preschool education (1:12), the student-teacher ratio for vocational education (1:17), calculation of English language teaching staff, calculation of technical administrative staff (1: 630 students), calculation of replacement of teaching staff in maternity ward is 3-6% (basic teaching staff), calculation for support staff per 170 students -1 staff member (cleaner) and 1 school staff (guard). Goods and services are calculated according to the criteria per student (€ 23 for majority students and € 25 for minority students) and per school (€ 1,500 for pre-primary and primary school and € 3,250 for secondary school). Capitals are calculated according to the criterion at € 7 per student.

Although MESTI has emphasized as a priority in KESP the development of the formula for financing pre-university education, it has not been accomplished, due to excessive negligence and excessive bureaucracy. The need to review the funding formula in favor of improving the quality of education is considered of particular importance, because the budget circulars each year set criteria for the allocation of grants for pre-university education, which do not ensure the sustainability of the funding formula in favor of quality in education mainly due to the risks from political interference.

Schools generally have very little control over their budgets. The inexperience of fully functionalizing school boards and work plans, combined with the lack of budget and financial management skills at the level of school directors,

⁴⁰ The average expenditure includes expenditure on preschool education.

⁴¹ As above.

⁴² As above.

further hamper the decentralization process. In this situation, MEDs often serve as procurement centers for the network of schools under their supervision, thus diverting attention from strategic issues of the education sector at the local level, like policy planning and monitoring.

No activities related to systematic efforts to improve the capacity of schools and municipalities for budget planning and implementation have been identified. The share of municipalities in the expenditures for pre-university education is below 5% of the total expenditures in pre-university education.

6.5 Data collection and processing

EIMS is divided as a separate division and now functions as the Division for data collection and analysis in MESTI. Also, the framework of indicators according to UNESCO, EUROSTAT and OECD has been completed as foreseen by KESP and a Guide for calculating public expenditure indicators for pre-university education in Kosovo has been drafted.

On the other hand, no measures have been taken to develop procedures for data management and their use. Within this activity, the development of two new policies is foreseen. One would be oriented towards internal processes after finalizing reports and analyzes, including modalities for initiating additional analyzes that may be needed for certain sub-sectors. Meanwhile, the other policy would be oriented towards communication with the parties and the general public. Other capacity building activities for advanced data collection, analysis and interpretation, developing a platform for integrating existing information systems and databases for all levels, as well as capacity building for data users from schools, MEDs, central level and universities have also not been implemented, despite being planned in KESP.

Meanwhile, in terms of reports, information and educational statistics, the MESTI/Division for data collection and analysis in recent years, in addition to routine tasks such as supporting school directors in inserting data in the EIMS system according to reporting periods, creation of new databases for new pre-university educational institutions (public and private), processing of data and indicators for various documents according to the requirements of management, etc., in cooperation with KAS prepares and publishes annual reports on education statistics and annual statistical reports with educational indicators.

6.6 Legislation in pre-university education

Harmonization and consolidation of legislation for the pre-university education sector is an important outcome planned in the KESP. In this regard, in 2018 a comparative research was published on the coherence of secondary legislation with primary legislation in the field of pre-university education, and according to the findings there are conflicts between primary and secondary legislation, and between bylaws.⁴³

43 Dafina Bučaj (2018). Analysis "Coherence of secondary legislation with primary legislation in the field of pre-university education". GIZ/CDBE.

During the 2017 - 2021 period, two new laws were adopted in the sector of pre-university education: the Law on the Education Inspectorate and the Law on the Status of Albanian Education Workers 1990-1999.

The Law on Publishing Textbooks and School Supplies, School Reading and Pedagogical Documentation and the Law on Preschool Education have not been reviewed/approved. The revision of these two laws is included in the Government's legislative program for 2021.⁴⁴

In addition to primary legislation, during these four years, dozens of bylaws (Administrative Instructions and Decisions) have been drafted/revised, most of which related to the review or regulation of the pre-university education sector. Administrative instructions for pre-university education are not structured or arranged according to a logical model, which would make their implementation more meaningful and easier.

No publication has been identified on the monitoring of the implementation of legal and sub-legal acts by MESTI, beyond the initiatives of various international and local organizations for the partial supervision of the implementation of certain aspects of the legal and strategic framework for education.

6.7 School facilities - security and infrastructure

In order to create safe, friendly and healthy environments for all in schools, some steps have been taken by MESTI and MEDs, although they may be considered insufficient. MESTI has approved AI 03/2019 on Healthy Nutrition of Children in Schools, and has prepared a Guide for the implementation of the concept "Health Promoting Schools".⁴⁵ In 2019, AI 01/2019 on the online protection of children/students in schools was also approved.⁴⁶

MESTI, in cooperation with development partners, has conducted several campaigns in schools stemming from the National Strategy for the Environment and aimed at raising students' awareness of the need to protect the environment. Also, several activities have been carried out in order to raise awareness of young people in schools on reproductive health, family planning, pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted infections, and others. In some cases, schools have been provided with health promotion materials and health education guides. Mechanisms for health promotion have not yet been established in every municipality and school. In this regard, it is estimated that there is a lack of capacity at the central, municipal and school levels to make such a mechanism functional.

Emergency response mechanisms are sanctioned by legislation and other policies within the Integrated Emergency Management System.⁴⁷ At the municipal level, there are inter-institutional mechanisms for responding to emergencies, but at the school level mechanisms for responding to emergencies, educational programs and training programs for emergencies have not been implemented.

In order to increase the capacity of schools and MEDs for the prevention of violence, various trainings and

44 <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Programi-Legjislativ-per-vitin-2021.pdf>

45 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2019/03/ua-masht-nr-3-per-te-ushqyerit-e-shendeteshem-te-femijeve-ne-iaapu_3.pdf

46 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2019/03/ua-nr-01-2019-per-mbrojtjen-e-femijeve-nxenesive-ne-int-ne-ins-e-apu.pdf>

47 <https://ame.rks-gov.net/Portals/0/Files/SIME%20i%20Miratuar.pdf>

activities have been organized that are mainly related to the implementation of the Protocol on Prevention and Referral of Violence in Schools. The problem of violence in schools remains evident and needs a continuous institutional approach and care. A significant number of students are subject to bullying in Kosovo schools. Students report being frequently subjected to threats, beatings, gossip, and ridicule from other students. Bullying has a negative impact on learning and potentially long-term impact on children's personal development.

The guide for norms and standards of preschool facilities has been drafted. There are also guidelines for norms and standards of buildings for compulsory schools and gymnasiums..⁴⁸ The guide for maintenance of school premises has been drafted, while there has been an initiative for the preparation of specific norms for vocational schools, but this activity has not been accomplished. In 2018, AI 04/2018 on Capital Investment Planning was approved, which aims to regulate the process of planning the construction and renovation of educational facilities of all levels. This instruction includes the procedures for applying capital investments in pre-university education.⁴⁹

MESTI annually evaluates the condition of educational facilities based on the educational facilities electronic database "school mapping" and requests infrastructure investments from municipalities. However, there is no summary report showing the number of schools assessed in recent years, nor any findings from those estimates. There is no long-term investment plan for school facilities, but every year an investment plan is drafted for the construction and renovation of school facilities.

6.8 Investments in educational infrastructure

In the last decade, the trend of investments in education has been characterized by large investments in the improvement of educational infrastructure through construction, renovation and expansion of educational institutions. Although investing in physical infrastructure is of undeniable importance to students' access to education, infrastructure investments need to be carefully made until a certain threshold is reached to provide students with the necessary learning environment. Any investment in physical infrastructure after reaching that set threshold will no longer produce return on investment. This is why it is important to carry out analysis to understand if there is a need to further invest in physical infrastructure or if the investment should focus on other areas.

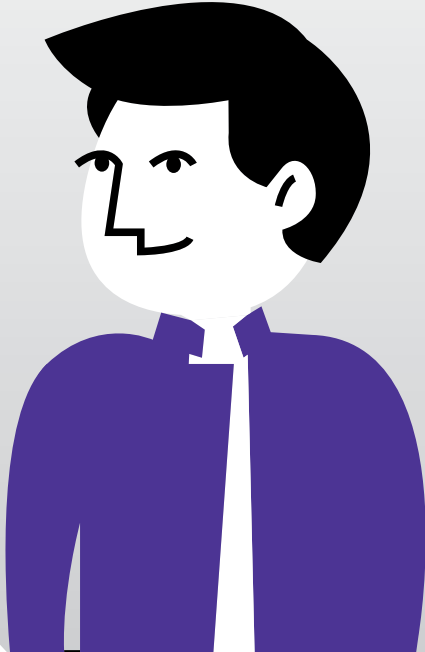
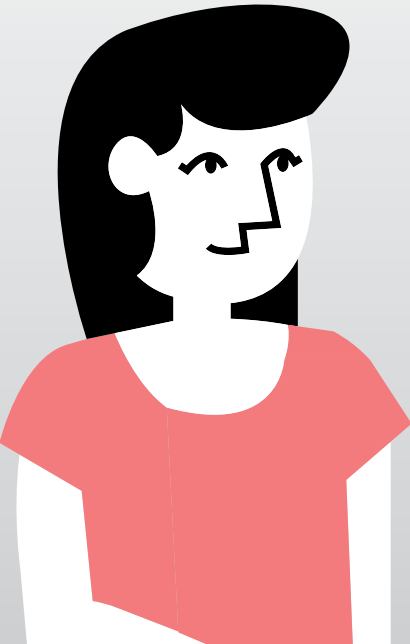
With the internal migration of the population and the declining trend of population, Kosovo risks facing situations of schools being left without students. In this regard, no long-term analysis has been conducted on the population trend to determine whether the trend of students in the coming years will increase or decrease, in order to understand whether the investments in school construction have been worth it. In the case of Kosovo, such analysis, e.g. cost-benefit analysis have never been performed. It remains unclear whether the moneys invested in building the schools were investments that have improved the quality of education.

48 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/05/masht-vol1-alb-print-5mm-bleed-0mm-inside-final_1.pdf
https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/05/masht-vol2-alb-print-5mm-bleed-0mm-inside_1.pdf

49 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/02/ua-masht-04-18-per-planifikimin-e-investimeve-kapitale.pdf>

The educational community in Kosovo (directors and teachers) emphasizes the importance of reorienting funding and investment in textbooks, libraries, laboratories and technological equipment. Lack of physical infrastructure and inadequate infrastructure, especially lack of reading rooms for students, are also primary challenges. The education system has low access to information and communication technology and modern technology has not yet been properly integrated into the curriculum, teaching and management of the education system. No progress has been made in equipping schools with technological equipment. Ongoing investments should be reviewed in favor of internal school infrastructure and concretization tools, including laboratories, textbooks and computers.

QUALITY ASSURANCE



7. Performance appraisal - Objective 3: Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is the third strategic objective in KESP aimed at developing a functional quality assurance system, in line with international standards. For this strategic objective 8 targeted results and 26 strategic measures are foreseen, along with success indicators that serve to monitor their implementation. The activities for the implementation of these measures are summarized in an action plan and the budget for implementation is calculated, which for participation and inclusion reaches the total of € 2,233,784 or 1.2% of the total budget of KESP 2017-2021.

The main priorities in this area are the functioning of effective mechanisms for quality assurance in pre-university education, preparation of development plans by all schools and municipalities in Kosovo, capacity building for quality assurance at the central, municipal and school level, and increased reliability of national test results and their use for policy making, in addition to international test results.

As provided by the KESP, the process of external evaluation of schools started in 2017 but the dynamics of implementation is not of the expected level. The first cycle of external evaluation of all schools is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021, while by 2020 the external evaluation was conducted only in 68 schools or less than 7% of all schools.⁵⁰ The Regulation of the Education Inspectorate, which according to the new function of this institution provides for the appointment of inspectors to evaluate the performance of the school and of teachers, was approved in May 2019.⁵¹ Currently, all pedagogical-professional inspectors cover both the external evaluation of school performance and the evaluation of teachers' performance. The low number of pedagogical inspectors and their limited capacity to meet the new functions, and the inability to engage external experts to carry out external evaluation of school performance have caused the slow dynamics of external evaluation of schools. However, the quality of the implementation of external evaluation process for schools with the existing capacities of the Education Inspectorate will be quite debatable.⁵²

The challenges identified from the first experiences in the self-evaluation process are also an indication that a large number of schools are not yet ready to carry out this process based on the preset requirements and expectations, as this process has not been taken seriously or treated as a priority either in schools, or among the MEDS, or by the MESTI.

50 4 schools in 2017, 25 schools in 2018, 132 schools in 2019 and 7 schools in 2020.

51 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2019/05/rrukto-re-nr-01-masht-per-org-dhe-funks-e-brendeshem-te-ins-ars-rk-x.pdf>

52 For more details regarding the process and initial experiences on school performance evaluation, see the report from Selim Mehmeti (2020). School Performance External Evaluation as a Mechanism for Quality Assurance. Situation and Perspective. P56-102. Pedagogical Research – Summary of Publications. KPI.

7.1 Quality assurance mechanisms

In recent years, significant progress has been made in completing the legal and regulatory framework for consolidating the quality assurance system. The framework for quality assurance of school performance is the basic document for the quality assurance system in pre-university education, which serves as the main reference for the assessment and self-evaluation of school performance, its development planning and continuous improvement of school quality. The framework defines the areas of school performance quality, school performance quality criteria, school performance quality indicators, school performance evaluation levels and school performance quality scales.⁵³

In 2018, the legal framework for quality assurance in educational institutions was completed, including AI 24/2016 on Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education, AI 04/2017 on Performance Evaluation in Educational Institutions and Law no. 06/L -04 on the Education Inspectorate in Kosovo.^{54 55 56}

AI 24/2016 on Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education defines the mechanism and procedures for quality assurance, responsible staff and related tasks, workload and planning and reporting procedures related to quality assurance activities.

According to AI 04/2017 on Performance Evaluation in Educational Institutions, school performance evaluation is mandatory for all schools in Kosovo. The school performance evaluation system consists of internal evaluation/ self-evaluation, which is carried out by the school through its mechanisms, as well as external evaluation, which by legal provisions is determined to be carried out by the Education Inspectorate.⁵⁷

Also, as provided in the KESP, the Quality Management Guide was drafted and published in January 2017 with the purpose to support schools to approach quality assurance in them, namely support school leaders, quality coordinators, teachers and all other actors involved in meeting specific tasks related to this field.

In recent years, after the package of documents for quality assurance and performance of educational institutions was approved, quality assurance mechanisms have been developed, which define the tasks and responsibilities for each level, and the appointment of quality coordinators in municipalities and schools began, together with the internal evaluation of school performance, initially in the first schools that started with the implementation of the new curriculum. Despite these developments, the initial process of implementing the regulatory framework for quality assurance had many challenges: in determining the quality coordinators at school and municipal level, as well as in building their capacities, in the functioning of teams at school level for internal evaluation of school performance, and in conducting internal evaluation (in schools where this process has begun during the pilot phase of this process).⁵⁸

53 https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/library/attachments/korniza_per_sigurim_te_cilesise_nentor_2016.pdf

54 https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/library/attachments/korniza_per_sigurim_te_cilesise_nentor_2016.pdf

55 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/08/4-2017-ua-vleresimin-e-performances-se-institucioneve-arsimore-ne-arsimin-parauniversitar-rotated.pdf>

56 <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=17744>

57 The quality assurance process in vocational schools in Kosovo started earlier, namely immediately after the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority (2011) and the responsibility assigned to the authority in internal and external quality assurance of AAAP. Quality assurance of IAAP evaluation is performed by the NQA based on the Law on National Qualifications.

58 IPK. First experiences in evaluating school performance in Kosovo. 2018.

KESP provided for the appointment of quality coordinators in 3300 primary and secondary schools in Kosovo. Now, at least formally, most schools have a Quality Coordinator. Coordinators are appointed by school directors. Although it is regulated that the best teachers be appointed as coordinators, in practice the appointment of quality coordinators is often formal without a full understanding of the coordinator's roles and responsibilities. In some cases, teachers who do not work full-time are appointed as coordinators just to fill the teaching hours, while there are cases when some teachers are not relieved from the volume of teaching hours even after being assigned to the role of coordinator. Quality coordinators in schools, in cooperation with the quality coordinator at the municipal level, support, supervise and provide mentoring to professional assets. In terms of financial support, MEDs do not allocate budget for the support and empowerment of professional assets. Another challenge is the fact that the quality coordinator at the MED level, due to lack of sufficient human resources is not relieved of other duties and responsibilities in the MED and consequently complicates the implementation of the supervisory and supportive management role in municipal level within school.

Quality Coordinators have been appointed in most municipalities. AI 24/2016 does not specify the manner of selection of the Quality Coordinator in MED and consequently this post (despite its importance) in by no means a special one. The duties of Quality Coordinator are usually assigned to primary/lower secondary/upper secondary education officials. Large workload of relevant officials with administrative duties and other professional functions makes it difficult for them to meet their function as Quality Coordinator.⁵⁹

AI 22/2016 on professional assets (departments) of schools was approved in November 2016.⁶⁰ This sub-legal act only sanctions and specifies a multi-year practice of functioning of professional assets in schools, but does not necessarily change the practice of their functioning. In this regard, no compensation is provided for asset managers, while their appointment is made by the school director. This poses a risk that the work of the assets be characterized by formalism.

Professional assets of teachers within schools are among the most important mechanisms that guarantee a regular educational process and quality teaching in schools. This is due to the fact that the quality of teaching depends a lot on how much the teachers cooperate, plan and exchange ideas and materials within the school, in order to increase the quality of their work with students. Depending on the internal organization of the school and the teachers, and depending on the size of the school, different schools have different numbers of professional assets within them. Vocational assets exist in most schools in Kosovo, organized by subject area or class. However, in many cases, their operation is relatively informal and without any major impact on the quality of school teaching. Since assets are seen as professional bodies that can promote the professional development of teachers and enable continuous exchange of experience between them, they need to become fully functional and act as middle-level management in schools. It is thought that with the functioning of professional assets in schools, a mechanism will be practically provided to help the school management guide the implementation processes of school-based quality assurance. Consultative sessions can also be organized within the framework of assets that promote teaching methods and result in clear articulation of requirements for the necessary teaching tools.

In 2018, the Law on the Education Inspectorate was adopted, defining the Education Inspectorate as the

59 Boshtrakaj, L., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2018). Challenges of implementing curricular reform in pre-university education in Kosovo. Kosovo Education and Employment Network (KEEN).

60 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/12/22-ua-nr-22-2016-per-aktivitetet-profesionale-te-shkollave.pdf>

central executive body for quality assurance under the direct supervision of the MESTI Minister. Within the authorizations on quality assurance, the Education Inspectorate is responsible for general inspection of school institutions, external evaluation of school performance based on AI 04/2017, inspection of quality of work and evaluation of teacher performance for the licensing process according to AI 14/2018 for Teacher Performance Evaluation and work quality inspection and performance evaluation of the school director and deputy director. Although more than two years have passed since the entry into force of this Law, inspectors are still not divided into pedagogical and administrative ones. Inspectors continue to be divided by geographical regions and by general tasks, but some are involved in external evaluation of schools and in the evaluation of teachers' performance.

The Education Inspectorate has not yet prepared or published a summary report with the findings from the schools subjected to external evaluation. External evaluation reports of individual schools were not shared with the MEDs, on the grounds that the coverage of schools at the municipal level was too low to prepare summary reports at the same level. The level of MEDs interest in the external evaluation processes of schools is generally very small. This is reflected through their non-participation in information meetings that the Education Inspectorate conducts in schools before going into external evaluations, and in meetings organized to present and discuss preliminary findings. There is a tendency for schools to use the findings and recommendations from external evaluation in their development plans.

The research of the first experiences of schools in conducting internal evaluation, conducted by IPK in 2018, points out that the implementation of the internal evaluation process in schools emphasizes two priority needs for change: first, improving the quality of general information of school stakeholders about the self-evaluation process and secondly, their extensive involvement in the processes that take place in the school. The research also states that the self-evaluation reports are characterized by the circumvention of requirements, which are clearly elaborated in the guide for internal evaluation of the school. This approach hinders the advancement towards improving the quality of self-evaluation processes in the respective schools and planning actions for improvement within the school development plans, respectively the annual action plans. Problems in the implementation of self-evaluation according to the main steps, including the preparation of the self-evaluation summary report, prove that the capacities of self-evaluation teams and persons responsible for leading this process, including Quality Coordinators, are not appropriate to ensure quality of school performance.⁶¹

In 2020, AI 106/2020 was approved for the evaluation of the performance of the school director and deputy director.⁶² The package of instruments for evaluating the performance of directors has been piloted in 10 schools and this sub-legal act is still in its initial stage of implementation.

61 <https://ipkmasht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Raporti-Pervoijat-e-para-ne-vleresimin-e-performances-se-shkolles.pdf>

62 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/10/20201013131849347-rotated-1.pdf>

7.2 Development planning of schools and municipalities

Development plans that would help schools focus on measures to be taken for the improvement of the quality of education delivery do not exist in all schools. Even when they exist, it is estimated that they are often only formal template documents (copied from other schools) and therefore do not properly address the specifics, the needs and requirements of the respective school, and not properly implemented, namely do not perform the role and the function they are supposed to, in terms of good school management and governance. In addition, development plans typically focus on improving school infrastructure and other aspects that rely on external funding, rather than aspects that the school could improve, to influence the quality of the teaching and learning process. In this regard, it seems that school development plans are considered a means to obtain additional resources, rather than a tool used by schools to focus on actions for the improvement of the quality of service delivery.

Administrative Instruction 23/2016 on the School Development Plan and the Municipal Education Development Plan defines the format, content, structure, carriers, criteria and procedures for drafting the development plan of educational institutions as well as responsibilities and procedures for drafting the municipal development plan.⁶³ As foreseen in the KESP for 2017, the Guideline “School development plan and project management” has been revised. The revised guideline is used by schools for drafting development plans and is in accordance with AI 23/2016.

During 2018, development planning was completed in 140 schools, while data for 2019 could not be obtained.⁶⁴ Although the KESP envisages the development of a framework for monitoring the implementation of school development plans, it has not been implemented. Regarding the monitoring of the implementation of the SDPs, no systematic or continuous process of supervision and support of schools in the implementation of the SDPs has been identified.. During the 2017-2018 period, MEDs in six municipalities (Kaçanik, Klina, Prizren, Gjilan, Prishtina and Fushë Kosova) relied on the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of development plans in 116 schools. This support is provided in the framework of projects supported by development partners in education.

At the municipal level, again with the support of projects from development partners, development plans have been drafted/approved in 13 municipalities.⁶⁵ These plans reflect the development needs of municipalities in the field of education and are in line with KESP. Harmonizing municipal plans with school plans according to quality areas through integrated planning is still not a consolidated practice. Exceptions are the municipalities that have benefited from the support provided under the KEEN and CDBE projects. A very small number of municipalities have strengthened the integrated planning approach even though they are aware of such an approach. In general, the MESTI - MED - Schoolcooperation in most municipalities is lacking.

Identifying good practices in school and municipal development planning on an ongoing basis and publishing them on the quality assurance portal is scheduled to begin in 2017, but has not begun yet. This process is not

63 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/12/rotatedpdf90.pdf>

64 Under the ESIP project implemented by MESTI and financed by a World Bank loan, under component 1.3 - School Development Grants.

65 The European Union-funded KEEN project has helped draft 5-year development plans in 9 Kosovo municipalities: Prishtina, Prizren, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Gjakova, Mitrovica, Peja, Suhareka and Dragash. Meanwhile, GiZ/CDBE has supported the drafting of municipal development plans in Kaçanik, Klina, Gjilan and Fushë Kosovë.

possible without the establishment and functioning of a mechanism for monitoring the drafting and implementation of development plans. In the same line, the development of the quality assurance portal planned for 2017 has not been done yet.

7.3 Capacity building for quality assurance

The capacity of the Education Inspectorate for quality assurance is very limited. Many of the processes related to quality assurance, such as external evaluation of the school and evaluation of teacher performance, have to be carried out with complex methods and require good knowledge of quality areas. The Education Inspectorate, apart from lacking profiled specialists in education fields and levels, also lacks professional leadership and efficient management. It is surprising how, on the one hand, very important and sensitive areas and aspects of quality assurance in pre-university education have been assigned to this institution, and on the other, poor professional capacities and inefficient management of this institution have been tolerated over the years, and the situation remains the same. Efforts to improve the quality of pre-university education in Kosovo are, to a large extent, directly related to the quality and results of the work of the Education Inspectorate.

Regarding the implemented activities for capacity building of the Inspectorate of Education, during the 2017-2021 period very little progress has been made. After the completion of the training program for external evaluation of school performance in 2016, there were no activities for monitoring the quality of external evaluation of schools and identifying the needs for capacity building of the Inspectorate.⁶⁶ A number of inspectors have been trained in the external evaluation of the school and in the re-licensing of teachers, namely in the process of evaluating the performance of teachers, but it remains unclear whether these trainings have successfully achieved the intended effect.

The Handbook for school assets with a focus on quality development has been drafted and with the support of development partner projects over 100 teachers from 10 schools in three municipalities (Gjilan, Prishtina and Prizren) have been trained. Other data related to the use and distribution of the Manual at the country level could not be provided.

Capacity building of schools for quality management started in 2016, immediately after the approval of the Framework for Quality Assurance of School Performance. Quality management trainings were conducted in about 400 schools.⁶⁷ Regarding the capacity building of school representatives for development planning, during 2017 a 3-day training program was provided for the drafting of the School Development Plan for over 280 school representatives (2 representatives from 140 schools), while 20 schools have attended 1-day information meetings and were further supported in the process of drafting and updating their development plans.

66 Basic training for external evaluation of school performance for 20 Education Inspectors is provided by PIK, within the Project 'Quality Assurance of School Performance in Kosovo', funded by UNICEF. In the framework of this support, the Guide for External Evaluation of school performance has been drafted. The rest of the Education Inspectors are included in the training program offered by "KulturKontakt Austria", also in 2016.

67 Trainings for internal evaluation of school performance are provided by PIK, in the framework of the 'Quality Assurance of School Performance in Kosovo' Project funded by UNICEF; trainings focusing on the use of internal evaluation results for updating / drafting the school development plan and annual plan / action plan are provided by KEC, with support of "KulturKontakt Austria". The workshops were organized by MESTI with the support of "KulturKontakt Austria".

No progress has been reported on the establishment of the Agency for Curriculum, Evaluation and Standards. It is surprising how the fulfillment of such an important legal obligation has dragged on from one year to the other, for an agency that would cover the most sensitive areas of the education system, on which the quality of learning results directly depends..

7.4 Raising awareness for quality assurance

In June 2018, IPK and MESTI organized a conference in which they presented the report *"Initial experiences in evaluating school performance in Kosovo"*. The conference aimed to inform stakeholders about the first experiences in the internal evaluation of school performance in Kosovo, the similarities and differences between policies, procedures and approaches to the evaluation of school performance in Kosovo with EU countries, as well as to enable an exchange of experiences between school representatives who have a role and responsibility in quality assurance in pre-university educational institutions. Organizing the annual conference for quality assurance is a very important activity foreseen by KESP, but it has not been organized.

Other developments for the identification and promotion of success and lessons learned during the quality assurance system consolidation process have not been reported. Neither the publication of examples of good practices and successes in the quality assurance portal, nor the sharing of acknowledgments for good practices, which are provided in the KESP, has ever taken place. The quality assurance portal has not been developed, nor has there been any organized form of sharing quality assurance best practices. The KESP envisages the preparation of promotional materials for informing parents and the implementation of the information campaign in electronic media, but these activities have not been implemented either. Also, there has been no campaign targeting parents.

7.5 External evaluation of students

The result of the national tests implemented within the education system in Kosovo can serve as a reflection of the level of quality in pre-university education, provided that the result is reliable and based on students' knowledge and competencies. Therefore, as foreseen in the KESP, a new guideline for the administration and monitoring of tests was drafted in 2017. In terms of capacity building of administrators and test monitors, so far only administrators' information sessions have been conducted, lasting about 2 hours, without having the character of trainings.

Since 2018 the design and implementation of new logistics procedures and security measures has begun, in order to improve exam administration and reduce negligence. The training of DCSA staff and their allies on the principles of statistical analysis and reporting with special emphasis on calibration of questions was also conducted. In an effort to improve the external student evaluation process, technical support was also provided for developing tests and piloting questions for a national evaluation in grade 12, using IRT and comprehensive reporting procedures. This will include classical analysis and IRT, as well as recommendations for policy-makers and other stakeholders. The school report card is currently being piloted and the full implementation

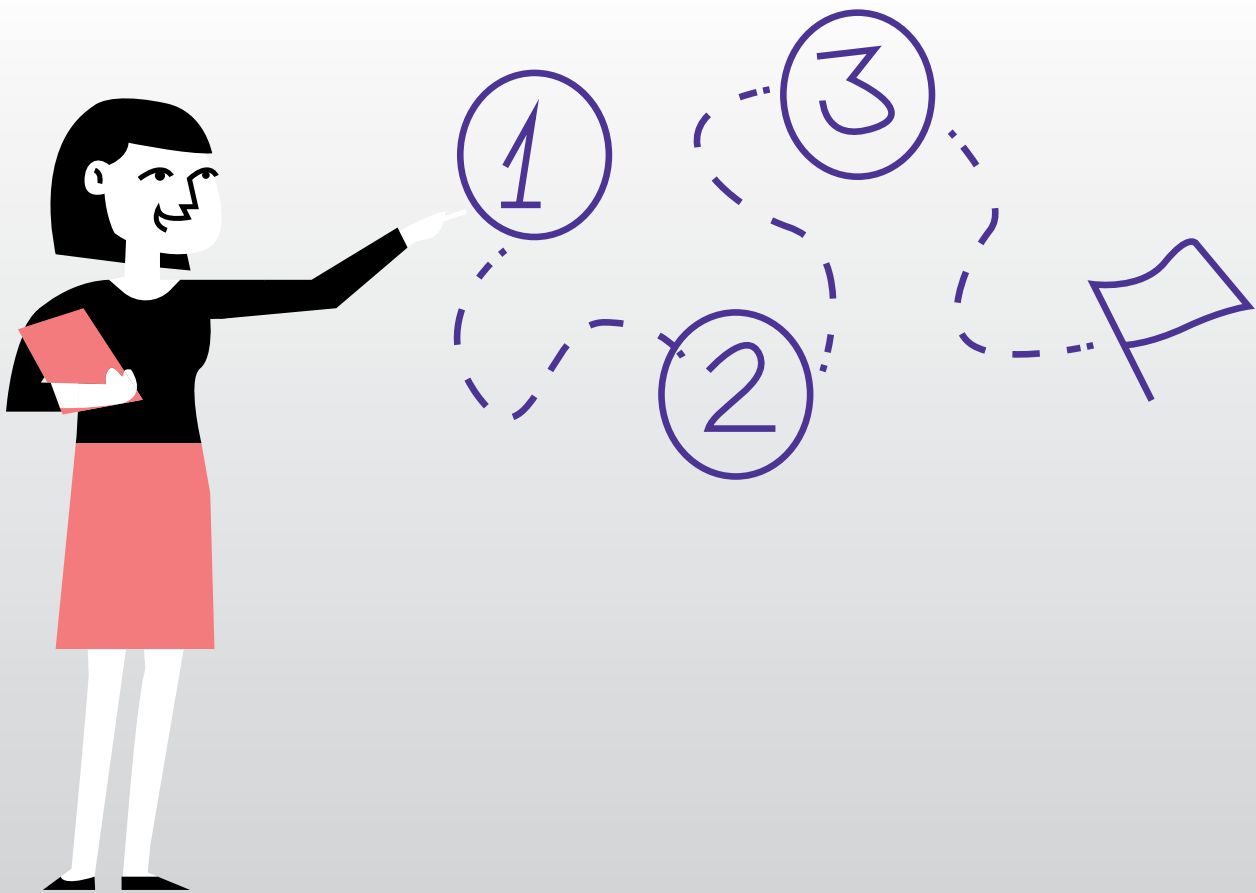
of IRT-based software for reporting national tests is expected during 2021.

MESTI organizes the annual external evaluation of students through the achievement test at the end of primary and lower secondary level and with the Matura exam. Although there is an institutional system and practice of external student evaluation, the administration continues to be the weakest point of national test management. The quality of evaluation and the issue of validity of the State Matura Exam in Kosovo are major concerns discussed in society and in the educational community, due to numerous irregularities and poor administration, which results in opportunities for copying and fraud, which then present those students who are not sufficiently prepared as being better than students who have learned systematically, and who may happen to be more conscientious and unwilling to get into such matters. The irregularities that accompany this exam undermine the credibility of the exam and deepen the society's mistrust in the results. Reports from the media and civil society organizations monitoring the Matura exam have been highly critical, but this has not improved its administration.

In an effort to avoid copying and fraud, in recent years MESTI has applied four different versions of the tests, in four different regions of Kosovo. This practice breaks the rules of standardized evaluations, the main purpose of which is to certify graduates. Moreover, this approach of test forms for four different regions has consequences as it does not allow cross-referencing between any of the versions, since none of the exams are linked, which limits the possibility of equalizing test versions and does not allow the differentiation to be made between the test version and the region.⁶⁸ Furthermore, organizing the curriculum level evaluation continues to be a challenge, while the approach applied is not in the spirit of the Curriculum Framework for Pre-University Education.

68 IPK (2019). Pedagogical research, summary of works. Selim Mehmeti - Provimi i Maturës Shtetërore në Kosovë - Një vështrim i perceptimeve të maturantëve.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



8. Performance appraisal - Objective 4: Teacher Development

Teacher development is the fourth strategic objective in KESP aimed at raising the quality of teaching through an effective and sustainable system for the preparation and professional development of teachers. For this strategic objective 4 targeted results and 34 strategic measures are foreseen, along with success indicators that serve to monitor their implementation. The activities for the implementation of these measures are summarized in an action plan and the budget for implementation is calculated, which for teacher development purposes reaches the amount of € 14,550,750 or 8.2% of the total KESP budget 2017-2021.

The main priorities in this area are the construction of a sustainable system for professional development of teachers, which will contribute to the implementation of the educational reform, the implementation of teacher performance evaluation process, the functioning of the system for teacher licensing and quality preparation of pre-service teachers.

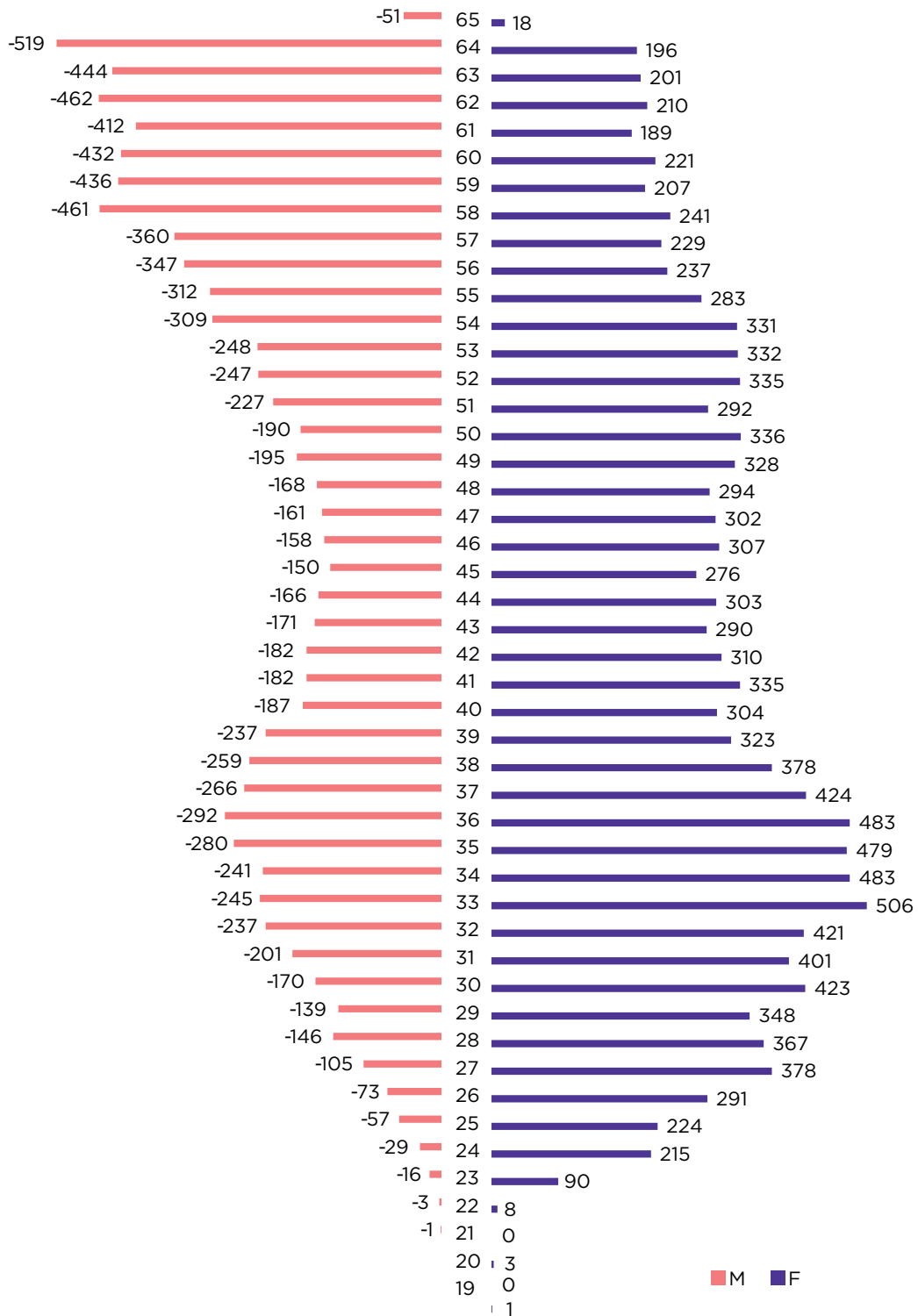
The teaching staff has remained largely the same in number. At the pre-university education level in Kosovo 28,150 people are employed, of which 23,234 are teachers, 3,350 support staff and 1,566 administrative staff.⁶⁹ In recent years there has been an increasing tendency for women dominance in the teaching staff, mainly at the preschool, primary and lower secondary level. This has also resulted due to the tendency of admitting mainly women to university education programs (about 95% women). The female teaching staff is mainly dominant at the preschool level (99%). The participation of female teachers starts to decrease in percentage at the highest levels of education with 59.3% at the pre-primary, primary / lower secondary level (ISCED 1.2) and 43.1% at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3).⁷⁰ The distribution of teachers by age and gender shows that teachers under the age of 55 are mostly women, while teachers over the age of 55 are mostly men (Figure 10).

The average age of employees in pre-university education is 45. The average age of education workers is 10 years higher than the average age of the population of Kosovo, which is estimated to be 30.2 years. The average number of years of working experience, not only in education, of all teachers is 16 years. Of the total number of teachers, 40% have less than 11 years of work experience. In the next eight years, an average of 640 teachers will retire each year.

⁶⁹ Source: MESTI, Education Statistics 2019/20

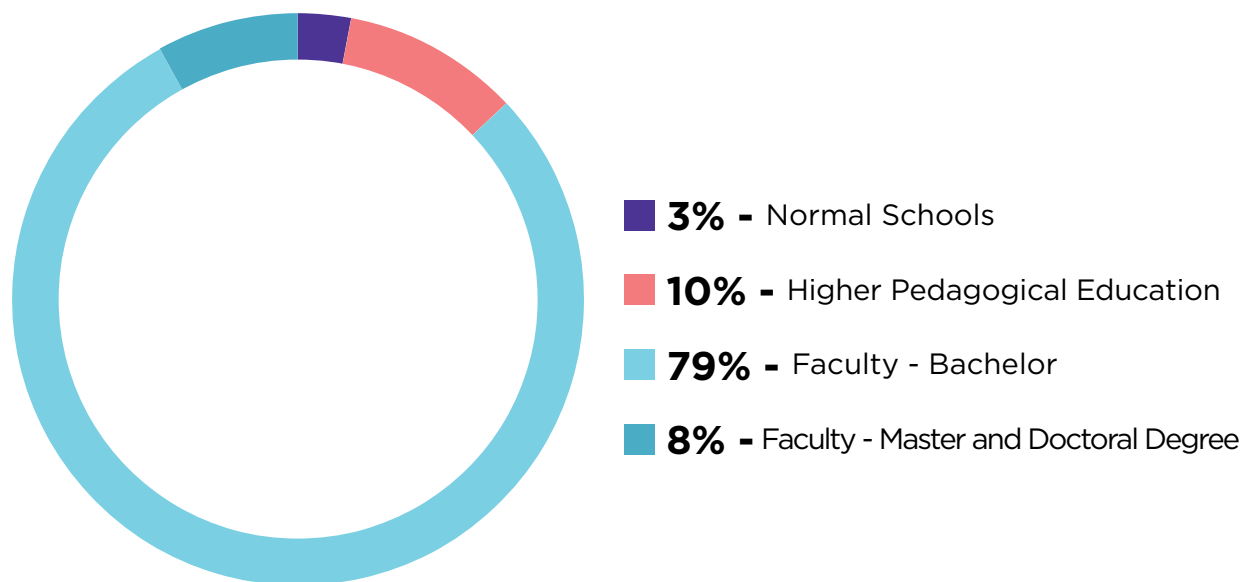
⁷⁰ Ibid.

Figure 10 Teachers by age and gender



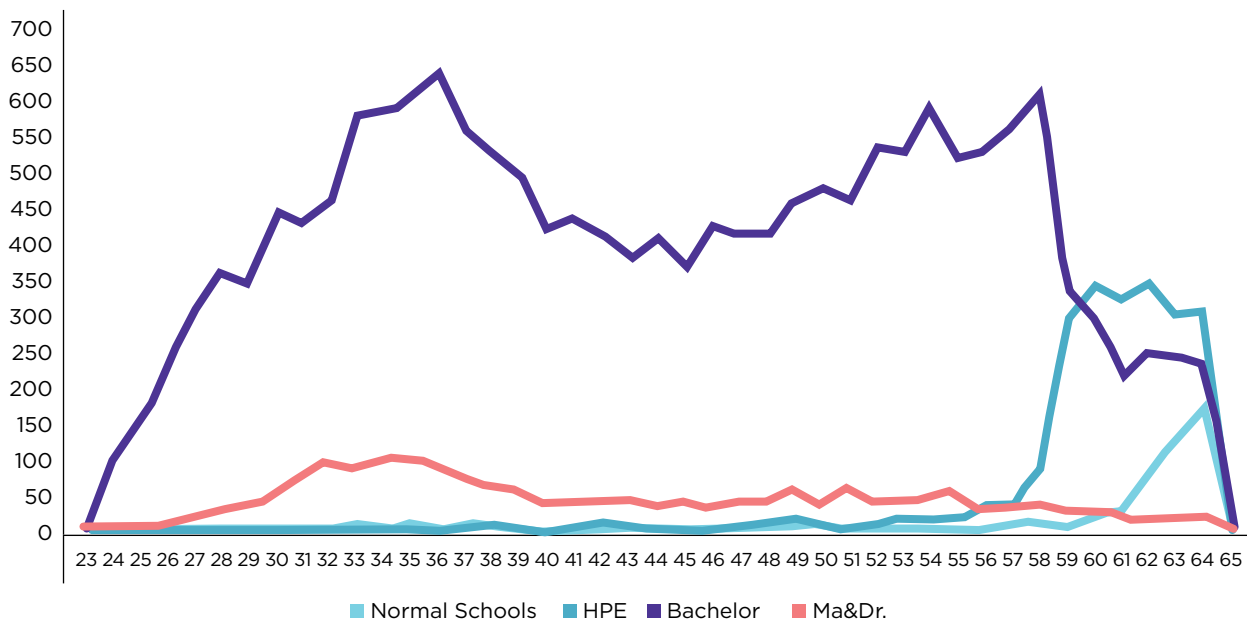
In terms of their own educational background, most of the teachers have finished their Bachelor studies (79%).

Figure 11 Teachers by level of education



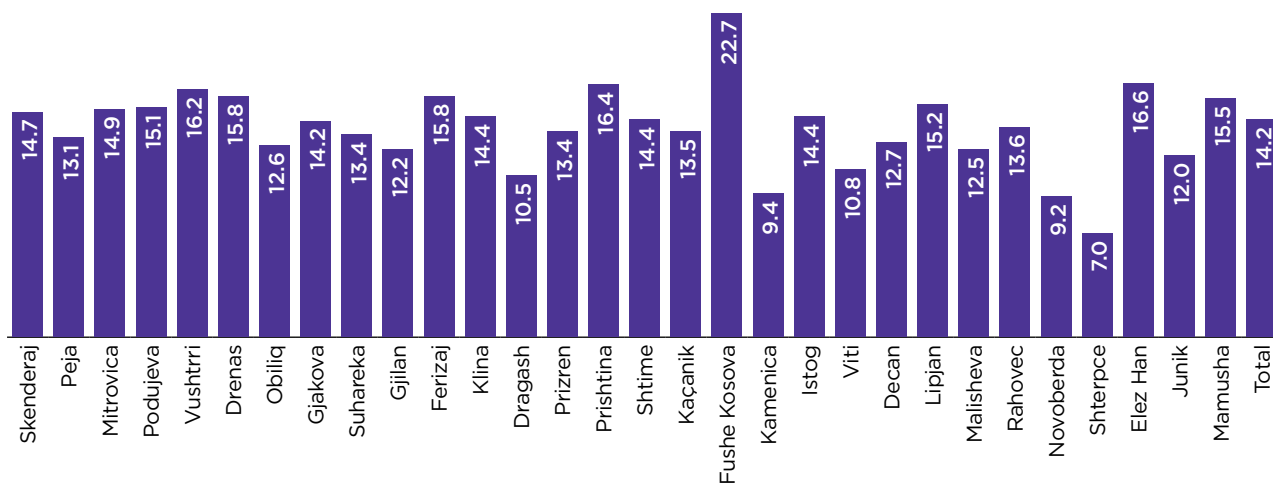
In terms of age and educational background, teachers who have completed the "normal school" are mainly over 60, teachers aged 57 and over are mainly with higher pedagogical education (HPE), teachers between the ages of 25 and 55 are mainly with bachelor's degree, while those with master's and doctoral degrees are extended to all age groups, but with a slightly higher level to teachers in their 30s.

Figure 12 Level of education of teachers by age



A number of rural municipalities such as Kamenica and Dragash have a very high number of teachers in relation to students. Other municipalities such as Gjilan and Gjakova have a much larger number of teachers in relation to students than other urban municipalities such as Prishtina, Ferizaj or Mitrovica. The number of teachers in Fushë Kosovë, Skenderaj, Drenas and Vushtrri is small for the number of students. The teacher-student ratio at the country level is 1:14. A more unfavorable situation is presented in the unbalanced distribution of students in schools at municipal levels.

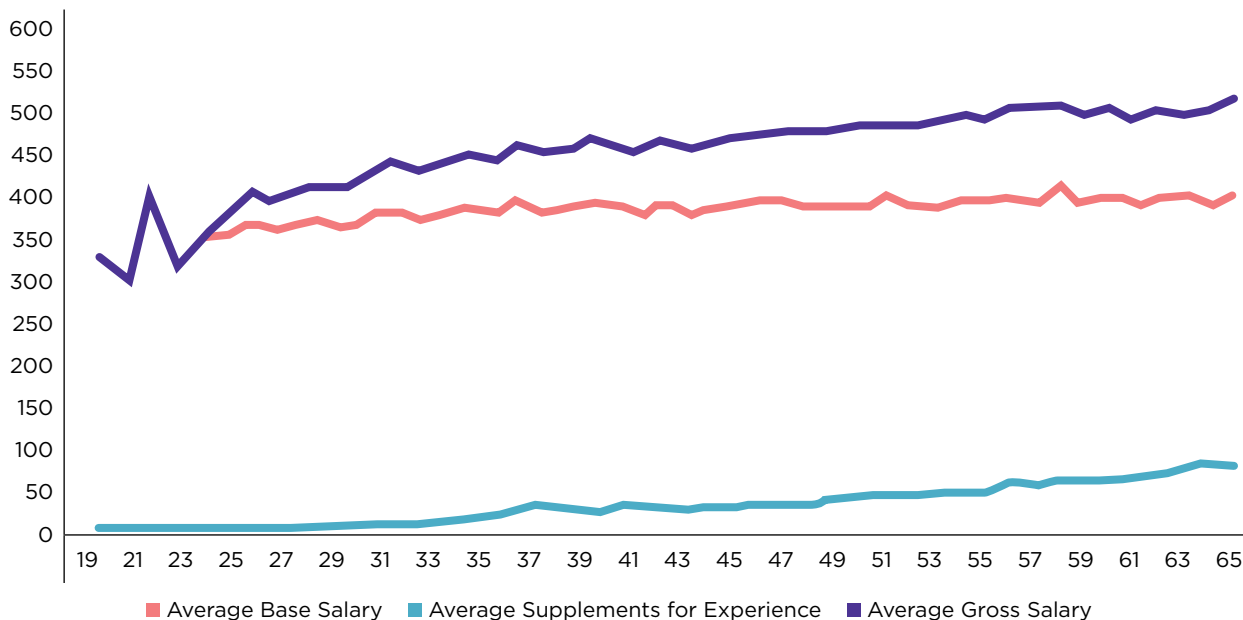
Figure 13 Teacher-student ratio in Kosovo municipalities



Source: MESTI, Education Statistics 2019/20

While the average salary of all teachers is the basic salary of € 417, the gross salary and salary supplements increase according to the age of teachers. Older teachers are paid more than younger teachers. The average gross salary for teachers over 55 is € 532, while for teachers between 25 and 35 the average gross salary is € 452 Euro.

Figure 14 Teachers' salaries and allowances by age



8.1 The system for professional development of teachers

Evidence shows that the quality of teachers is the main driver of change in student achievement at school level. Low teacher performance, especially during the first years of schooling, has a negative impact on students' prospects of succeeding in later stages. This being said, students who experience educational loss in the first years of schooling will have difficulty achieving higher levels of education. As a result, Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is a very important aspect for the continuous advancement of teachers and one of the key factors that directly impacts the quality of teaching and learning. Based on this, TPD or teacher training has been and continues to be a widespread practice in Kosovo.

During the period 2017-2020, MESTI has drafted a legal package that largely defines the process of teacher professional development. In this period, four administrative instructions were issued that are directly related to teacher development: AI 3/2017 on the State Council for Teacher Licensing (SCTL);⁷¹ AI 5/2017 Licensing and Career Development System for Teachers;⁷² AI 6/2017 Criteria and Procedures for Approval of Programs for Professional Development of Teachers and Educational staff;⁷³ and AI 119/2020 on Professional

71 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/08/3-2017-ua-per-keshillin-shteteror-per-licencim-te-mesimdheseve.pdf>

72 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/08/sistemimi-i-licencimit-dhe-zhvillimit-te-mesimdheseve-ne-karriere.pdf>

73 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/08/6-2017-ua-per-kriteret-dhe-procedurat-e-aprovimit-te-programeve-per-zhvillim-profesional-te-mesimdheseve-dhe-punonjeseve-arsimor-rotated.pdf>

Development of School-Based Teachers.⁷⁴ Furthermore, in April 2017, the Strategic Framework for Teacher Development was approved, which sets standards for the teaching profession, including pre-service teacher training, the initial phase of practicing the profession, and career development. The framework also defines the competencies at different stages of the career and serves as an orientation for organizing the professional development of teachers in these stages.⁷⁵

Based on the above, the existing model of professional development of teachers in Kosovo is based mainly on training programs offered by various institutions and providers, which are selected based on criteria set by MESTI. In 2019, MESTI published the third edition of the Catalog of accredited and approved programs for professional development of teachers and education leaders, which also includes accredited providers and approved programs from 2010.⁷⁶ Based on this, 13 professional development programs were accredited during 2017, 45 programs and 14 non-governmental organizations that can implement training modules were accredited in 2018, 12 training programs and 1 organization were accredited in 2019, and 14 training programs for informational technology were approved in 2020.⁷⁷ However, during this period (2017-2020) no programs were accredited for TPD of non-educational profiles for vocational education, thus, creating a gap for TPD in this important part of the education system.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the Catalog was prepared after the approval of the document of the Strategic Framework for teacher development in Kosovo, the priority programmes to be provided to teachers with support from MESTI and/or partners have not been identified yet. Also, it has not been possible to evaluate the programs according to the requirements of professional development through the stages of career development, namely to classify the training programs according to the four types of licenses as defined by the teacher licensing system.⁷⁸ This situation has created challenges in initiating the appraisal process for the performance of teachers. As a result, the performance appraisal process has only started with teachers who meet the professional development requirements for the Career Teacher License.

In addition, there has been no progress in building mechanisms at school level to identify TPD needs, although this activity was foreseen to take place in 2017. With the entry into force of AI 06/2017 on the criteria and procedures for approval of programs for professional development of teachers and educational staff, the instruments for application and evaluation of programs and training providers have been reviewed. The request for a description of the experience for the development of the training program relates to the development of the program based on teachers' needs. However, this does not ensure the inclusion of teachers in

74 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/10/combinepdf-rotated.pdf>

75 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/04/kornize-strategijike.pdf>

76 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/01/katalogu-i-programeve-te-akredituara-dhe-te-aprovuara-per-zhvillim-profesional-te-mesimdhemesve-dhe-udheheqesve-te-arsimit-edicioni-i-trete-i-converted-converted-converted-converted-converted-converted.pdf>

77 In 2017, through USAID KEC/ASSET program, four programs were designed, piloted and then accredited, which helped the implementation of the NQF, respectively the UN for gymnasiums, including: Project-based learning (integrated learning); Technical clubs (related to ICT); Career counseling and orientation (based on expected results from the field of Life and Work); Entrepreneurship and financial education (based on the RM in the field of Life and Work); Evaluation for learning (formative evaluation), contextualized for high schools.

In 2018, the GIZ-funded CDBE project contributed to the design of two training programs, including a Professional Assets capacity building program and a science teaching program. Both programs were developed based on two surveys conducted to identify the needs for TPD.

In 2019 the EU-funded Teacher Professional Development Project has contributed to the design of two training programs, including one for the implementation of the new curriculum at the primary level (based on the specific needs for TPD identified within research conducted with teachers in 50 schools) and a school-based mentor training program for TPD.

78 Mehmeti, S., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2019). Professional development of teachers in Kosovo. KEEN.

training programs according to their needs. According to the findings of a study on Teacher Professional Development in Kosovo, training providers conduct needs analysis based on their projects, but there is no well-managed system at the central level for the preparation of training programs based on the needs of teachers.⁷⁹ Other research shows that the selection of training depends largely on the perception of MESTI officials, MEDs, donors, and not on school-based evidence.⁸⁰

On the other hand, in terms of trainings provided, the database for individual TPD has not been updated following the issuance of licenses for career teachers. Consequently, there is no accurate database on the number of training hours that teachers have completed after obtaining their first career license, despite the fact that all certificates for teacher training are signed by the MESTI. In the absence of a TPD database, it has never been possible to generate reports that would enable better planning to guide teacher involvement in training programs and other TPD-related analysis.⁸¹

According to the MESTI report on the evaluation of the implementation of KESP for 2019, the rate of teachers' involvement in professional development in 2019 was 24.7% of the total number of teachers. This rate is significantly lower than in countries with advanced education systems. The level of teachers' involvement in professional development has decreased steadily since 2015. The decline in inclusion is due to declining funding in professional development and the non-functioning of a sustainable funding model.⁸²

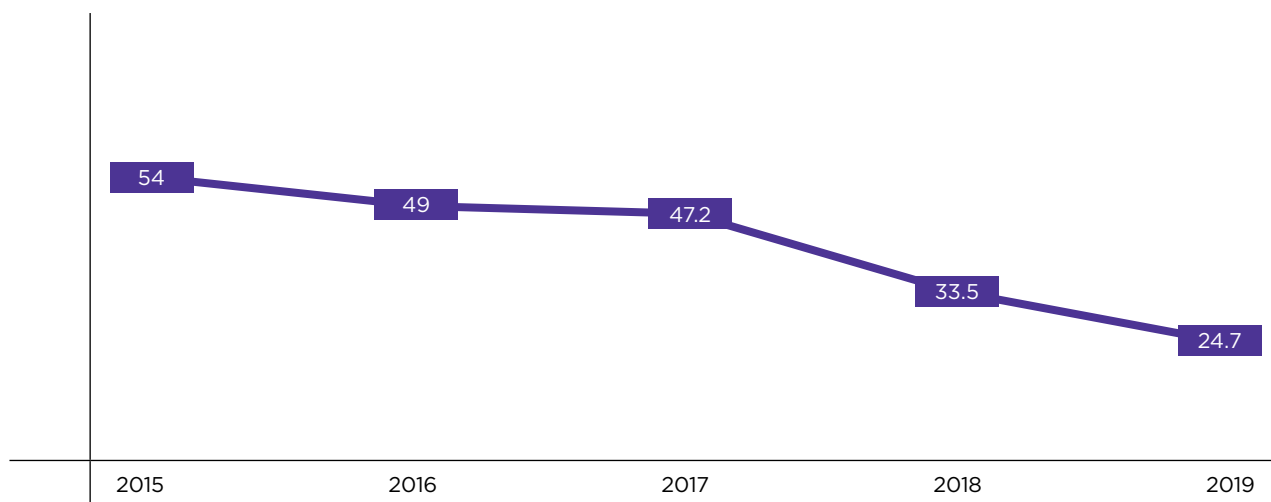
79 For example, to identify the needs of TPD, within the CDBE project, funded by GIZ, two surveys were conducted in 2017 to identify the needs of TPD in the field of mathematics and science, while in the first part of 2019 a survey was conducted under the EU-funded Teacher Professional Development project.

80 Gam, P., Schusterede, J., & Katsanos, K. (2018). Initial report within the European Union project: Improving the capacity building for professional development of teachers (training of preschool and primary teachers) in Kosovo. The project is implemented by Planet SA in consortium with SOFRECO and WUS Austria.

81 Mehmeti, S., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2019). Professional development of teachers in Kosovo. KEEN.

82 MESTI, 2019. Annual KESP Evaluation Report.

Figure 15 Involvement of teachers in professional development 2015-2019



Source: MESTI, 2019

During 2017-2020, the main focus of MESTI has been on training teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum and for the educational leadership program. According to the report of the Professional Development Division at MESTI, the number of teachers involved in the training for the implementation of the new curriculum during the period 2016-2020 was over 24,000. By 2021, it was planned that all teachers are trained to implement the new curriculum. On the other hand, in regards to training programs for vocational schools (non-educational profiles), no accredited program was reported during this period. Consequently, specific training on the implementation of sectoral curricula and VET profile frameworks is also lacking. The KESP envisages that MESTI will encourage the design of these programs so that at least two training programs be accredited each year.

Furthermore, MESTI does not possess data on the number of teachers involved in training provided by various projects supported by development partners or other parties. Based on data obtained through direct contact with some of the major external TPD programs providers, the declining trend of TPD supply becomes visible.⁸³ From 457,597 hours for TPD in 2017, to 357,590 hours in 2018 and 301,617 in 2019.

KESP also foresees the establishment and engagement of expert teams at the municipal level. This process has been formally completed in most municipalities. However, there is a lack of a platform and more direct support of MESTI in the process of establishing and consolidating these teams, so that they become functional and meet their role for TPD in all municipalities. A good example in this regard is the municipality of Prishtina, where MED in 2018 established a professional team for support and professional development of teachers, which has cooperated with educational institutions and organized workshops with teachers in support of successful implementation of the new curriculum.

In regards to school-based teacher professional development, in the first half of 2019, with the support of the

83 Data from SBASHK, KEC, GIZ, KCIC.

EU-funded Project for Teacher Professional Development, the framework for the professional school-based development of teachers (SBTPD) was prepared and piloted during the period 2019-2020 within 50 schools in 10 municipalities. During the same period, a Guide was drafted to establish mechanisms for identifying the needs for teacher school-based professional development. In addition, MEDs in 10 municipalities have been supported in establishing procedures for identifying mentors for SBTPD, including setting criteria/ standards for selecting mentors. This process has been completed in about 50 schools and several activities have also been carried out to increase the capacity of the selected mentors for the SBTPD, including their role in identifying the needs for TPD at the school level.⁸⁴ Within the aforementioned EU-funded project, a training program consisting of five modules was provided in cooperation with MEDs in ten municipalities during 2019-2020 to 1,200 primary school teachers, (18,000 hours of TPD). These training programs are provided by the professional teams of the respective MEDs (after their prior training), thus contributing to the mobilization of MEDs to support the TPD. A positive development in regards to the implementation of the approach for school based teacher professional development is the organization and financing of school based TPD for all primary level teachers by the Municipality of Drenas.

In 2020, MESTI approved AI 119/2020 on School-Based Teacher Professional Development, which sets out internal and external procedures for identifying needs, implementing activities, supervising, monitoring, certifying and evaluating teachers in professional school-based development of teachers.⁸⁵

In order to support the organization of SBTPD activities, with the support of development partner projects, 21 Joint Learning Communities have been established in 8 municipalities (Gjilan, Kaçanik, Fushë Kosovë, Klina, Prishtina, Prizren, Shtime, Gjakova and Mitrovica) with over 100 schools participating. These communities contribute to the professional development of teachers by identifying common challenges and sharing experiences to address them. The initiative has been welcomed by the schools and the results of the project monitoring prove the positive effects of this networking in the work of schools. A summary of the good experiences of teachers in implementing the new curriculum in mathematics and natural sciences at elementary level has been prepared in 2017, to contribute to SBTPD. Other projects supported by development partners have also reported on other achievements in the preparing and certification of around 70 school facilitators in 17 gymnasiums (in 16 different municipalities), who support the SBTPD in integrated learning and evaluation for learning, also contributing to the capacity building of schools for SBTPD. However, the sustainability of these initiatives in the schools involved and the extension of these experiences to other schools depends on the municipal commitment to fund the SBTPD.

Similarly, the process of establishing professional development centers at the municipal level continues to be supported only by development partners. During 2017-2018, in 7 municipalities (Gjilan, Fushë Kosovë, Klina, Kacanik, Prizren, Prishtina and Mitrovica), 11 such centers were established and equipped. The promotion of regional cooperation at national level was supported only by development partners, including the organization of the "National Conference on Mathematics" in 2017; National Conference on "Teachers shaping the future of Kosovo" in 2017; National Conference on "Exchange of Experiences Between Schools" in 2018 and National Conference on "Student Evaluation Methods" in 2018.

In terms of TPD funding, a framework that would clearly define how sustainable TPD funding could be

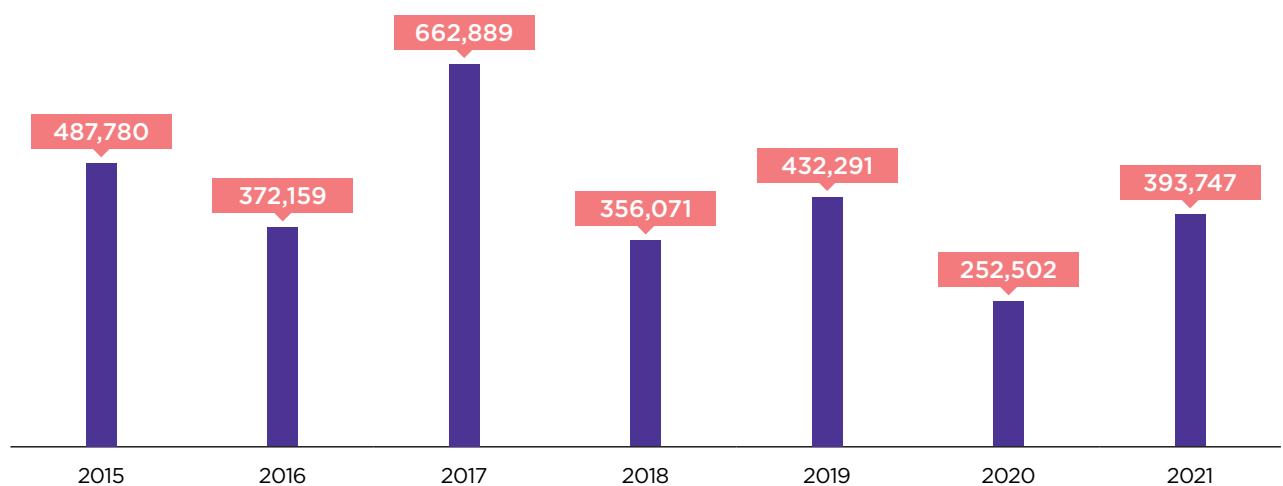
84 Within the Professional Development of Teachers project, funded by the EU

85 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/10/combinepdf-rotated.pdf>

achieved, which would enable the implementation of the teacher licensing process has not been drafted yet. Although they were part of the annual work plans of MESTI, AI 15/2013 on Financing the Professional Development of Teachers has not been revised yet and the AI on Licensing of Teachers has not been drafted. MESTI plans the budget on annual basis, but does not have a specific plan for financing the professional development of teachers that allocates it to training providers and to priority programs set by MESTI. The entire budget is planned for the budget item, namely the "Teacher training" sub-program, which includes the entire teacher licensing system. Furthermore, the planned budget for TPD is used by other MESTI Divisions for activities unrelated to TPD.

In 2019, MESTI's expenditures for Teacher Professional Development were around € 432,291. There was a slight increase in funding compared to 2018, but a small increase compared to TPD expenditures in 2017. In 2020, there is a significant decrease in TPD spending to € 252,502. The budget for TPD in 2021 is € 393,747.

Figure 16 Teacher Professional Development Expenditures in EURO 2015-2021



Source: Kosovo Budgets 2015-2021, Ministry of Finance

Regarding the monitoring and evaluation of the TPD programs implementation, MESTI in its application form for training programs for teachers and educators has defined two requirements for training program providers that to some extent address the requirements for quality assurance of training programs. However, in addition to application forms and application evaluation for training programs, MESTI has not developed standard instruments for external monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of training programs. Dozens of providers organize various training programs, while few or none are monitored by MESTI mechanisms. Monitoring is rare, with ad-hoc visits by MPDD officials or education inspectors.

The direct involvement of MESTI in the capacity of training provider shows that MESTI has continued to behave as if it is responsible to provide professional development of teachers despite the fact that this responsibility has been shifted to the municipalities since 2008. Municipalities, respectively their MEDs have the responsibility to ensure the implementation of TPD at the municipal level through budget provision

and TPD planning based on needs at the municipal level, and to support the full implementation of the teacher licensing system. However, the TPD responsibilities delegated to municipalities since 2008 have not been met almost by most municipalities in Kosovo, despite efforts with support from various projects funded by development partners, whereby in most municipalities capacities have been increased for the establishment of teacher professional development coordinators and for the drafting of municipal TPD plans.⁸⁶ The MEDs, due to limited human and financial capacities, face difficulties in meeting their role for TPD, with particular emphasis on setting priorities for TPD at the municipal level, providing and allocating budget for TPD, including the school budget, as well as data management for teacher involvement in trainings and other PD activities.⁸⁷

8.2 Evaluating teacher performance

Teacher evaluation is an important process in education. It refers to the formal process that a school uses to review and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of classroom teachers. Ideally, the findings from these evaluations are used to provide training for teachers and to guide their professional development. Teacher Performance Evaluation (TPE) is a process which started many years ago in Kosovo, but which has not yet been implemented or performed its intended function, especially for the purpose of teacher licensing. In the absence of implementation capacities, especially at central level, it seems that TPE is not well or clearly understood by schools and teachers, and thus there are diverse implementations of this process from school to school, despite the fact that TPE is supposed to be a unique process for all teachers. Furthermore, TPE should also serve for the categorization and promotion of teachers, in accordance with the results of their performance proven within the evaluation process. However, this does not happen because no teacher has been promoted based on the performance appraisal.

In 2017, the Strategic Framework for Teacher Development was approved, which defines the competencies of teachers according to the licensing scheme.⁸⁸ In 2018, MESTI has approved AI 14/2018 on Teacher Performance Evaluation, which regulates the system of teacher performance evaluation (including internal and external evaluation), TPE holders (including their duties and responsibilities), teacher performance appraisal procedures, performance level categorization, instruments for implementing performance appraisal and linking TPE to the teachers' licensing system. The Law on the Education Inspectorate in Kosovo was adopted the same year. Pursuant to the provisions of the new law, the Education Inspectorate is responsible, among others, to assess teachers' performance also for the licensing purposes according to AI 14/2018 for Teachers' Performance Evaluation.⁸⁹ Education inspectors have attended several trainings on TPE and the use of evaluation tools.

Regarding the compilation of an introductory program for teachers, apart from the entry standards set out in the Strategic Framework for Teacher Development, there has been no progress. The drafting of a sub-legal act for the entry phase in the teaching profession and for the state exam of teachers has not been

86 Mehmeti, S., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2019). Professional development of teachers in Kosovo. KEEN.

87 Ibid.

88 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/04/kornize-strategjike.pdf>

89 <https://qzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=17744>

completed yet. In the absence of a regulatory framework, the organization of the mentoring process for new teachers has not yet begun, although KESP has scheduled it to start in 2018.

Taking into account the frequent changes in school management and the limited capacities of the Education Inspectorate, informative meetings for TPE are conducted by the Inspectorate of Education with the directors and teachers of the schools in which TPE is planned. In the occasion, all teachers of the respective schools are informed about the TPE procedure and provided with an AI for teacher performance evaluation, while teachers who will be subject to performance evaluation are informed in detail about the relevant instruments for TPE. This process has become continuous since 2018, but shows a very slow dynamics.

The evaluation of teachers' performance started after the entry into force of the AI on TPE, since October 2018. The process of teacher performance evaluation, although started, it lags behind the foreseen time-frame. By 2021, the total number of teachers who have undergone performance appraisal is around 450 (2%). The dynamics of teacher performance evaluation is not in line with the KESP plan, which provided for the TPE to be conducted for teachers during 2017-2021, namely 20% per year. In addition, there is still no report with feedback that could be used for improvement. Some of the factors that have influenced this dynamic are the delays in the adoption of the Law on the Education Inspectorate, and consequently the delays in issuing the AI on Teacher Performance Evaluation have made the process start a year and a half late; limited capacities and small number of education inspectors; and the impossibility of engaging external evaluators.⁹⁰

8.3 Teacher licensing system

Teacher licensing is another process that began years ago in Kosovo. In practice teacher licensing remains a formal process without the proper weight and importance it should have. Almost all in-service teachers who have applied for a license have acquired one, while many new teachers in the absence of proper regulation of this issue enter the teaching process without a license.

The teacher licensing system in Kosovo is considered one of the main mechanisms for developing the quality of teaching, motivating and addressing the performance of teachers, which includes the mechanism of professional development required for each teacher and the mechanism for assessing the performance of each teacher, as two defining elements. Advancements in the licensing scheme are planned to be linked to salary increases, as a motivating instrument for better performance. The teacher licensing system consists of three main, interrelated components: (1) Teacher licensing; (2) Teachers' professional development; (3) Teacher performance evaluation. This system is also presented in the Teacher's Career Development Guide.⁹¹

AI 5/2017 on the Licensing System and career development of teachers, approved in 2017, defines the teachers' career path in Kosovo, licensing criteria and conditions for each type of license: Career teacher; Advanced

90 The AI provides that teachers with the rank of 'advanced teacher' can be hired as external evaluators, while lack of training programs to meet the criteria for TPD has had the impact of there being no teachers licensed for this degree.

91 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/04/kornize-strategijike.pdf>

teacher; Mentor teacher; and Deserved Teacher.⁹² This sub-legal act also defines the criteria and requirements for TPD, a process which is planned to be completed through programs by professional development providers and school-based professional development. It was planned that by 2021, TPD will be provided with 70% by training program providers and 30% by school-based professional development, and from 2021 onwards, TPD will be accomplished with 50% by program providers and 50 % based on school, but these plans have not been realized.

MESTI delays in regulating school-based TPD have led to school activities being ad-hoc, unorganized, without initiatives based on teachers' needs. Even the training program providers were not able to ensure the inclusion of all teachers in training, to meet the basic requirements for training hours for career license or career advancement. Delays in the regulation and implementation of school-based TPD and failure to create conditions for teachers to meet the basic requirements for the hours set for TPD within five years, show lack of TPD planning, coordination and management at both central and local level.⁹³

Regarding teachers' information on the licensing system, in April 2017 MESTI organized a Conference to launch the documents for the Teacher Licensing System, but there are no other reports regarding the organization of informative meetings with teachers about the licensing. The lack of such meetings is noted in the responses of teachers involved in a survey, whereby 25% of them say that they have little or no information on the requirements of TPD under the Teacher Licensing System, about 20% are informed only about some of the requirements, while about 55% indicate a high degree of information about the TPD requirements. The data show that a relatively large number of teachers, namely 44% of teachers involved in research, lack information on the basic/elementary training programs they need to follow in the professional development of the teacher licensing system.⁹⁴ Even more deficient is the information about the supplementary programs that teachers can attend in the framework of professional development for the teacher licensing system and the recognition of training hours from the basic and supplementary programs in the licensing system.

The lack of proper information among teachers about the licensing system seems to result also from the MEDs lack of engagement in this regard. Lack of information on teacher professional development programs, and in general on the teacher licensing system poses a risk of deviating from the very aims for establishing this system.. It especially jeopardizes efforts to build a sustainable TPD system.⁹⁵

Despite the efforts, action plans for the teacher licensing process have not been secured and there is no progress regarding teachers' licensing according to the grading system provided by the legal framework. Also, nothing has started and no progress has been made regarding the licensing of pre-university teachers by private schools, foreseen by the AI on the Teacher Licensing System.

92 <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/08/sistemimi-i-licencimit-dhe-zhvillimit-te-mesimdhemesve-ne-karriere.pdf>

93 Mehmeti, S., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2019). Professional development of teachers in Kosovo. KEEN.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

8.4 Pre-service teacher training

MESTI with the legal framework, strategic planning, curricular documents, and the Strategic Framework for career development of teachers has managed to ensure the link between pre-service teacher development and in-service teacher development. The practical implementation of this link remains a challenge, mainly due to non-implementation of the Law on Regulated Professions, incomplete implementation of the teacher licensing system, and also due to lack of professional standards for subject/curricular areas for the preparation of pre-service teachers for the respective levels of education.

Under the Law on Regulated Professions, the teaching profession at all levels of pre-university education is part of the regulated professions. The provisions of this law determine the criteria for practicing the regulated profession, where in order to gain the right to practice the regulated profession, every person must: (i) complete the relevant studies or professional qualifications; (ii) complete professional practice; (iii) take the state exam; and (iv) be registered with the relevant professional body.⁹⁶ The law has not yet been implemented and upon the commencement of implementation teachers who attain the right to practice the regulated profession must be registered in the teacher licensing system and be subject to other career development procedures.

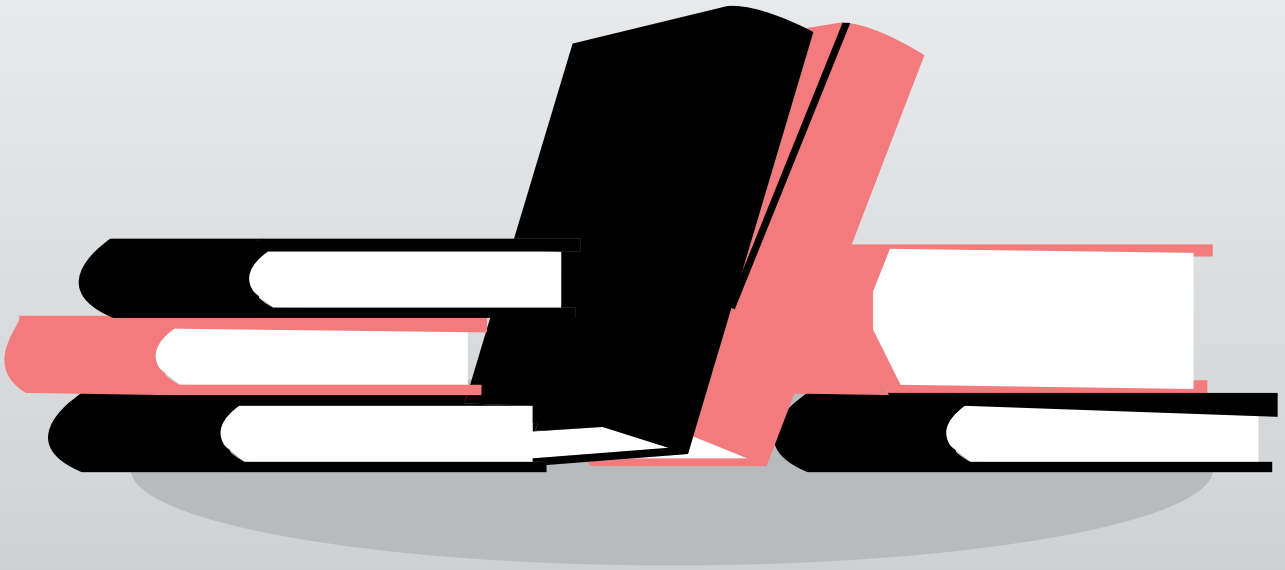
Regarding the setting of standards for student admission to educational university studies, KESP foresees the engagement of a team of experts to draft the standards for student admission on educational studies, but it was never reported that such teams have ever been engaged. The Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina has set new standards for the entry exam. The raised admission standards have resulted in higher success of students during their studies and this is confirmed by schools and mentor teachers.⁹⁷ The Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina has also continuously made efforts to harmonize its programs with MESTI policies, although frequent changes in MESTI policies are often estimated to have caused destabilization of the programs at the Faculty of Education.

Regarding the increase of capacities in the Faculty of Education for the design and implementation of programs according to the NQF, there has been no special activity, although the Faculty of Education at UP has independently reviewed all syllabi and programs and has harmonized them in order to prepare the students for the implementation of the NQF. The staff of the UP Faculty of Education is reported to have conducted a number of researches related to the implementation of the NQF, the methodologies and inclusion. Numerous studies related to the implementation of the curriculum or other methodological issues have been conducted by students in master studies at this Faculty. Despite the fact that every year the Faculty of Education organizes conferences, symposia and other scientific meetings of special importance, in recent years no event has been held based on the research conducted by the Faculty of Education to present any findings or recommended solutions (as provided in the KESP).

⁹⁶ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/01/liqj-per-profesionet-e-rregulluara-ne-republiken-e-kosoves-gznr38-21-nentor-2016.pdf>

⁹⁷ The passing threshold is reported to have been 40% of the total points, while in 2019 40% was required in each case. In recent years over 80% of students enrolled in the Faculty of Education have a grade point average of 5.0 in high school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING



9. Performance evaluation - Objective 5: Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is the fifth strategic objective in KESP with the aim of advancing learning through quality teaching, implementing competency-based curricula and utilizing quality learning resources. For this strategic objective, 3 targeted results, 17 strategic measures, as well as success indicators that serve to monitor their implementation are foreseen. The activities for the implementation of these measures are summarized in an action plan and the budget for implementation is also calculated, which for teaching and learning reaches the total amount of € 30,428,870 or 17.1% of the total KESP budget for 2017-2021 .

The main priorities in this area are the implementation of the new curriculum in all schools and all pre-university education levels, the training of teachers in all schools for the implementation of the new curriculum, the drafting of new textbooks and the provision of adequate means of concretization.

The new curricular reform in Kosovo is characterized by a major change, from an approach based on content and learning objectives, to an approach based on competencies and learning outcomes, from a subject-based approach, to an integrated approach in curriculum areas. The Curriculum Framework emphasizes the need to avoid routine and memorizing learning, and to encourage active and creative participation in the acquisition of relevant knowledge, development of skills, values and attitudes which lead to the gradual mastery of key competencies. The new curriculum is also characterized by changes in the evaluation system, teaching and learning methodology, as well as school autonomy in order to provide better opportunities for students to attain their competencies and learning outcomes.

9.1 Implementation of the New Curriculum

Following the revision of the Pre-University Education Curriculum Framework and core curricula for the three formal levels of pre-university education in 2016, the curricula for grades 0, 1, 6 and 10 were developed and approved by the MESTI in August 2017 and began implementation in the school year 2017/18 in all schools. In 2017, the drafting of curricula for grades 2, 7 and 11 has continued, which from the school year 2018/2019 are being implemented in all schools in Kosovo. The school year 2018/19 was the second year of the new curriculum nationwide implementation, with the inclusion of the preparatory class and classes 1,2,6,7,10 and 11 (only gymnasiums are included in grades 10 and 11). In 2018, the drafting of curricula for all subjects for grades 3, 8 and 12 was completed, while in 2020, the curricula for all subjects for grades 4

and 9 were drafted and approved. The process of designing new curricula for 5th grade is not yet complete. In 2020 MESTI prepared the curricula for the Albanian language subject for students of non-Albanian communities of grades 4,7,11, and draft programs for the Albanian language for students of non-Albanian communities of grades 3,6,10. The curricula for grades 0,1,2,3,6,7,8,10,11,12 have been translated into Turkish and Bosnian.

In addition to the development of curricular documents, MESTI has also prepared the Guide for the implementation of the new curriculum 2016-2021, which is a reference point for all educational institutions and other providers that have a role in the implementation of the curriculum nationwide, and in particular for schools and teachers who directly implement the new curriculum.⁹⁸

The research and analysis carried out during and at the end of the pilot phase of the new curriculum speaks of challenges in leading the processes for curriculum implementation, in the acceptance of the new curriculum by schools and teachers, the practical implementation of the new approach that provides competency-based curricula, as well as challenges in consolidating practices for ongoing school and teacher support for curriculum implementation. The main challenges in implementing the curricular reform in pre-university education have been identified in a study conducted by the KEEN project and they include:⁹⁹

- Fragmented and incoherent approach to implementing elements of reform;
- Failure to consolidate the mechanism of supervision, support and accountability in the curriculum implementation process;
- Insufficient orientation and support of teachers and schools in the planning and implementation of teaching processes based on the principles of the Curriculum Framework;
- Failure to set standard requirements for the learning progress, access and criteria for assessing certain competencies per curricular level;
- Insufficient preparation, supervision and support of teachers, leadership and professional staff for curriculum implementation;
- Poor quality of school education management;
- Insufficient involvement of Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs) in the curriculum implementation process;
- Lack of quality assurance mechanisms consolidation;
- Insufficient use of school autonomy for the implementation of the curriculum in accordance with the specific conditions of the teaching staff, the needs of students, the school infrastructure and the specifics of the locality in which the school operates.

As foreseen in the KESP, the Pedagogical Institute of Kosovo has during 2019 conducted a research on the process of implementing the new curriculum. The study presents an analysis of developments in the process of curricular reform in pre-university education, in the years 2016-2019; it identifies and evaluates the progress achieved in the implementation of the curriculum, focusing on its implementation at school level, identifying challenges and opportunities as well as needs for continuous support of schools and teachers for the effective

98 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/02/udherrefyes-per-zbatimin-e-kk-2016-2021-final.pdf>

99 Boshtrakaj, L., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2018). Challenges of implementing curricular reform in pre-university education in Kosovo. KEEN.

implementation of the curriculum. Some of the key findings of this study include:¹⁰⁰

- The implementation of the new curriculum nationwide has started without consolidating the necessary mechanisms for process leadership, monitoring and support of schools and teachers.
- There is little agreement between what is set out in the Curriculum Implementation Guide (2016-2021) and what has been accomplished in relation to leading the curriculum implementation process, both in content and in the planned timeline. The curriculum implementation guide is underused and neglected, especially by the central level, namely MESTI. This is also reflected in the approach followed in relation to the consolidation of coordination and support mechanisms, the development of the structure at the municipal level, the development of accompanying documents and textbooks, monitoring the implementation process, evaluation of the process at the end of each year, approach to training, access to ICT, etc.
- There was a lack of commitment by MESTI for the preparation of the system and mechanisms for curricular reform, and the curricular reform has not and is not being led by the main stakeholders and responsible persons in MESTI. In the absence of a governing and coordinating body, the main activities related to curricular reform continue to be fragmented and uncoordinated within sectors and sub-sectors in MESTI, and as such are reflected in the work of MEDs and schools.
- In many schools it has not yet been possible to change the organizational culture to develop and implement new practices related to the role and expectations of the school to lead the changes at its own level, such as changes in the curricular reform. This also shows that the piloting of the curriculum, completed in the school year 2015/2016 within 1 or 2 schools of each municipality has not sufficiently affected the preparation of schools and the system to guide the implementation of the curriculum nationwide.
- Most schools have not yet gone through a process of school performance self-evaluation, in line with the curriculum principles and school expectations set out in the School Performance Quality Assurance Framework. Problems raised about the functionalization of quality coordinators at school, municipality and MESTI level, have influenced schools not to conduct self-evaluation of school performance/internal evaluation of school performance.

Since the beginning of the new subject curricula implementation starting with the school year 2016/2017, at the system level mainly 5-6 daily trainings for the implementation of the curriculum have been provided and follow-up activities for the certification of teachers were developed. Other forms of support were initiated in some municipalities through professional support teams or the organization of schools within the learning together communities. However, the functioning of professional support teams has been challenged due to lack of legal rules, budgetary means, and lack of capacities. In the center of attention during the recent years have been the trainings of teachers for the implementation of the curriculum, but such trainings for the educational officials in MEDs and among schools' leadership were neglected, regarding their role in leading the curriculum implementation process.

Contrary to what was foreseen in KESP, there were no developments for a system of reporting and exchange of information for sectors and sub-sectors within MESTI, for aspects identified during the process of teachers' performance and school performance evaluations, for the implementation of the curriculum, or the challenges and problems faced by schools. Also, there is no evidence that any mechanism has been established to coordinate the cooperation between MEDs, schools and the UP Faculty of Education for professional support

¹⁰⁰ Kosovo Pedagogical Institute (2019), Competency Based Curriculum (Implementation experiences, challenges and opportunities, as well as the need for ongoing teacher support), <https://ipkmasht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Kurrikula-e-bazuar-ne-komkpetenca-2019.pdf>

for the implementation of the curriculum, as set out in the roadmap for its implementation.¹⁰¹

The quality of lesson plans still remains a challenge. Treatment of lesson planning by a large number of teachers and school leaders as administrative work; lack of creative approach to planning; the tendency of template planning; lesson planning based on textbooks (although the textbooks are from previous years, not drafted according to the new curriculum) not in subject curricula and core curricula, etc., continue to affect the quality of lesson plans and in using them to guide teaching and work with the students in implementing the new curriculum. It seems that the curriculum planning for the implementation of the curriculum in some schools was observed more due to some formal request, and not as a result of reflections showing that lesson plans are documents that help or accompany the work of the teacher.¹⁰²

In order to increase the capacities of MEDs, regional meetings were organized with school directors, MEDs and other representatives of education, regarding the information on the new curriculum. In terms of informing parents about various aspects of the curriculum and quality assurance, MESTI has not carried out any special activities, although this measure is scheduled to begin implementing in 2017. Informing parents about the implications of the new curriculum in the teaching and learning process and the overall work of the school is considered an obligation of schools themselves. Specific guidance for schools on this issue is included in “The guide for leading the implementation of the curriculum in school”.¹⁰³ However, this does not relieve MESTI and/or MEDs of the obligation to initiate public debates on quality in education and campaigns to inform parents about the rationale for curricular reform and the implications of this process on school performance, on expectations from this process, the role of parents as well as the role of all other parties that should contribute to the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

Monitoring the implementation of the new curriculum by schools, municipalities, and MESTI remains the most sensitive part of the process of implementing curricular changes. MESTI lacks an addresses related to this process, while at the level of MEDs the capacity is very limited and without the necessary professional preparation to contribute to the process.

Regarding the organization of evaluation for curricular levels, this process continues to be a challenge for MESTI and the schools, while the approach applied is not in the spirit of the Curricular Framework for Pre-University Education in Kosovo. Numerous concerns have been raised about student evaluation by both parents and the teaching community. Internal evaluation of students is not monitored nationally; there was no proper emphasis on reviewing the evaluation approach to better fit the curriculum philosophy, most of the classroom evaluation consists of memorizing information or the ability to calculate numbers; evaluation standards differ greatly, etc.

A step forward was marked in 2016, with the issuance of AI 08/2016 on Student Evaluation under the Curriculum Framework of Pre-University Education. This guideline regulates in detail the ongoing evaluation and the final evaluation, but not the grading evaluation.¹⁰⁴ MESTI, in an effort to support teachers in the student evaluation component, in 2020 has prepared the Pre-University Education Student Evaluation Framework, which provides a description of how internal evaluation, external evaluation and international evaluation for students of this level in Kosovo are organized and integrated.¹⁰⁵

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 A guide to leading school curriculum implementation. IPK, 2016.

104 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/08/ua-nr-08-2016-per-vleresimin-e-nxenesiveve.pdf>

105 <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/09/korniza-komplet-shqip-2.pdf>

9.2 Compilation of textbooks and other teaching materials

The law on the publication of textbooks, teaching aids, reading books and pedagogical documentation has not been revised after the approval of the Curriculum Framework. MESTI is in the process of preparing a new draft law on textbooks, teaching aids and materials, school reading and pedagogical documentation in pre-university education, despite the fact that according to the Guide for the implementation of the 2016-2021 curriculum, it should have been completed long ago so as to precede the process of drafting and approving the new textbooks.

Despite the delays, in a consolidated draft version of the draft law, the procedure for approving and publishing textbooks remains unclear. In principle, there is a tendency for schools to be involved in the process of selecting textbooks from the catalog of textbooks allowed by MESTI, but the procedure for ordering textbooks for publication, of textbooks provided free of charge by MESTI, is not defined. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the circulation of textbooks and other materials will be determined by MESTI in accordance with the needs of schools, and this can only include the needs in terms of number of students as interpreted in current practice with the law currently in force.¹⁰⁶ Another not sufficiently addressed aspect in the draft law is the process of withdrawing textbooks and teaching materials from use, improving any shortcomings or even the continuous improvement of their quality. The role of schools in this process and the establishment of a mechanism for improving errors and/or raising the quality of textbooks is not defined at all. Finally, the issue of translation and adaptation of textbooks from other countries should be specified in the draft law on textbooks, paving the way for increased competition and opportunities to increase the quality of textbooks.¹⁰⁷

There has been much debate about the quality of textbooks, but the main challenge facing schools is the fact that current textbooks do not match the curricula offered by MESTI (in many cases not even 20%). Furthermore, taking into account the fact that the relevant textbooks are provided free of charge by MESTI, the possibility of selecting textbooks and other resources by the school itself is limited. In this regard, parents refuse to purchase alternative/supplementary materials while schools do not have the necessary conditions and equipment to prepare them or access other teaching resources.¹⁰⁸

Although the implementation of the new curriculum throughout the country has started since 2017/18, and the first phase of piloting since the school year 2013/14, the preparation of textbooks according to the new requirements of the Curriculum Framework only started in 2018. According to the 2016-2021 Curriculum Implementation Guide, the new textbooks for grades 0, 1, 6 and 10 should have been ready for the 2017/18 school year, when the implementation of the new curriculum in these classes started, in order to continue the process gradually until the completion of the entire textbook package for pre-university education.¹⁰⁹

Following the implementation of the new curriculum throughout the country, despite the lack of new textbooks, schools have not received adequate guidance on how to approach the use of current textbooks according to the new spirit of the curriculum. The orientations offered in the core curricula are very general, with the emphasis on the possibility of using alternative textbooks and materials, but do not help teachers to

¹⁰⁶ Boshtrakaj, L., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2018). Quality of textbooks in Kosovo. KEEN.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

re-position themselves in relation to textbooks. The situation is similar in subject curricula/curricula prepared for classes. In addition, even within the framework of teacher training programs for the implementation of the new curriculum, this issue has not been given due attention.¹¹⁰

Decision 251 /01B on the appointment of the Council of Experts for Programs and Textbooks (CEPT) was issued by MESTI in 2018, followed by the drafting of the CEPT Regulation and the preparation of the dynamic plan of this entity.¹¹¹ As a result, the whole process of drafting new textbooks has been delayed:

- Textbooks for the preparatory class and grades 1, 2, 6, 7, 10 and 11 were published in the school year 2019/2020, two years after the start of the implementation of the new curriculum in grades 0, 1, 6 and 10, namely one year after the start of the implementation of the new curriculum in grades 2, 7 and 11. These textbooks have sparked much criticism for inappropriate content on many levels.
- The third cycle of the implementation of the new curriculum (grades 3, 8, 12) has started to implement the new curriculum in 2019/2021 without new textbooks. This cycle of delay is also followed in the 5th grade.
- Textbooks for foreign languages such as: English (preparatory classes 1,2,6,7,10,11), German (grades 6,7,10,11) and French (6,7,10,11) are taken from foreign publishing houses.

Textbooks that were prepared in 2019, will not be used in Kosovo schools, since MESTI at the end of 2020 has reopened the competition for new textbooks and teaching materials for all grades. The process of publishing new textbooks is planned to be completed in the school year 2022/23. The lack of new textbooks for the classes in which the new curriculum is implemented has greatly challenged the work of teachers and students. Current developments in the preparation of new textbooks do not ensure that they will be soon completed for all classes working with the new curriculum and learning programs.

Certain irregularities were also found in the process of drafting and approving new textbooks in 2019. Despite the fact that CEPT duties and responsibilities foresee (a) the support of the training program for textbook authors and publishing houses, and (b) the establishment of mechanisms for the continuous collection of data from schools/municipalities related to the quality of textbooks, these measures are not foreseen at all within the CEPT plans for the preparation of new textbooks. Another important aspect that is not foreseen in the CEPT plans is the testing of textbooks, after the evaluation of the reviewers and the recommendation for use. Given the quality of current textbooks and poor experience in compiling textbooks, these measures are of particular importance and should not be overlooked because they are necessary stages for the development of textbooks and the approval process. Even the process of selection of textbooks by schools, before the publication is ordered, is not foreseen at all in the CEPT plans.

In a study prepared by the KEEN project, in early 2019, the quality of textbooks currently in use has been assessed. The evaluation did not focus on specific texts and in-depth treatment of certain shortcomings, but was a general reflection of teachers' impressions of the texts they work with. The main concerns of teachers regarding the quality of textbooks include:¹¹²

- Lack of topicality, relevance and compliance with the new curriculum;
- Overload (with topics, text, facts, formulas);

110 Boshtrakaj, L., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2018). Challenges of implementing curricular reform in pre-university education in Kosovo. KEEN.

111 MESTI Decision on the appointment of the Council of Experts for programs and textbooks (<https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/04/vendim-refnr-251-01b-dt-090218-per-emerimin-e-keptsh-251.pdf>).

112 Boshtrakaj, L., Rraci, E., Bajrami, K. (2018). Quality of textbooks in Kosovo. KEEN.

- Content of inaccurate facts and ill-defined concepts;
- Imbalance in breadth and depth of treatment of topics;
- Lack of multiple perspective in dealing with topics;
- Inadequate and inconsistent structuring of content;
- Lack of reference to additional sources for further information;
- Lack of adaptation to the cognitive level of students;
- Lack of liaison/opportunity to relate to students' prior information and experiences;
- Lack of cross-curricular correlation;
- Lack of expected results at the beginning of each unit/learning topic and success criteria at the end of each unit;
- Impossibility for flexible use of text, conforming to different skills and learning styles;
- Focus on information/facts and their reproduction;
- Inadequate, non-functional and unattractive illustrations for the student.

Textbook analysis in terms of gender generally show stereotyping of gender roles. According to the analysis conducted for high school textbooks by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), over 100 formulations were found that contain discriminatory and exclusionary language.¹¹³ Based on the above studies, and other studies on textbooks, the standards and indicators for textbook evaluation should be reviewed to ensure that the above-mentioned shortcomings receive due attention. Preparing relevant guidelines for textbook publishers/authors and planning training programs for them is a necessity.

9.3 Equipping schools with educational technology

Infrastructure investment policy in Kosovo is mainly focused on the construction of school buildings. Kosovo lags behind in all parameters of internal infrastructure and means of concretization. Based on the OECD surveillance of school leaders in Kosovo, these delays continue to negatively affect the learning process. Most schools in Kosovo do not provide adequate teaching equipment including libraries, laboratories, computers and textbooks. In this regard, in relation to the KESP planning, the supply of schools with computers and ICT infrastructure and other necessary tools is lagging behind.

Based on the Results of the Information and Communication Technology Use Survey for 2020, 96.4% of households in Kosovo had access to the Internet at home from any device.¹¹⁴ This makes Kosovo one of the countries with the largest internet penetration in the world. Unlike the situation in general, the situation in this regard in schools does not seem to be satisfactory. According to MESTI/EIMS data, 127 or 16.2% of public parallel schools in Kosovo do not have access to the Internet (out of 785 parallel schools in total). According to EIMS, 262 or 84.8% of the shared classrooms of public schools in Kosovo do not have internet access (out of 309 shared classrooms in total). Out of the total number of public school facilities in Kosovo which is 1,094 (primary schools and shared classrooms), 705 of them or about 64.4% have internet access, while 389 of them or about 35.6% do not have internet access. This indicates large differences, especially for remote rural areas,

113 Gjuha diskriminuuese në tekstet shkollore-Analizë e teksteve shkollore të nivelit të mesëm të lartë, YIHR, Prishtinë, 2017.

114 <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5804/anketa-e-p-C3%ABrdorimit-t-C3%AB-teknologjis-C3%AB-informative-komunikimit2020.pdf>

where shared classrooms are mainly organized. It should be mentioned here that the lack of internet access is not due to the technical impossibility of gaining access, but due to the monthly cost of the internet, which is not planned or provided by the relevant institutions. Even schools that have internet access, in most cases do not provide internet throughout the school facilities, but only in certain staff offices and possibly in ICT cabinets. This is due to the absence of the necessary installations across the premises to provide internet throughout the school space. Also, there is no concrete data on the quality and capacity of the Internet in schools.¹¹⁵

According to MESTI/EIMS data, unfavorable situation also occurs in ICT cabinets and various digital devices in public schools in Kosovo. According to these data, in all public schools in Kosovo (1094 in total) there are only 602 ICT cabinets (in some schools, mainly High Schools, there are more than one ICT cabinet), namely more than half of Kosovo's public schools have ICT cabinets. Here too, it should be mentioned that there is a big difference between primary schools (which over 60% have ICT cabinets) and shared classrooms (which only about 20% have ICT cabinets), since shared classrooms are mainly in rural areas, often in remote rural areas.¹¹⁶

In general, educational institutions in Kosovo face a lack of ICT equipment. Students can commonly use computers inside specialized ICT cabinets during regular classes, while teachers use them in the classroom when there is a projector, SMART TV or interactive whiteboard. As for the number of computers (desktops and laptops), according to data provided by EIMS, the total number of computers in all public schools in Kosovo is 8,894 or 1 computer per 37 students in public schools in Kosovo.¹¹⁷ This represents an improvement compared to the situation in 2014 when 1 computer was available to 46 students, but is still far from the KESP target of having 1 computer for 30 students by 2021. These proportions are not comparable to those in EU countries where one school computer is available for 3 to 7 students. Except for computers, according to partial EIMS data, in all public schools there are in total 969 projectors, 157 Smart TVs, 71 interactive smart boards, 424 copiers, 588 printers, while the number of classrooms is over 9,000.¹¹⁸

In Kosovo, there are still no digitally developed teaching materials, in accordance with state curricula, subject programs and curricula. The only such teaching materials are those produced during the Covid-19 pandemic period, with the aim of providing distance learning for children / students of different levels and categories of pre-university education. The development and production of digital teaching materials is not well regulated even by legislation, as the law on textbooks does not provide for such forms of digital teaching materials.

Training of teachers in Kosovo on the use of technology for teaching purposes was not lacking, although much work remains to be done. According to data provided by MESTI, the total number of pre-university teachers trained under the well-known ECDL (European Computer Driving License) program¹¹⁹ is 19,354 or about 84.14% of teachers in the pre-university education system. Nevertheless, the lack of technological equipment in schools and the impossibility of their use by teachers for teaching needs may have made this training more theoretical and not implementable in practice by many teachers and consequently it has diminished the competencies of teachers gained through this training. In addition to ECDL training, there are other trainings approved (accredited) by MESTI, which are offered to teachers from various organizations and which aim to

115 MESTI (2021). Strategy for Digitalization of Education in Kosovo (SDAK) 2021-2026.

116 Ibid.

117 A total of 329,589 students in public pre-university education in the 2019/20 school year.

118 MESTI (2021). Strategy for Digitalization of Education in Kosovo (SDAK) 2021-2026.

119 ECDL - a standard training program for computer use and MS Office package

improve the digital competence of Kosovo teachers, namely the use of digital technology for teaching needs.¹²⁰

On the other hand, it seems that the future teachers in Kosovo are not properly prepared in relation to digital competence, since in the faculties that deal with teacher training, respectively in their study programs there are few subjects / courses aimed at training prospective teachers to use technology for teaching needs, namely increasing their digital competence.¹²¹

Currently, the subject of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is offered at the superficial applied level and does not reflect creative thinking and programming (coding) as the main skills in ICT. The technologies and programming languages taught in high schools are old and unattractive to students.

In relation to the promotion of the use of personal ICT equipment (students and teachers) and the conclusion of agreements between MESTI and companies interested in providing favorable payment terms for laptops, as planned in the KESP, there have been no initiatives. Even the determination of the minimum package of teaching equipment and aids for the implementation of the new curriculum and the supply of schools with the concretization tools necessary for the implementation of the new curriculum (based on this package) has seen no initiatives from MESTI or MEDs.

In 2021 MESTI has prepared the Strategy for Digitalization of Education in Kosovo 2021-2026 in order to use technology to improve teaching and learning, and develop digital competence to the younger generations. The strategy has defined four strategic objectives and a detailed action plan has been drafted for the implementation of the foreseen activities.

120 MESTI (2021). Strategy for Digitalization of Education in Kosovo (SDAK) 2021-2026.

121 Ibid.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND ADULT EDUCATION



10. Performance appraisal - Objective 6: VET and Adult Education

Vocational education and training and adult education is the sixth strategic objective in KESP with the aim of harmonizing vocational education and training with the demands of the labor market in the country and beyond, as well as creating an open system of adult education. For this strategic objective, 3 targeted results, 17 strategic measures, as well as success indicators that serve to monitor their implementation are foreseen. The activities for the implementation of these measures are summarized in an action plan and the budget for implementation is calculated, which for the vocational education and training, and adult education reaches the total amount of € 6,772,946 Euro or only 3.9% of the KESP general budget for 2017-2021.

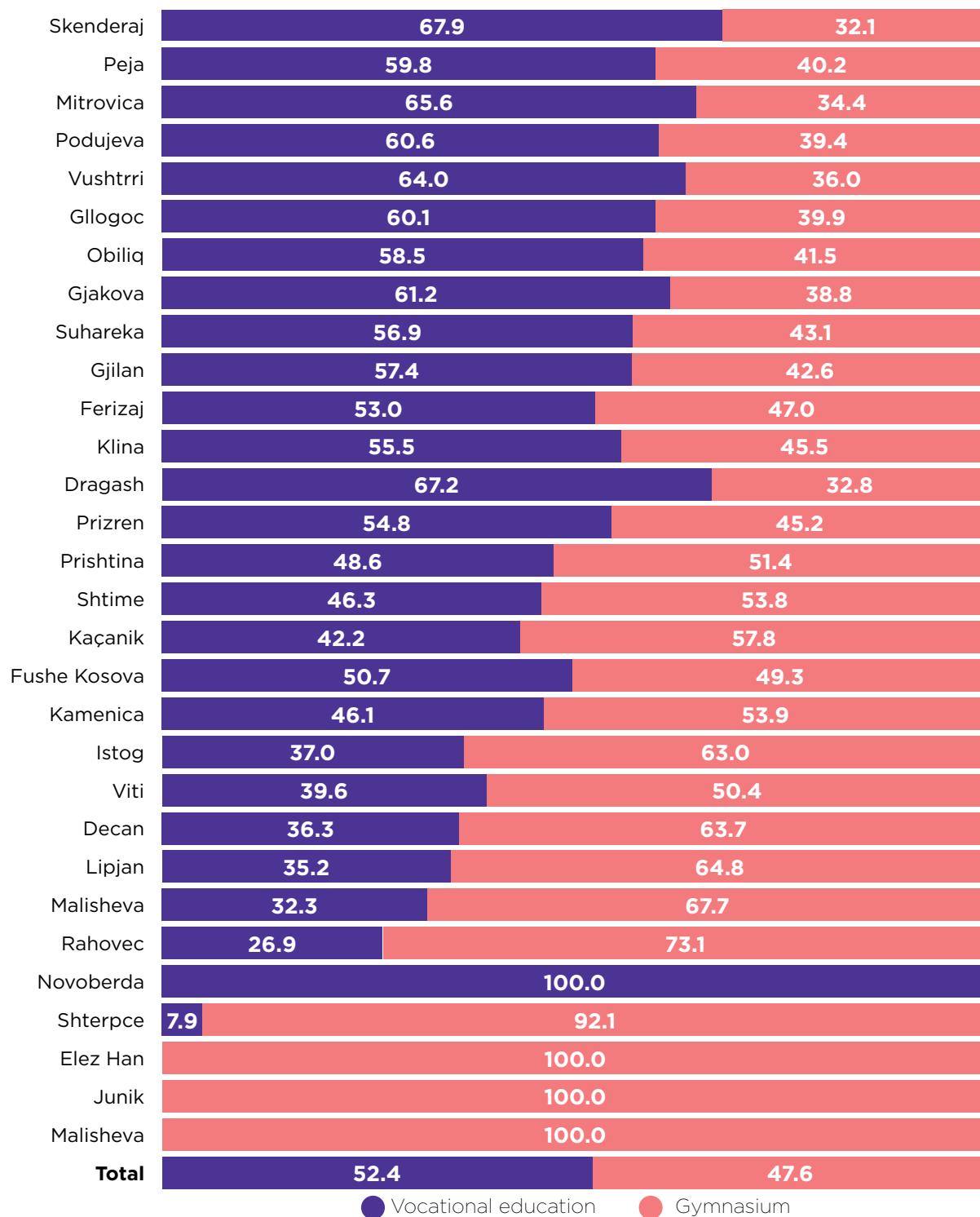
The main priorities in this area are the improvement of interconnection of school programs with the needs of the labor market, the development of a special VET core curriculum harmonized with KKK- systematic provision of high quality practical training and professional practice, ensuring the sustainability of the Centers of Competence and their further development and establishment of an efficient and quality system of adult education.

10.1 Registration trends in vocational education

Young people's interest in vocational education schools has increased in recent years. Statistics for 2019/20 show that 77,907 students are enrolled in upper secondary education, of which 40,817 students are enrolled in vocational education schools, compared to 37,090 students enrolled in gymnasiums. According to these data, 52.4% of students in upper secondary education attend one of the 122 profiles and 69 vocational high schools and Competence Centers. Disaggregated by gender, the data show that compared to girls, boys are more likely to enroll in vocational schools. Thus, in 2019/20, 23,868 boys were enrolled in VET schools compared to 16,949 girls. The gender parity index for the school year 2019/20 is 0.71 which represents a slight increase compared to the initial situation set out in KESP. Most vocational schools are managed by the relevant municipal authorities, while the number of teachers in vocational education schools is 3,149, of which 1,287 are females.

Although recent data show an increase in the number of enrollments in vocational education schools and position Kosovo close to the average of developed countries in the European Union Vocational schools continue to generally remain a second choice, especially for students who have not been able to enroll in gymnasiums. Enrollment in vocational schools does not require any specific admission criteria, and this has the effect of attracting low-achieving students or students who cannot enroll in high schools. Moreover, recent changes in the enrollment of students in vocational education can be attributed to external factors, namely the possibility of migration after visa liberalization in labor markets of European countries that require a skilled workforce. Figure 17 shows that In recent years, the level of student opting for vocational high schools and those opting for gymnasiums has been balanced.

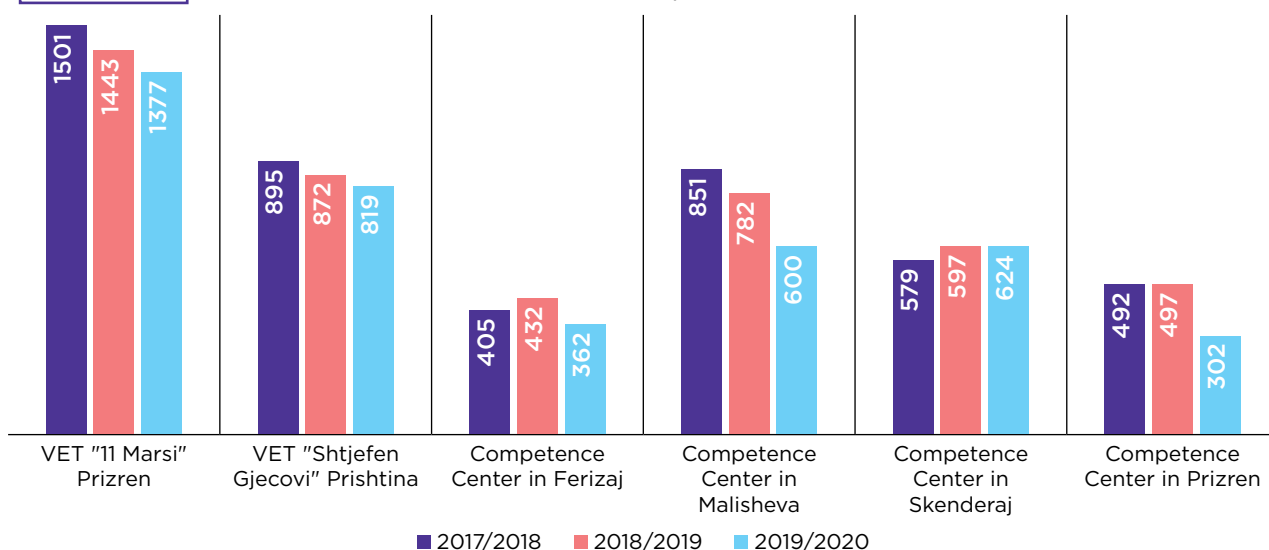
Figure 17 Percentage of students in upper secondary education by municipalities 2019/20



Source: MESTI, Education Statistics 2019/20

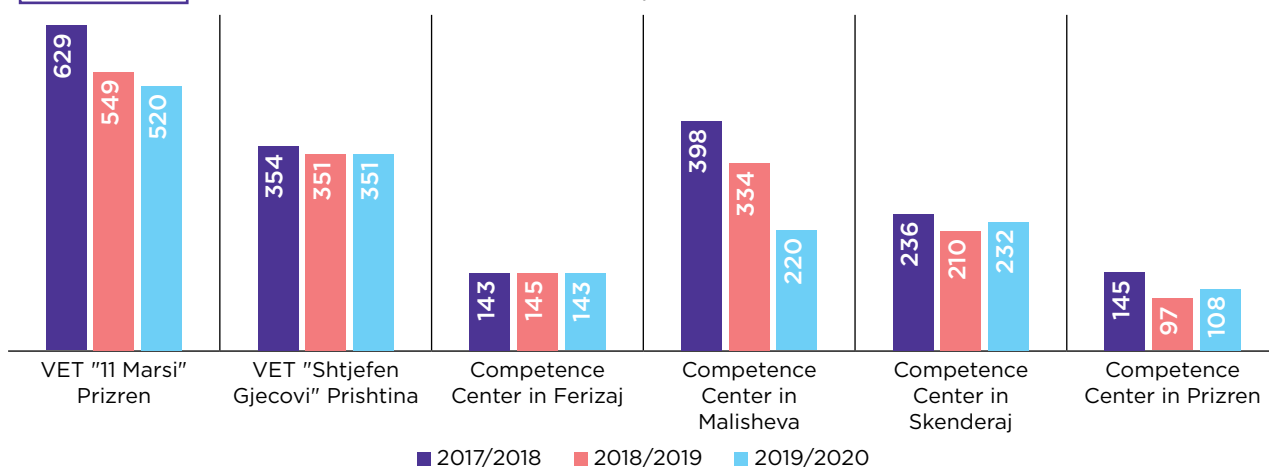
In the school year 2019/20 the total number of students in VETAL partner schools is 4,084 students, and compared to the previous two years it has decreased by 539 students. During 2019/20, the number of students enrolled in VETAL partner schools was reduced by 331 students compared to 2017/18. The gender parity index in VETAL partner schools in 2019/20 is 0.44. The educational offer within the Competence Centers is similar to the municipal vocational schools and this affects students' lack of interest beyond the municipal perimeter.

Figure 18 Total number of students in VETAL partner schools 2017-2019



Source: VETAL ¹²² AND MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

Figure 19 Enrollment of students in VETAL partner schools 2017-2019



Source: VETAL ¹²³ AND MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

122 AAAPARr. Data on schools and post-school employment of students in AAAPARr partner schools. Comparative statistics for the school years 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

123 AAAPARr. Data on schools and post-school employment of students in AAAPARr partner schools. Comparative statistics for the school years 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

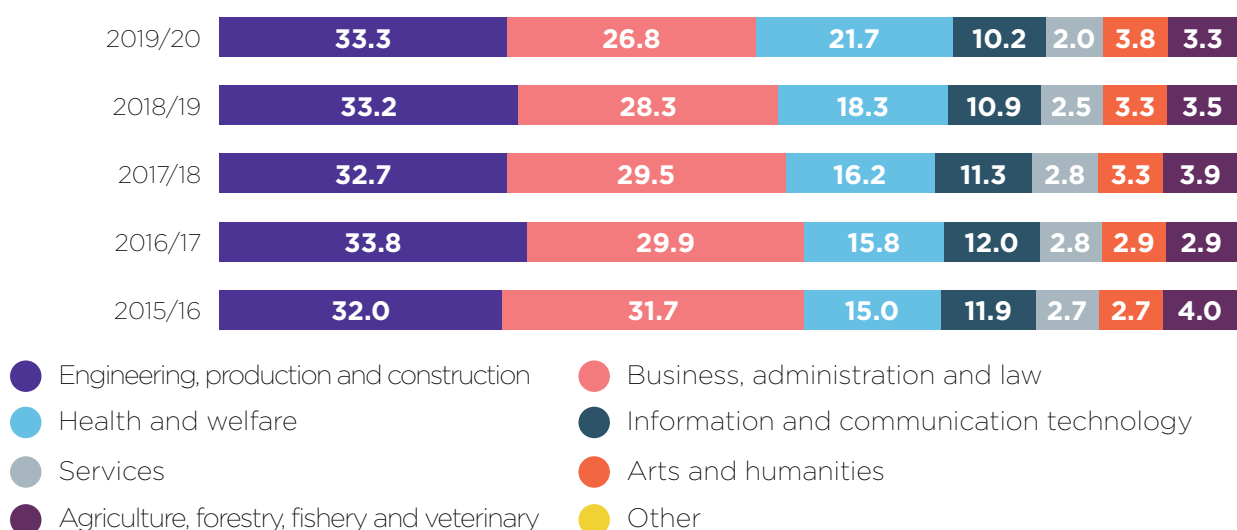
10.2 Harmonization of profiles with the needs of the labor market

Figure 20 shows that the most requested profiles for students are in engineering, manufacturing and construction with 13,179 students (22.5% girls) and in business, administration and justice with 10,920 students (46% girls). About 59% of students enrolled in vocational education and 47.1% of all girls enrolled in vocational schools attend classes in these two areas. Other required profiles are in health and well-being with 8,839 students (69.2% girls), as well as information and communication technology with 4,148 students (27.2% girls). About 59% of students enrolled in vocational education and 47.1% of all girls enrolled in vocational schools attend classes in these two areas.

In the profiles of agriculture, forestry, fishing and veterinary there are 1,333 students (33.2% girls), in the profiles of arts and humanities there are 1,568 students (69.2% girls) and in the profiles of services there are 830 students (25.5% girl). About 9.1% of students enrolled in vocational education and 10.1% of all girls enrolled in vocational schools attend classes in these three areas.

Over the years, the number of students enrolled in vocational schools has increased and more young people are enrolling in vocational schools than in gymnasiums. The analysis of student orientation based on profiles/fields of study shows that the preferred fields of study are engineering, manufacturing and construction, continuing with business, administration and law, and there is a growing trend for the fields of health and welfare. The general enrollment of students in agriculture, forestry, fishery, veterinary medicine and services is extremely low.

Figure 20 Percentage of VET students by field of study (ISCED) 2015 - 2019



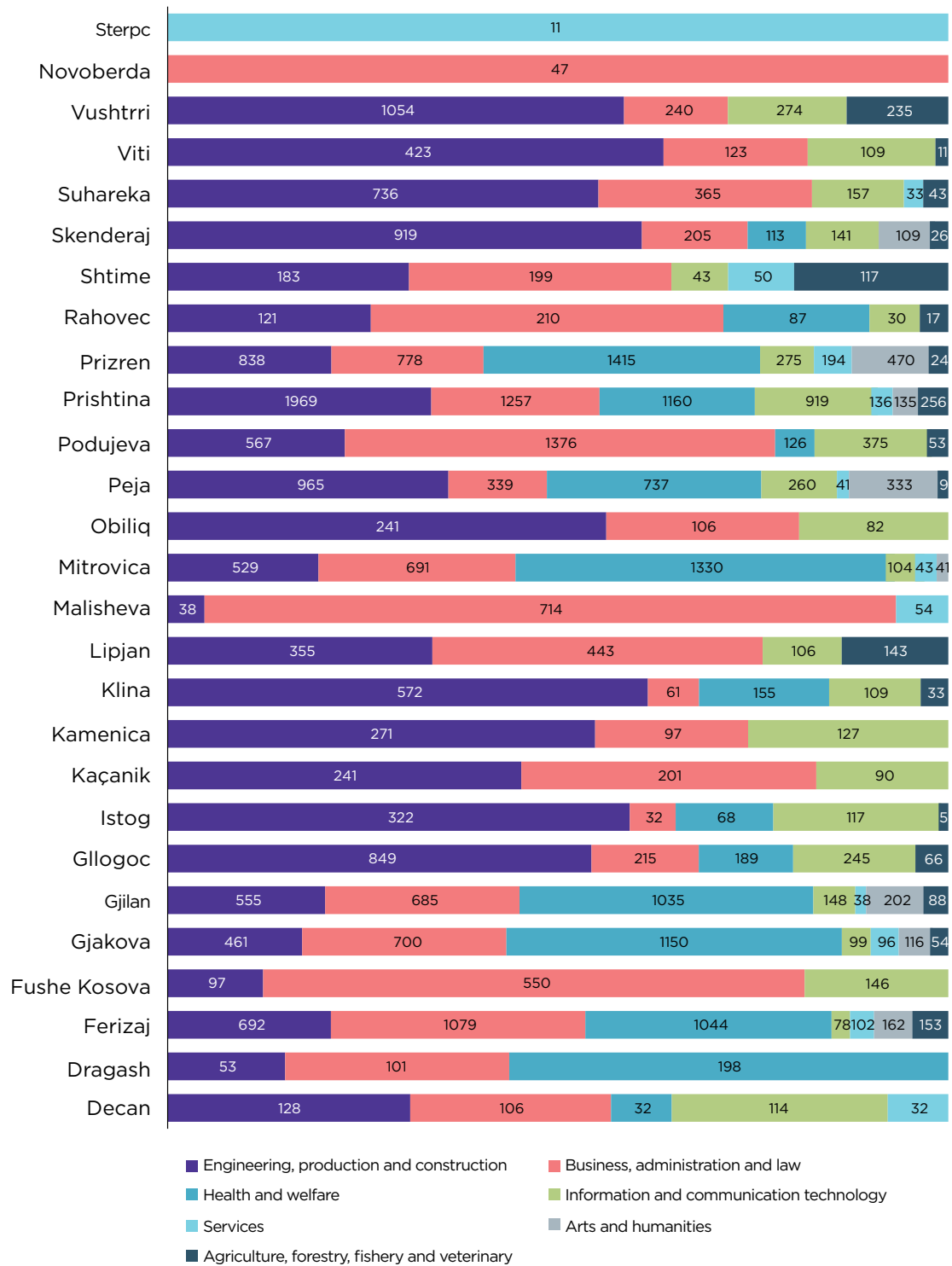
Source: Data provided by MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

In 2019, in an analysis prepared by ALLED 2 project, disturbing data have been released showing a discrepancy between the skills acquired in VET schools and the skills required in the labor market. According to this analysis, 92 out of 122 profiles offered in vocational schools are not based on occupational standards which means that more than 77% of the profiles offered by VET are not based on the needs of the labor market. The total number of students who attend profiles in vocational schools and who are not harmonized with the standards of the profession is 34,011.¹²⁴ The development of professional standards is mainly funded by donors. Based on the above data, it is essential for VET quality to develop occupational standards that will harmonize and update VET curricula and profiles offered to VET students.

Figure 21 shows the number of vocational education students in municipalities by field in 2019/20. When the enrollment of vocational secondary school students at the regional and municipal level is analyzed, discrepancies can be noticed between the regional economic potential and these enrollments. The regions of Prizren and Gjakova with potential for the development of food industry, textiles, handicrafts, tourism, livestock and culture have a very low number of students enrolled for the profiles of agriculture and services. Most students in these two regions opt for profiles in health and well-being, business, administration and justice, as well as engineering, manufacturing and construction. On the other hand, Mitrovica region with a potential for the development of industry and agriculture, has the majority of students opting for the profiles of engineering, production and construction, health and well-being and business, administration and justice. Prishtina, Ferizaj and Prizren are centers with potential for development of the service industry, however, the number of students in vocational education in these municipalities opting for this field is below 2.4% of the total number of students in vocational education in these municipalities. Dragash and Istog, as municipalities with potential for agricultural development, have only 5 students attending education in agriculture profiles, while students in profiles of engineering, health, business and justice predominate.

124 ALLED2, EIPP, 2019. Gjendja aktuale në Arsimin dhe Aftësimin Profesional në Kosovë: Publication of project "Harmonizimi i Arsimin dhe i Aftësimit me Nevojat e Tregut të Punës 2. <http://alled.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Vocational-Edu-AL-Final-Print.pdf>

Figure 21 Number of vocational education students in municipalities according to ISCED fields 2019/20

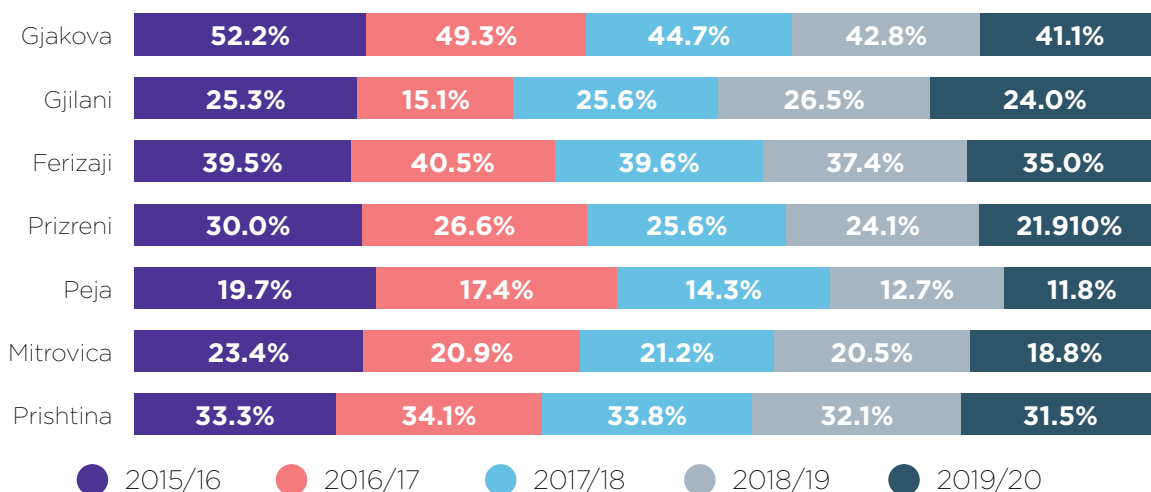


Source: Data provided by MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

As the data show, the three areas that 80% of students consider are: business, administration and justice; engineering, manufacturing and construction; as well as health and well-being. There are enrollment inconsistencies in all three of these areas in the seven regions of Kosovo. For example, in Gjakova region, student enrollment is extremely high in the areas of business, administration and justice, while low enrollment is observed in engineering, production and construction. In the region of Prishtina, which is characterized by the most developed health sector, only slightly more than 13% of VET students opt for health and being profiles, compared to the region of Prizren, where more than 28% are enrolled in these profiles. As there is no in-depth analysis regarding the needs for profiles, it is difficult to prove the impact of the difference in enrollment on the graduates' ability to obtain employment. However, differences in enrollment cannot be attributed to trends in local economies, a fact that supports the presence of skills mismatch in the labor market. Municipalities are very non-flexible in changing profiles in vocational schools, in order to not create the problem of technological redundancies among teaching staff.

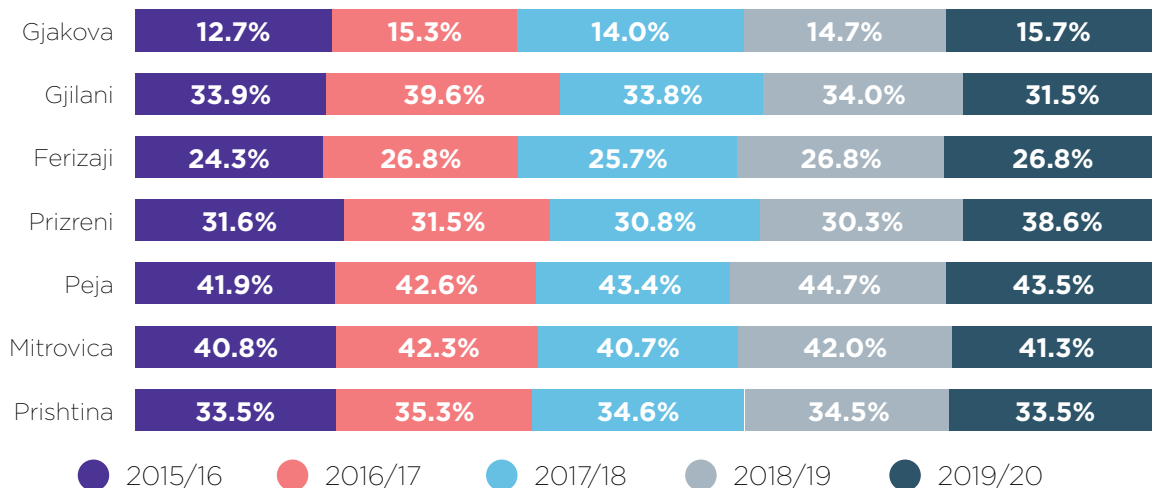
Figures 22, 23 and 24 represent the percentage of students enrolled in profiles in the three most required fields of study in vocational education by regions of Kosovo.

Figure 22 Percentage of students enrolled in profiles of business, administration and justice by regions of Kosovo 2015 - 2019



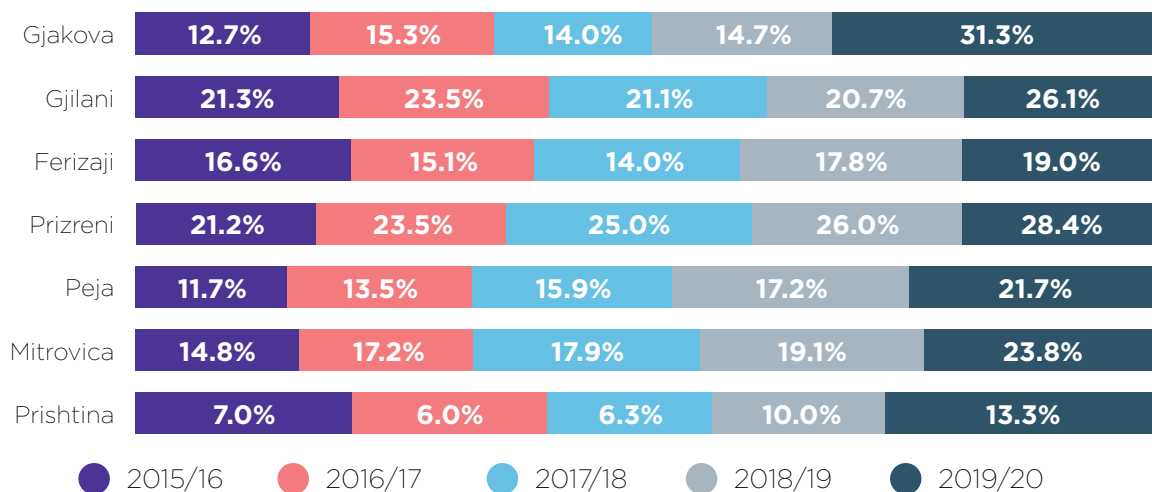
Source: Data provided by MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

Figure 23 Percentage of students enrolled in profiles of engineering, production and construction by regions of Kosovo 2015 - 2019



Source: Data provided by MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

Figure 24 Percentage of students enrolled in profiles of health and well-being by regions of Kosovo 2015 - 2019



Source: Data provided by MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

The baseline study report on vocational education and training in Kosovo prepared by the YES project funded by GIZ, found that about 83% of all vocational schools prepare an annual self-evaluation report and submit it to National Qualifications Authority (NQA). Almost 88% of vocational schools have a quality coordinator, but in many cases, the quality coordinator has very limited time to complete the task, as they still have a teaching rate of more than 50%. The self-evaluation reports and improvement plans follow a template described by the NQA and most vocational schools do not attach much importance to the self-evaluation report or the improvement plan, as there is no harmonized feedback mechanism from the NQA and it rarely visits vocational

schools, except for those institutions that provide accredited education and vocational training or are in the process of accreditation.

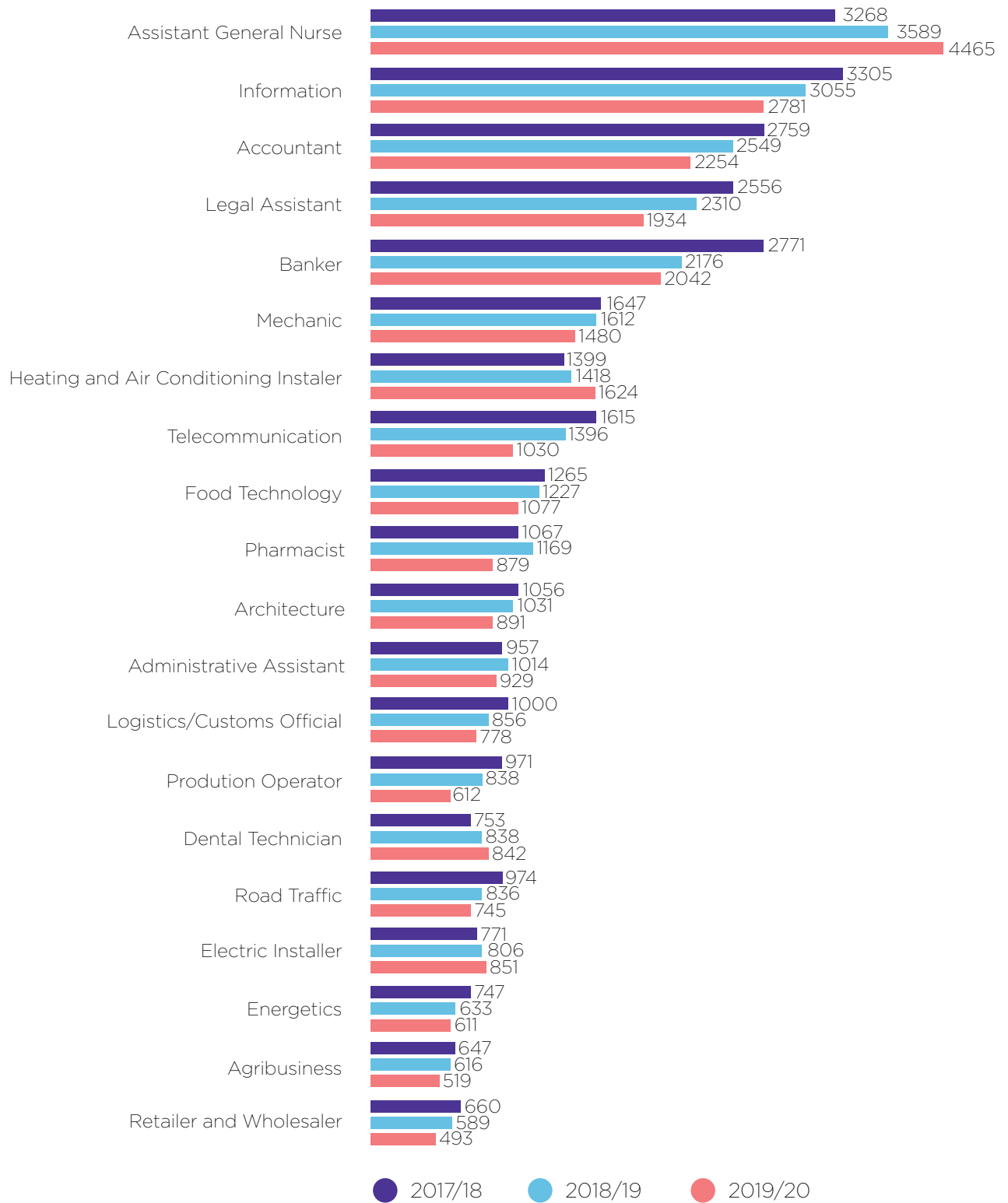
The leadership team of VET schools in Kosovo is dominated by men, who are over 50 years old, with more than half of them having no previous experience in running schools. In addition, most of them are politically appointed and not based on merit. They have limited decision-making powers, most vocational school directors believe that they or School Boards have no responsibility in terms of staff recruitment, in decisions on programs offered or in decisions on salaries or budget. On the other hand, most schools have School Boards with formal business representation.

Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning, which was established in order to serve as an advisory body for vocational education and training policies, and with responsibility for professional standards at the national level has not been functional for more than 5 years and the process of coordinating the development and approval of professional standards was executed by the VET Department in MESTI. Furthermore, the Law on Vocational Education and Training provides that the functioning of this Council be regulated by a sub-legal act issued by the MESTI, but this sub-legal act has not yet been drafted/approved by the MESTI.

10.3 Enrollment in deficiency courses and participation of girls in technical courses

In 2019/20, the largest number of students in vocational education enrolled for the profiles: general nursing, informatics, accountant, banker, legal assistant, heating and air conditioning installments, auto mechanic, food technology and telecommunications. Profiles with a tendency to increase students' interest compared to 2017/18 are general nursing, heating and air conditioning installer, dental technician and electrical installer. Figure 25 presents the 20 most preferred profiles in vocational schools in the 2017 - 2019 period.

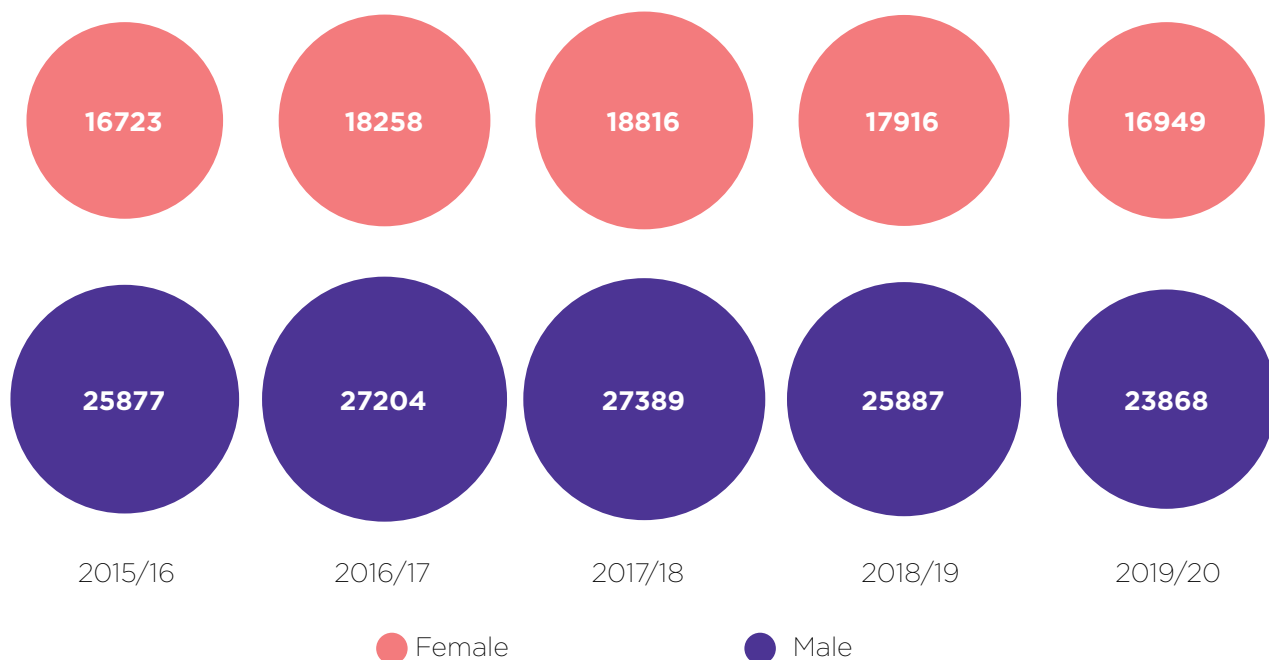
Figure 25 Number of students in the 20 most favorite profiles in VET 2017-2019



In 2019/20, 18,236 students or 44.7% of the total number of students in VET attend school in deficiency profiles.

About 41.5% of students in vocational education are girls. This participation rate in 2019/20 has increased compared to 2016/17 when about 40% of girls in vocational education were identified.

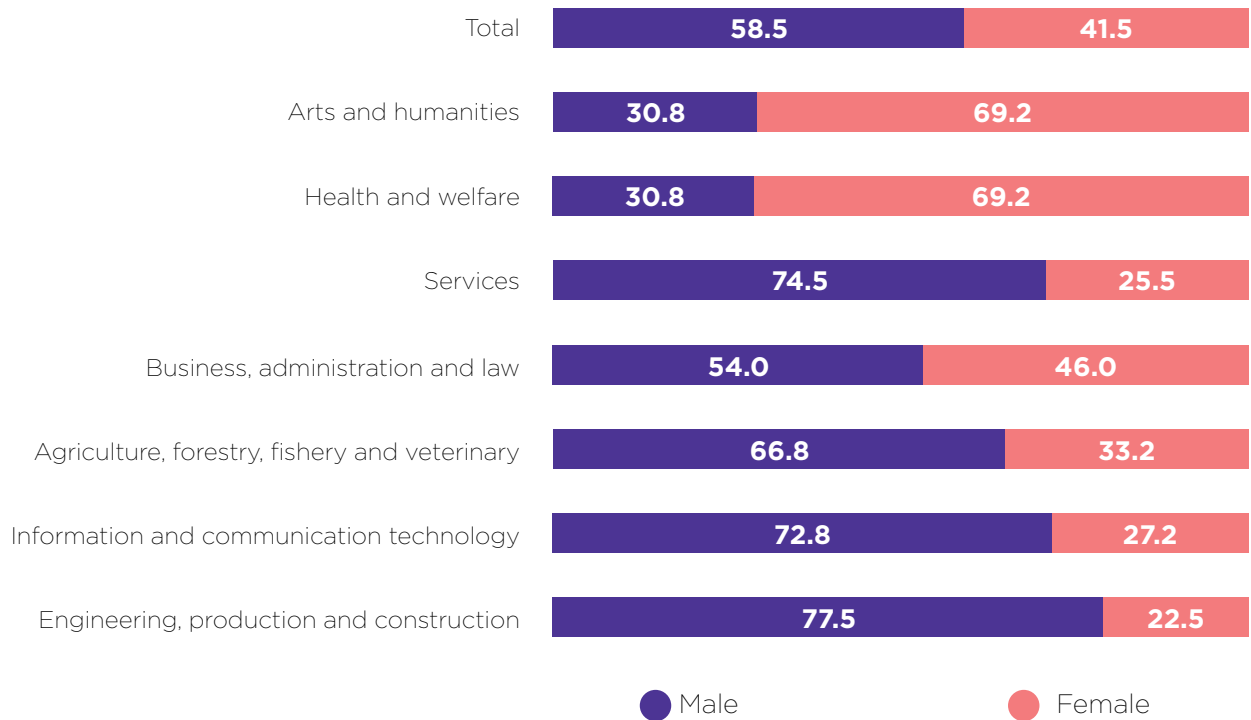
Figure 26 Number of VET students by gender 2019/20



Source: MESTI, Education Statistics 2019/20

The gender analysis of enrollment in vocational education shows the tendency of girls enrolling for profiles of health and wellbeing, business, administration and justice. Boys tend to enroll in profiles of engineering, manufacturing and construction, and information and communication technologies.

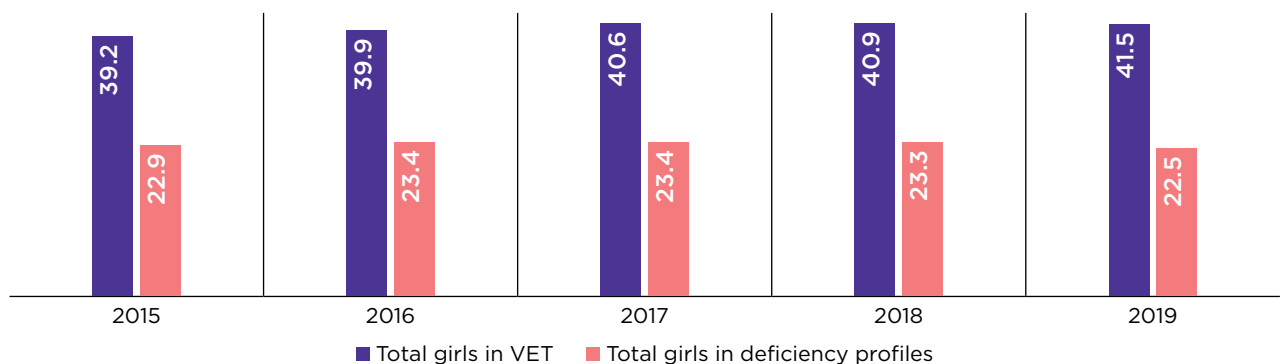
Figure 27 Percentage of VET students by gender and ISCED 2019/20 fields



Source: Data provided by MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

In 2019/20 in the technical profiles (profiles in engineering, production and construction) about 2,960 girls attend education, that compared to the total number of students in these profiles in technical directions represents 22.5%. The gender parity index in technical directions is 0.22.

Figure 28 Percentage of female students in VET and in technical profiles 2019/20



Source: Data provided by MESTI, EIMS 2019/20

During the 2017-2019 period, the fair of labor, and vocational education and training were organized on an annual basis in cooperation with MLSW, while at school level, open days and the fair of training firms were organized. These activities are planned as promotional campaigns to promote vocational education and vocational schools.

In 2020, MESTI has approved AI 136/2020 to create an incentive structure to support the education of students in deficient areas and for girls/women in technical areas in vocational education and training institutions.¹²⁵ In this regard, in 2020, MESTI has offered 20 scholarships worth € 500 per year for girls attending vocational schools in the profiles of food technology and agribusiness and has offered 40 scholarships for girls to enroll in technical fields in vocational schools, namely the profiles of installer of heating, air conditioning and water supply; electric installer; mechatronics; and auto mechanic.

10.4 Curricula and teaching materials in VET

Despite the fact that the development of the core curriculum for vocational education has been among the main objectives for several years, the VET curriculum is still missing. The development and approval of the core curriculum in vocational education should also include the revision of the curricula in all fields of study. Vocational education profiles should be revised to include the competencies of the vocation in the teaching curriculum, teaching staff and infrastructure. Delays in drafting/approving the VET Core Curriculum affect the inadequacy of VET programs with the needs of the labor market, which further hinder the employment of students attending vocational education and training. In recent years, several steps have been taken to review and design the curricula for some of the profiles and these have been piloted and continue piloting in some vocational schools.

Lack of textbooks and teaching materials for vocational high schools, especially for vocational subjects, is a major problem, well known and acknowledged in Kosovo. Despite this, nothing serious has been done by MESTI so far to address this problem. This is because in vocational schools there are many different directions and profiles, in which a small number of students are educated, therefore the publishing houses do not find it convenient to publish textbooks, which can be sold in very few copies.

During 2017-2019 period, teaching materials have been drafted for several profiles such as physiotherapy, mechatronics, food technology, agriculture, metalworking, medicine, entrepreneurship development, heating installer, fashion design and construction. In the absence of teaching materials for other profiles, vocational high school teachers are forced to improvise and find other solutions so that they can provide students with teaching materials. They are forced to use various sources, such as high school textbooks, university textbooks or certain chapters of these textbooks, to prepare their own summaries of materials and scripts, etc. Although KESP envisages developing the capacity of teachers to develop teaching and support materials according to the requirements of the curriculum and based on the needs of the economic sectors, it seems that not much has been done in this regard, as there are no reports of initiatives in this area. By

¹²⁵ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/12/udhzimi-administrativ-me-nr-136-2020-per-krijimin-e-strukture-stimuluse-per-mmbeshetjetje-e-shkollimit-te-nxensve-ne-drejtmet-deficitare-dhe-per-vajza-gra-ne-drejtme-teknike-ne-institucione-e-aap.pdf>

not having special textbooks, which would be updated and republished from time to time, it seems that vocational high school teachers are forced to use outdated textbooks and materials. MESTI has developed several guidelines for various aspects such as the design of teaching materials; teaching methods in vocational high schools; pedagogical training of teachers; and drafting school development plans.

10.5 Practical schooling and on-the-job training with the employer

Due to the nature and function of vocational schools, it is unimaginable for them to function without providing conditions and opportunities for internship for students during their schooling. The professional practice of students during schooling is among the main determinants of how well students will be prepared to implement their profession following their graduation from vocational high schools. The concept of vocational education and training is built on practical learning in schools and learning in the workplace of the employer (business, NGO, institution). Practical schooling and on-the-job learning with the employer remain among the main challenges of VET in Kosovo. Practical teaching in school is implemented within school workshops (only a small number of workshops in schools are equipped with appropriate tools and equipment from donor projects), in improvised workshops (training firms) and within the employer's premises. Although the curriculum documents stipulate that the employer's professional practice is integrated into the VET curriculum, in practice this is not systematically implemented.

In recent years it has been noticed that there is an improvement in student participating in learning in the workplace with the employer and that there is an improvement in school-employer relations, but there are still many challenges in this regard. As a result of not conducting any learning in the workplace, students fail to prepare for the job market and develop their practical job skills.

To a large extent, teaching in the workplace is organized in the form of a block system only for the 12th grade, while for grades 10 and 11 only practical teaching in school is realized. This happens for several reasons, among the most important ones being: lack of sufficient space in the school for the accomplishment of practical teaching; saving of consumable materials in the school workshops, and the insistence of employers that students conduct the internship in this form, due to the organization of their work process. The quality of learning in the workplace of the employer differs according to professional profiles. For example, in the field of machinery and electrical engineering, a large number of students conduct their professional practice in the enterprise and are offered the opportunity to be directly involved in the work processes.

The teacher of professional practice in vocational schools is responsible for initiating agreements with employers and for finding opportunities for learning in the workplace of students. However, in most cases, students find their own internship opportunities, based on the recommendations of family or friends. The schools that are under the jurisdiction of VETAL have two teachers, namely the practical teacher and the instructor. One of them is responsible for the practical training inside the school, while the other is responsible for finding opportunities for professional practice of 12th grade students through employers. In this sense, the responsibilities are separate, and this ensures a higher degree of success in the student's attendance at workplace.

The impressions received from VET schools and employers show that on-the-job learning and practical learning are not carried out as effectively as they should be. The problems of conducting learning in the workplace are different, presented by both schools and employers. Despite the willingness of employers to admit students to learning in the workplace, they generally do not have the capacity to accommodate a large number of students. Most Kosovar enterprises are micro and small ones, and their vision for development is short-term. Therefore, students are divided into groups, and the time they spend with the employer is divided between each group during the school year. Moreover, even in cases when students carry out on-the-job learning with the employer, this is rarely done with proper planning based on the curriculum requirements.

Student monitoring should be done by the professional practice teacher, but employers point out that there are times when the teacher never goes to the employer and the students are supervised only by the employer. In some cases, student monitoring is done in collaboration between the employer and the school. However, the school only monitors student attendance, while their performance is the responsibility of the employer.

Other challenges that hinder the realization of learning in the workplace are the lack of long-term development plans in most enterprises, and the lack of coordinators in schools who would serve as facilitators between schools and employers. Also, in many cases when employers are away from school or municipality, the financial implications pose an obstacle for employers and schools, due to lack of sufficient school budget to cover the cost of transporting students.

Recently, MESTI has approved AI 137/2020 on Learning in the Workplace in vocational education and training institutions, which regulates the way of organizing, implementing and evaluating students during the workplace learning.¹²⁶ Also, Regulation 135/2020 on the protection and preservation of students' health during practical training at school and in the workplace has been approved.¹²⁷

During 2017-2019 it was planned to run workshops in order to build a platform for school-enterprise cooperation, but they were not held. However, many information trainings were held for VET schools regarding the instruments issued by the Busulla.com platform. Furthermore, training programs for teachers for career counseling have been developed and interventions have been made in new career centers in Kaçanik, Ferizaj, Gjakova, Viti, Vushtrri, Prishtina, Prizren and Peja, with about 40 enterprises and 100 students in vocational schools, where work-based learning is being piloted.

In recent years, several training programs have been implemented for vocational school teachers for career counseling and cooperation with employers, as well as investments in career centers in vocational schools. To support the workplace learning with the employer for students of vocational education in the school year 2018/19 an additional budget in the amount of about 1 million EUR was allocated. The additional budget was planned for the training and certification of teachers and instructors for professional practice in school and with the employer, for accident insurance during workplace learning at the employer, for protective equipment and the purchase of raw materials to conduct practical training in vocational school workshops.

Some activities foreseen in the action plan that may affect a better functioning of vocational schools were

¹²⁶ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/12/udhzimi-administrative-me-nr-137-2020-te-mesurit-ne-vendin-e-punese-ne-iaap.pdf>
¹²⁷ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/12/udhzimi-administrative-me-nr-137-2020-te-mesurit-ne-vendin-e-punese-ne-iaap.pdf>

not conducted during the 2017-2020 period. To date, no instrument has been developed to stimulate enterprises to admit students into practice. Also, students and instructors who travel to do internship in enterprises are not transported, with the exception of some municipalities that have these costs covered. Other activities that have not been fully conducted or have been partially conducted, are: institutionalized payment of insurance for students, support of school workshops for different vocational profiles and drafting of the criteria document for the establishment of public-private partnerships in education.

In recent years, a large number of cooperation agreements have been signed with employers for the admission of students to workplace learning, but there is no accurate evidence of these agreements nor reporting on the degree of their implementation in practice. Cooperation agreements between employers and vocational schools are generally written and they express the willingness of partners to cooperate to a certain extent. However, the obligations that the employer must meet for the development of competency-based skills are not mentioned in it, and the students' obligations during workplace learning are not defined.¹²⁸

Vocational schools mainly have cabinets and workshops for a specific number of educational profiles. The workshops are not fully used and in some cases not regularly supplied with raw materials needed for practical training. Vocational schools complain that MEDs do not supply them with raw materials according to their needs. When they are supplied, it is usually partial and with delays of up to six months.¹²⁹

The complex state of workplace learning is also confirmed by vocational schools. Vocational school leaders say that workplace learning is based solely on school initiatives, using private connections, and that there is always a lack of institutional support. Employers do not accept large numbers of students, so schools are forced to send students in small groups. Enterprises do not have the capacity to accommodate large numbers of students. Usually, 1 to 10 students are admitted into a given enterprise.

Vocational school leaders testify that cooperation with employers in the implementation of workplace learning varies according to the profiles offered by the school. For the most demanded profiles in the market, the cooperation of schools with employers is better, while for the less demanded profiles there is a lack of cooperation or it is very weak. It is also noted that different profiles have different characteristics and challenges and that there is no unique policy that could be implemented to encourage employers in different sectors to cooperate with vocational schools, respectively to conduct workplace learning of students. The cooperation of employers with vocational schools is mainly on voluntary basis as support to the school, and very little because of their benefits from their cooperation with schools.

Coordinators for cooperation with employers are missing in many schools and in most cases, this task is covered by the vocational practice teacher.

The budget allocation for vocational schools does not take into account the special needs of the profiles offered by different schools, which is why some of the VET schools spend a lot on the materials that will be used for the practical teaching. When the budget is not enough to provide the necessary materials, students are left without the opportunity to practice the theoretical part in school workshops.

128 ALLED2, EIPP, 2019. Gjendja aktuale në Arsimin dhe Aftësimin Profesional në Kosovë: Publication of project "Harmonizimi i Arsimin dhe i Aftësimin me Nevojat e Tregut të Punës 2. <http://alled.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Vocational-Edu-AL-Final-Print.pdf>

129 Ibid.

The Government of Germany through the German Development Bank (KfW) has financed the “Kosovo Challenges Fund” program by allocating € 5.8 million to support vocational education in Kosovo. The fund is a financing instrument, created to increase the employment of vocational education graduates, and to strengthen the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in Kosovo. The fund aims to strengthen the quality and importance of the labor market of vocational education and training by financing investments in equipment and infrastructure, for selected collaborative training projects implemented by partner enterprises between vocational schools and enterprises. The fund will operate until 2025 and plans to fund 20 collaborative training projects. The amount of project grants varies from € 100,000 - € 600,000.

10.6 Counseling and career guidance

Career counseling and guidance is an essential service for a functioning VET system. Career counseling and guidance remains a challenge and the services provided are still limited in some municipalities. In some municipalities there are career counseling and guidance centers or career counseling and guidance offices located within schools. These were made possible mainly by various project initiatives, and not as a result of a comprehensive plan. In this respect, adult education stands in a worse position, as the lack of counseling and career guidance does not help adults when deciding whether to continue their education or requalify in line with the needs of the labor market. In 2017, the Professional Standard for Career Advisor was developed, verified and approved by the NQA.

During 2017-2020 different municipalities were supported in establishing 4 Career Orientation Centers, 5 Gymnasiums in 5 different municipalities for the establishment of Career and Entrepreneurship Centers, and several schools were supported to establish Career Clubs which aim to create ongoing activities for career guidance and entrepreneurship promotion.

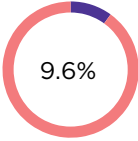
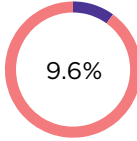
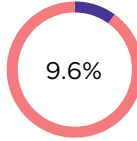
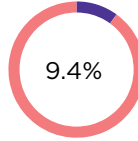
No progress has been made in appointing counselors for career counseling and guidance.

10.7 Funding the vocational education and training

Funding for vocational education within the general budget for education has not shown any significant increase in recent years. The increase in expenditures on vocational education has been devoted almost entirely to expenditures on teachers' salaries and to financing the salary increases in the sector. Government investments in other categories of vocational education expenditures such as capital investments, goods and services and other current expenditures have gradually declined.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ MESTI, 2019. Annual KESP Evaluation Report.

Table 10 Public spending on vocational education and training 2016-2019

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Expenditures for VET (in millions of €)	25.833	25.692	27.375	28.584
VET expenditures as % of education expenditures				
Expenditures for students in VET (in €)	560.5	557.4	625	713.1

Source: MESTI, Annual Evaluation Report 2019

The current formula of financing vocational education is generalized according to the profile per student and not with any differentiation of expenses according to the specific requirements of the profiles. The collected data show there is a regulation on planning and spending of own source revenues made by educational institutions and vocational training and adult education, but in practical terms, such institutions have had difficulties in managing their own source revenues. A number of public vocational schools generate their own revenues, going up to several thousand (€ 5,000- € 6,000), effectively supplementing the budget of vocational schools, for both salaries and goods and services. Candidates enrolled in adult education pay approximately € 130 per year. Also, a number of vocational schools, which offer agricultural programs, generate income from selling agricultural products.¹³¹

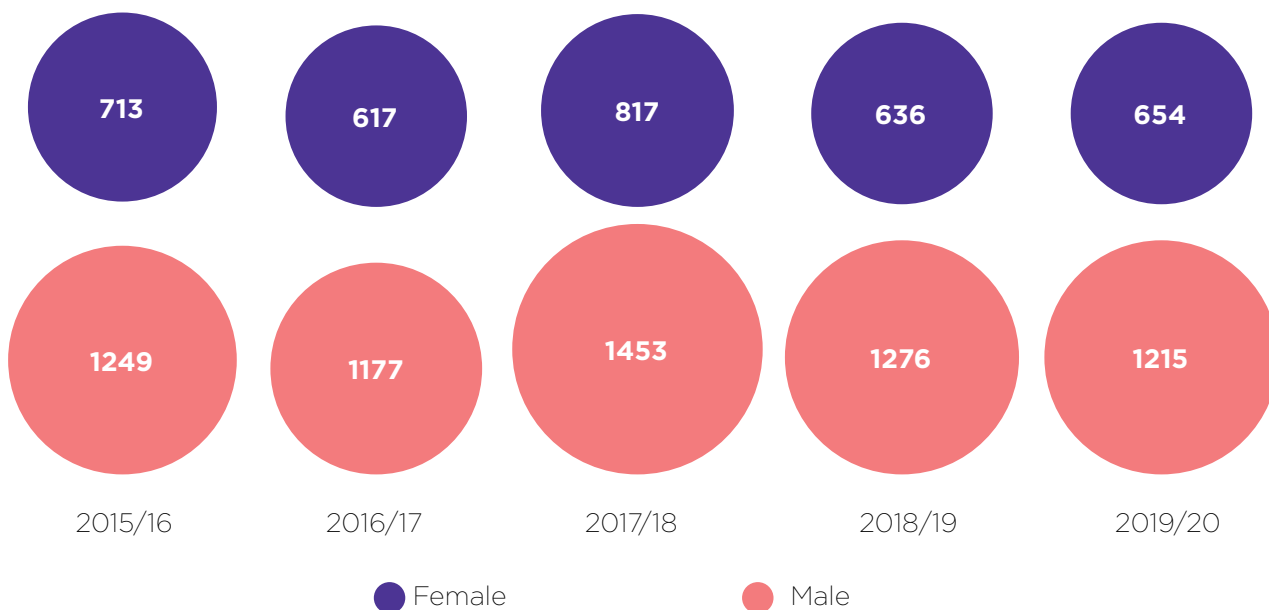
131 ALLED2, EIPP, 2019. Gjendja aktuale në Arsimin dhe Aftësimin Profesional në Kosovë: Publication of project "Harmonizimi i Arsimin dhe i Aftësimin me Nevojat e Tregut të Punës 2. <http://alled.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Vocational-Edu-AL-Final-Print.pdf>

10.8 Adult learning

Adult learning and training means the whole education and training provided for adults and/or young people who are eligible to attend adult learning curricula.

EIMS has started to collect and report data on adult learning that enables monitoring of the situation in this sector. During the school year 2019/20, a total of 1,869 adults were included in vocational secondary education, of which 654 were women. Gender parity index in adult education is 0.53. Unfortunately, there are no data on adult involvement in various forms of non-formal education. Collecting data on adult learning and lifelong learning remains one of the main challenges. The capacity to collect and process developments in the non-public sector is limited. There is also lack of occupational standards and a curriculum for providing adult learning.

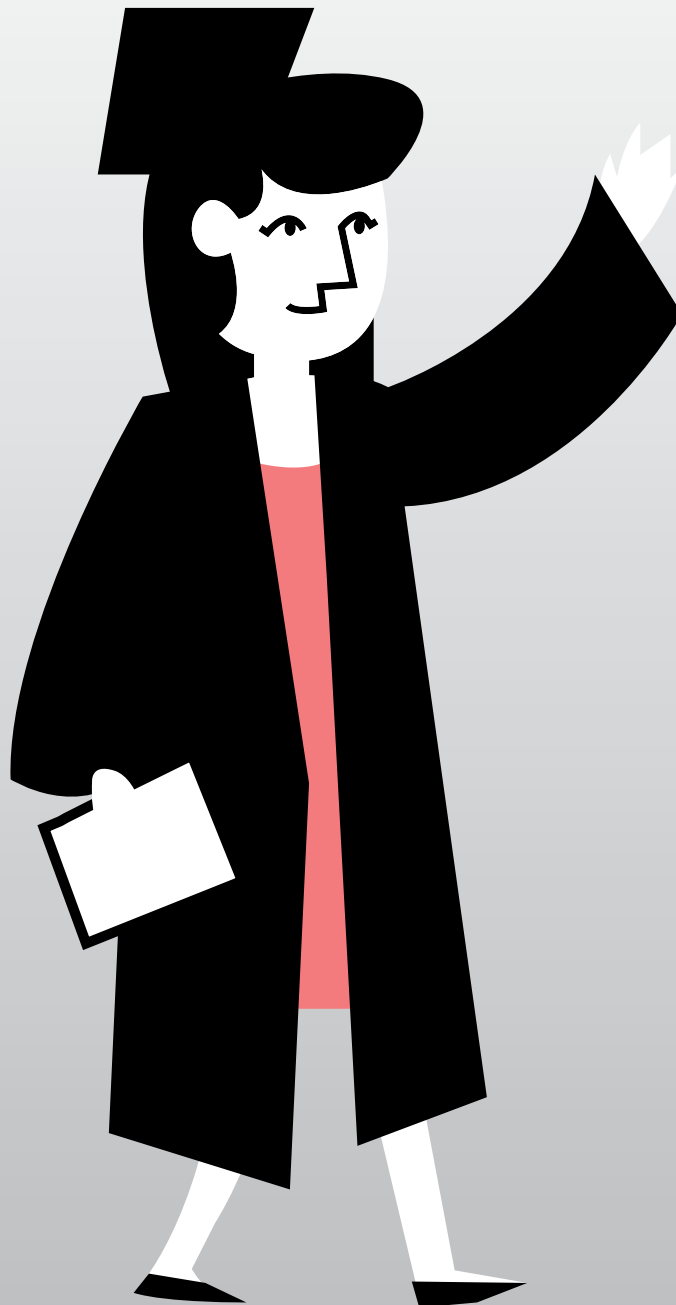
Figure 29 Attendants in adult education and training 2015 - 2019



Source: Education Statistics 2019/20, MESTI

In the context of increasing the supply of education at level 5 of qualifications, the collected data show that the study envisaged in the KESP action plan has not been carried out, regarding the needs for providing qualifications at level 5. On the other hand, as foreseen, some level 5 programs have been developed, but not by public vocational schools, but by other informal public providers and private VET providers. According to data from the NQA, there are 10 institutions which have passed the process of validation 19 qualifications at level 5 and accrediting institutions for their provision.

HIGHER EDUCATION



11. Performance appraisal - Objective 7: Higher Education

One of the seven strategic objectives of KESP is higher education with the aim of improving the quality and competitiveness of higher education through promoting excellence in teaching, research, artistic creativity, innovation and internationalization. For the strategic objective for higher education, 11 targeted results, 47 strategic measures, as well as success indicators that serve to monitor their implementation have been defined. The activities for the implementation of these measures are summarized in an action plan and the budget for implementation is calculated, which for higher education amounts to a total of € 22,232,500.

The main priorities in KESP for this area are quality improvement in higher education institutions, including adapting study programs to the demands of the labor market, promoting scientific research, and providing support for academic development for higher education institutions. Attention is also paid to the quality of teaching and the need to increase the number and mobility of academic staff and students, as well as to increase participation in international higher education and scientific research programs.

11.1 Enrollment trends in higher education

In 2020, the higher education system in Kosovo consisted of 32 accredited institutions of higher education, of which 9 public institutions and 23 private ones. With this number of higher education institutions Kosovo continues to be one of the countries with the largest number of higher education institutions per 1 million inhabitants.

The number of students in higher education has been declining in the last three years. In the academic year 2019/20, a total of 95,176 students attended studies in accredited institutions of higher education, of which 58.3% were women (Table 11).

Table 11 Students in accredited institutions of higher education in the academic year 2019/20

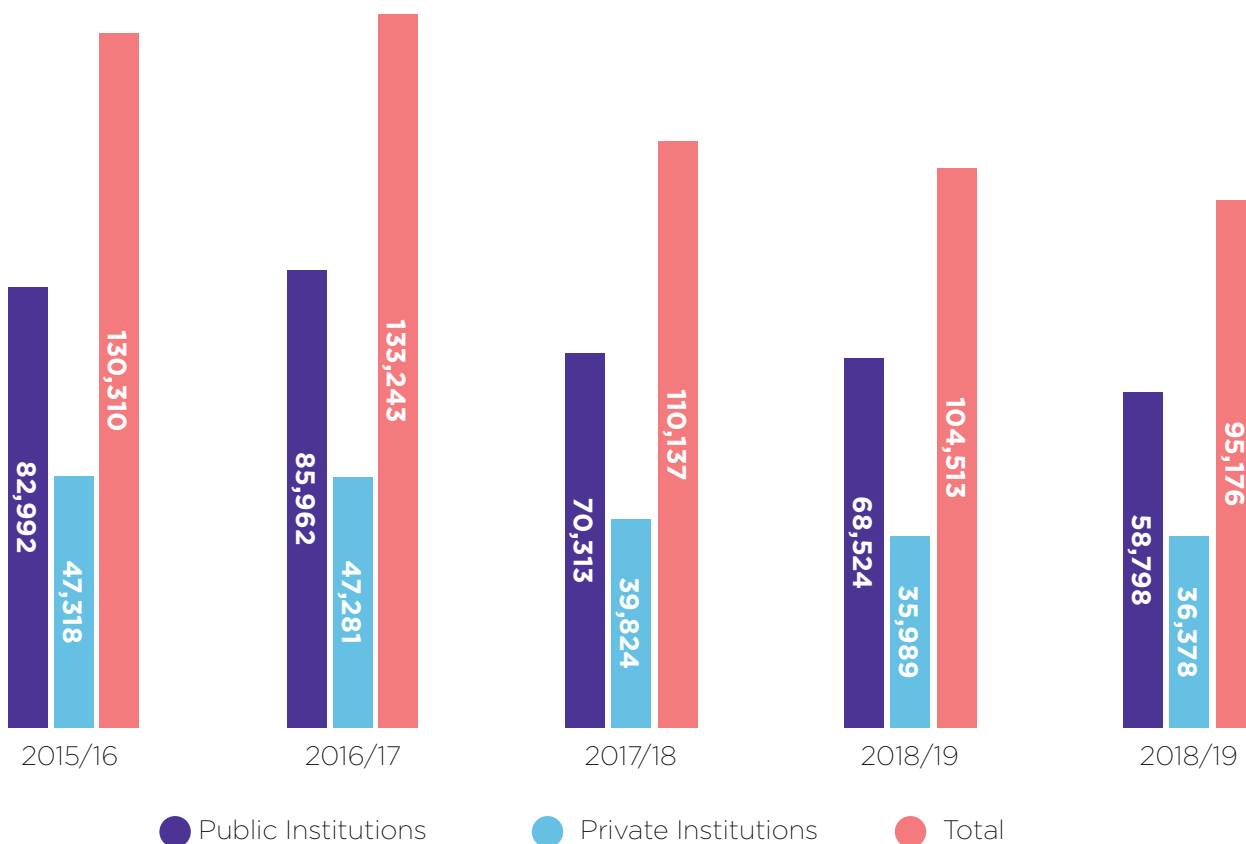
Institution	Bachelor		Master		Total	
	T	F	T	F	T	F
University of Prishtina	29,531	17,898	6,064	3,687	35,595	21,585
University of Prizren	3,776	2,776	259	144	4,035	2,920
University of Peja	9,613	3,916	1,470	840	11,083	4,756
University of Mitrovica	1,660	1,126	152	72	1,812	1,198
University of Gjilan	2,522	1,694	137	65	2,659	1,759
University of Gjakova	1,653	1,399			1,653	1,399
University of Applied Sciences Ferizaj	1,336	719	102	60	1,438	779
Faculty of Islamic Studies	274	113	21	5	295	118
Academy for Public Safety	228	18			228	18
Public institutions	50,593	29,659	8,205	4,873	58,798	34,532
Private colleges ¹³²	32,621	18,734	3,757	2,261	36,378	20,995
Total	83,214	48,393	11,962	7,134	95,176	55,527

Source: Education Statistics 2018/19 and 2019/20, MESTI

The decrease in number of students in the last three years is evident in Figure 30, and this is greater in public institutions of higher education in Kosovo. Here one must take into account the fact that the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, in its decisions for accreditation of study programs since 2017 has determined the number of students that can enroll in those programs.

¹³² For the private colleges AAB, AUK, Fama, Rezonanca and Kosovo Art Academy data on the number of students were obtained from education statistics 2018/19 since they were not published in education statistics 2019/20.

Figure 30 Students in higher education institutions in the last five years

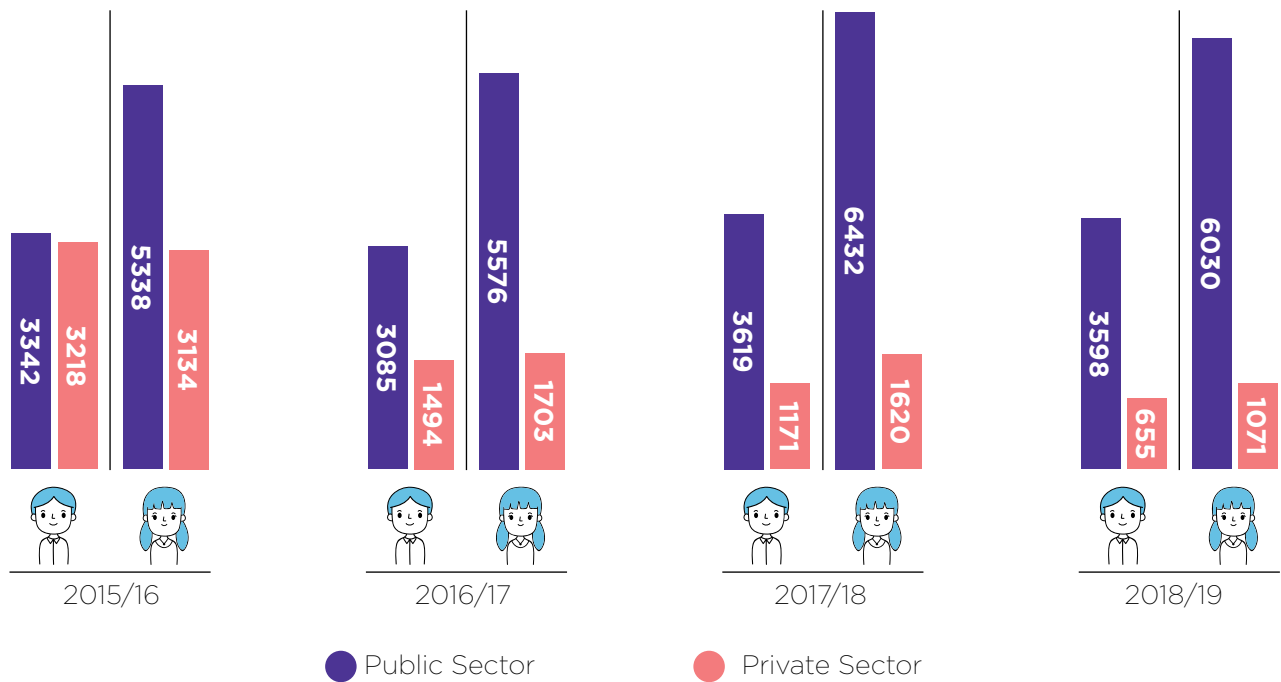


Source: Education Statistics 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/2020, MESTI

Based on the 2019/20 data, about 56.7% of gross students in the 18-22 age group attend higher education in Kosovo. Female participation in higher education is of a satisfactory level. Women make up 58.7% of students in the public sector and 57.7% of students in the private sector. The gender parity index in higher education in Kosovo is 1.4.

During 2018/19, about 11,354 students graduated at the bachelor and master levels in various study programs in both public and private sectors. The private sector contributes about 15.2% of graduates. Figure 31 shows the number of graduate students in bachelor and master studies during 2015/16 - 2018/19 academic years. The data show that women respond better to their obligations than men, with 62.5% of graduates in the academic year 2018/19 being women. The timely graduation rate of students is not satisfactory.

Figure 31 Number of graduate students in bachelor and master studies 2015/16-2018/19

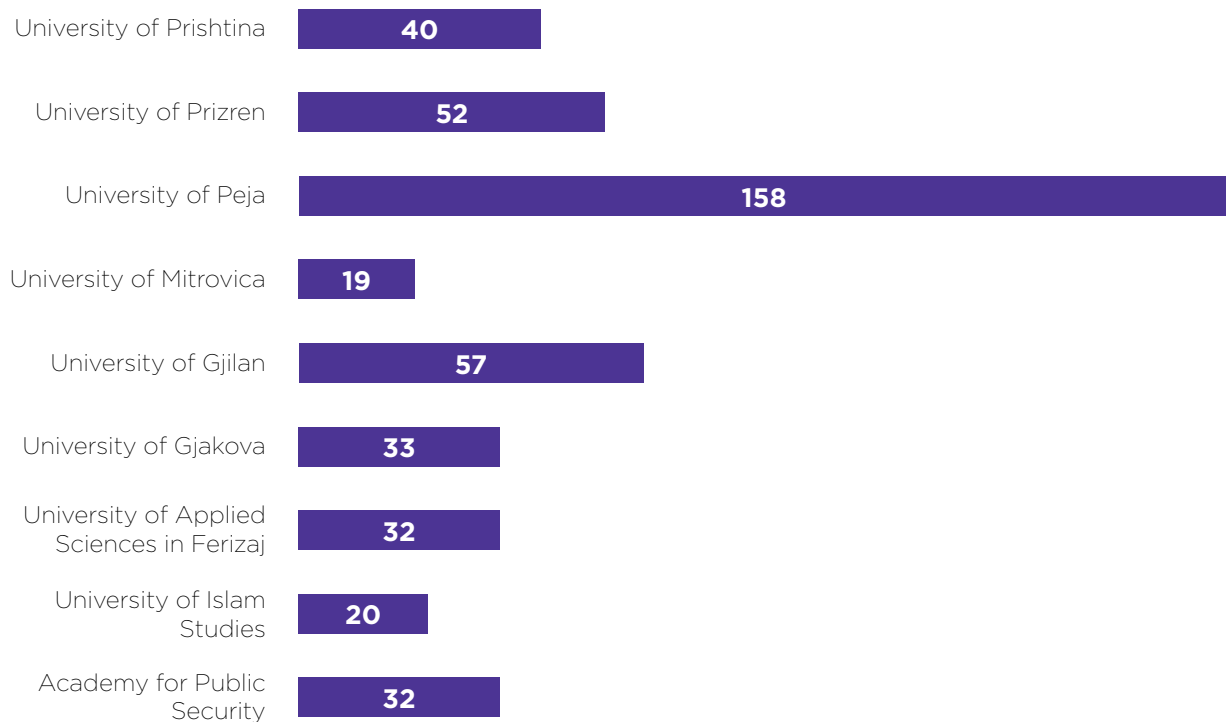


Source: Education Statistics 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/2020, MESTI

11.2 Academic staff and students

In KESP, it is foreseen as part of outcomes that the ratio of academic staff to students be at least 1:40, namely about 40 students per 1 lecturer. Within the target outcome no details are provided on the calculation methodology and whether this includes regular and part-time teaching staff. According to data in 2019/20, in public institutions of higher education in Kosovo there are 1,297 members of academic staff in regular employment. The "professor-student" ratio in public institutions is 1:45 and the University of Peja is in the most difficult situation. This professor-student ratio at the University of Prishtina, in spite of improvement, continues to be high, compared to universities in the region. In Albania it is 1:24, in Serbia 1:23, in Macedonia 1:17, and in Croatia 1:9.

Figure 32 shows the academic staff - students ratio in public institutions of higher education, calculating the number of students in the academic year 2019/20 and the number of regular academic staff in higher education institutions.

Figure 32 Professor-student ratio in public institutions of higher education in Kosovo

Source: Education Statistics 2019/20, MESTI

This ratio improves to some extent when considering the academic staff engaged on part-time basis, although it should not be overlooked that a good part of them may be the same people, who work in several institutions of higher education at the same time.

Insufficient number of qualified academic staff directly affects the quality of higher education. In this regard, a research conducted, reports on a large number of diploma thesis supervised by few professors of the University of Prishtina who teach in programs where the "professor-student" ratio is unfavorable.¹³³ Other risks posed by the insufficient number of qualified academic staff are large groups of students, whereby the teacher fails to pay due attention to the individual needs of students, while the knowledge evaluation process is superficial.

In a research conducted on the UP academic staff, it is found that out of 840 members of the academic staff with CVs published on the UP website, 257 (31%) are engaged at least in one other public or private higher education institution. Of these, 141 are engaged in private institutions, 85 in public, 29 are in private and public, while 48 (5.71%) are engaged in three other educational institutions. It is estimated that other engagements outside UP negatively affect the progress of the teaching process.¹³⁴

¹³³ Pazari me tema të diplomës, Buletin Preportr, 2017. <http://preportr.cohu.org/sq/hulumtime/Pazari-me-tema-te-diplomes-224>

¹³⁴ Admovere, 2018. UP academic staff: studies, other engagements, plagiarism, evaluations and student staff ratio. http://admovere.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/admovere_plagjiaturaUP_ALB_web-2.pdf

On the other hand, academic staff in public universities are paid much more than their counterparts in neighboring countries. Albania's professors are paid from € 600 (lecturer) to € 1000 (full professor), while North Macedonian professors are paid from € 400 to € 600. Basic salaries for public university professors in Kosovo are from € 772 (assistant) to € 1429 (full professor).¹³⁵

Despite the fact that KESP envisages the development of 10 new doctoral programs in various fields of study in order to create staff for public higher educational institutions, since 2018 no doctoral level program has been developed. In the 2016/17–2019/20 period, only the University of Prishtina has offered 15 doctoral programs, accepting 202 candidates. Despite the fact that the KESP every year provides support for 20 students with scholarships for doctoral studies to meet the needs of public institutions of higher education and create staff in deficit/strategic profiles, only a limited number of scholarships have been offered for this purpose. KESP also envisaged the development of mechanisms for student admission by higher education institutions based on their staffing capacity. Although public institutions of higher education in Kosovo have not recruited/appointed officials responsible for planning and analysis of student admission, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, since the academic year 2016/17 in its decisions for accreditation of study programs began determining the number of students that can enroll.

11.3 Professional development of academic staff

From many student surveys it turns out that many professors still use classical lecturing techniques with no interactive student involvement. Currently, only the University of Prishtina and the University of Gjakova have established and functionalized Teaching Excellence Offices, which have developed development strategies. None of the other public institutions of higher education in Kosovo have established/functionalized such offices to provide academic staff with academic development services, namely various training programs related to new teaching and research methodologies. In the vast majority of cases, the development of academic staff is a purely voluntary process of individuals rather than an institutional approach which is implemented on the basis of a published and consistently applied plan.

Other activities planned in KESP related to the evaluation of the needs of the academic staff for professional development, the drafting of plans for the professional development of the academic staff, and the development of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the work of the academic staff are formally implemented in public higher educational institutions in Kosovo.

135 ORCA, 2019. "Bourgeoisie" of the Academy - Research on the personal income of the academic management staff in the public universities of Kosovo. <http://orca-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Borgjezia-e-Akademis%C3%AB.pdf>

11.4 Quality assurance in higher education

In Kosovo, the accreditation process is applied based on the quality assurance approach, or meeting the minimum quality criteria set out in local legislation. The accreditation process in Kosovo is a mandatory legal process and higher education institutions have legal consequences if they fail to obtain accreditation. The quality assurance system has not yet matured enough to implement a system based on a quality enhancement approach or quality culture as is the case in developed European countries.¹³⁶

Unfortunately, there is a tendency to improvise the accreditation process from both sides: KAA in the absence of human capacities has failed to verify the accuracy of information and evidence provided by higher education institutions during the accreditation process, which has directly affected the undeserved accreditation of many institutions. On the other hand, higher education institutions do not see internal quality assurance as a regular process of their institution which should serve them as a guide for decision making and strategic planning but rather view it as an instrument of decision making for accreditation.

In most cases, the internal evaluation of higher education institutions is mechanical, not taken as a discussion of quality but simply as paperwork and a bureaucratic exercise. While external evaluation creates hierarchical communicative situations, and is officially called "interview". This term is very different from the discussion, which is less hierarchical and more fruitful compared to the interview conducted by experts, where communication is one-way and interaction minimal, turning this process into a bureaucratic mechanical exercise.¹³⁷

Apart from the accreditation process which is followed by many challenges, the monitoring system is not applied, in spite of it being a continuous quality assurance process which checks whether the institution continues to maintain the quality standards with which it was initially accredited. In the absence of human resources the KAA fails to ensure whether the specific recommendations or requirements of international accreditation experts are addressed by higher education institutions to ensure that quality criteria and accreditation conditions are consistently maintained. MESTI inspection is a sporadic process mostly oriented towards the control of the technical and legal aspects of higher education institutions, without significant impact on the quality of study programs.

In recent years, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency has demonstrated a stricter stance in the accreditation process, resulting in a reduction of the number of study programs in higher education (Table 11). In the academic year 2019/2020 the number of study programs accredited in HEIs is 362 in all levels. Most study programs are in bachelor's and master's degrees. The number of doctoral programs is relatively small (19 programs). The total number of accredited programs has dropped from 468 programs in 2015 to 362 programs in 2020. Most accredited study programs are in the public sector (234), while the private sector has 128 accredited programs. Compared to 2019, in 2020 there are more accredited programs in public institutions of higher education since the three public universities have already re-obtained institutional accreditation and consequently the programs that were accredited were enabled to enroll students, and accreditation was given to other programs which have not had accreditation. Thus, the number of accredited programs during 2020 has increased in the

¹³⁶ ASHAK (2021). Platform for Education Recovery in Kosovo.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Bachelor level for 53 and in the Master level for 17 programs.

Table 11 Programs accredited by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency

Academic year	Bachelor	Master	Doctorate	Integrated	Level 5	Total
2013/14	270	181	26	/	/	477
2014/15	262	180	26	/	/	468
2017/18	221	109	19	7	1	357
2018/19	226	113	19	7	1	366
2019	154	113	19	6	1	293
2020	207	130	19	5	1	362

Source: Information from KAA

The KAA Board was dismissed in September 2017 by the Minister of MESTI, resulting in the exclusion of KAA from The European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), as a consequence of the violation of the independence of the institution and the political pressure on this independent institution. Following the expulsion from EQAR, the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education (ENQA) also expelled the KAA on the grounds that its institutional position does not ensure full independence from political interference. Diven by the pressure from civil society organizations MESTI has issued a sub-legal act setting out the criteria and procedures for the appointment of the KAA board. The new approach for the selection of the KAA board was assessed as more transparent and resulted in a new composition of the KAA board, elected for the first time by the Assembly of Kosovo. However, at the beginning of 2021, 5 members of the KAA board resigned, including the chairman, vice-chairman and three international members. The KAA Board currently has only 4 local members.

In the KESP, activities are foreseen within the objective for the development and expansion of human and financial capacities of KAA to apply ESG (European Standard Guidelines) standards on quality assurance. In relation to other countries in the region Kosovo has progressed in terms of building a formal quality assurance system in line with European standards. This is evidenced by the fact that up until 2019 Kosovo was a full member of the main European quality assurance mechanisms, such as ENQA and EQAR, compared to countries in the region which have not yet gained membership in these bodies. Although KAA is one of the oldest in the region, established in 2004, operational in 2008, it still has the smallest number of staff, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Correlation of Agency staff with quality in HEIs

	Slovenia	Serbia	Croatia	Bulgaria	Montenegro	Kosovo
Higher Education Institutions	41	17	47	51	8	32
Number of staff in the Accreditation Agency	20	40	20	30	14	7
Relation of HEIs/Agency staff	2	0.4	2.35	1.7	0.5	4.5
HEI with the best ranking according to Webometrics	271	403	542	942	1906	3022

Currently, the KAA operates through seven officials. Administrative difficulties in the recruitment process, criteria, workload compared to the salary of officials, the quality of case review, and many other issues have made KAA still unable to complete the necessary staff, and consequently it has not achieved the process of monitoring higher education institutions.¹³⁸ According to the Law on Budget Appropriations for 2021, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency has been allocated the budget for 32 posts, but recruitment has not yet been completed to fill these post.

KAA has drafted and approved its new standards based on European standards and guidelines ESG 2015. Also, KAA has functionalized the electronic platform "E-accreditation", through which many of the processes related to the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions, such as the declaration of academic staff engaged in institutions, are carried out electronically. The application for accreditation is not yet operational.

In recent years, the AI on accreditation of higher education institutions has been revised several times. Frequent change of AI for accreditation, especially regarding deadlines for submission of applications and declaration of academic staff, has created uncertainty among higher education institutions. In order to ensure full independence and higher efficiency in the decision-making processes for the accreditation of institutions and programs, as well as for better functioning, the KAA needs a special law. The creation of a special law for the Kosovo Accreditation Agency would provide the KAA with full institutional independence, so that its function would be in line with EQAR criteria and enable the KAA to establish its own policies. Due to the lack of a special law, over the years MESTI has approved AIs that directly affect the work of the KAA, such as the example with two amendments to the AI on accreditation of higher education institutions.¹³⁹

Despite the enthusiasm and commitment of the KAA to implement the requirements arising from the accreditation process, it has not yet developed the appropriate mechanisms to monitor the work of higher education institutions. In the KAA Strategic Plan of 2019-2023, monitoring is considered as one of the weaknesses of

138 ORCA (QAIN), 2021, Raport i monitorimit të Këshillit Shtetëror të Cilësisë 2, <http://orca-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Raporti-Monitorimit-te-Keshillit-Shteteror-2.pdf>

139 ORCA (QAIN), 2021, Raport i monitorimit të Këshillit Shtetëror të Cilësisë 2, <http://orca-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Raporti-Monitorimit-te-Keshillit-Shteteror-2.pdf>

the Agency, while the non-realization of this aspect of its work is attributed to lack of staff. The only form of monitoring currently carried out by the KAA is the remote verification of the academic staff of higher education institutions which, in some cases, has resulted in the suspension and withdrawal of accreditation. In this regard, KAA should draft the methodology document for monitoring quality in higher education institutions in accordance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance to ensure an effective monitoring process.

The dysfunctional internal quality assurance system is one of the weakest points of public institutions of higher education in Kosovo, which is also reflected in the quality of teaching. Public institutions do not have functionalized quality assurance offices, operate with limited staff capacities who deal with quality assurance aspects, have no quality assurance guidelines, self-evaluations are conducted only for the purpose of accreditation and not for the internal improvement of the institution and quality assurance instruments are limited to the evaluation of academic staff by students. These institutions have a great lack of academic staff, research and scientific capacities, financial autonomy, as well as internationalization and exchange of students and academic staff. Moreover, these institutions are still challenged by political influences in terms of selection of rectors, selection of academic staff and other governing structures within universities.

KESP envisages the establishment of Quality Assurance Offices in all public institutions of higher education and the training of academic units for quality assurance. Almost all public institutions of higher education have established Quality Assurance Offices. Through the projects of development partners, the training of coordinators for academic development of higher education institutions has been supported and workshops on program evaluation procedures and teaching have been organized.

Lack of KAA capacities and the problems that KAA has faced during the last two years have made KAA not carry out in-depth analysis of the system as planned in the KESP for the 2017/18 period. On the other hand, no draft law has been drafted to determine the criteria for ranking programs and institutions under the European Multidimensional Framework.

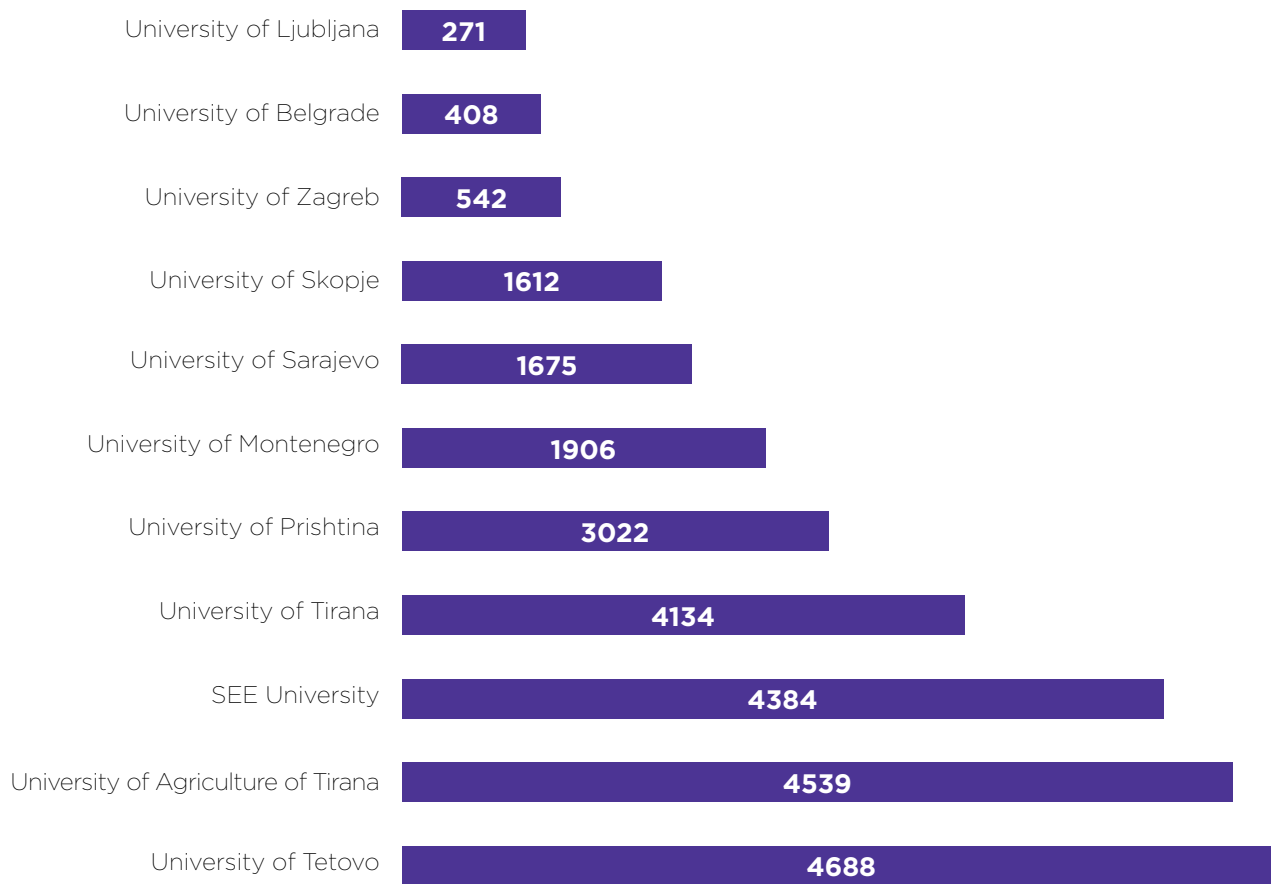
The small number of staff, diplomas obtained in foreign countries which for various reasons remain in the process or are not being recognized, lack of an online database, are just some of the problems that hinder the efficient functioning of the National Academic Recognition and Information Center (NARIC), which provides information on procedures for the recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications, as well as information on the higher education system and qualifications in Kosovo at the request of other countries. Lack of human capacities makes it impossible for NARIC to review cases in a timely manner, due to the large volume of cases.¹⁴⁰

The only international ranking that includes higher education institutions in Kosovo is Webometrics conducted by a research institute in Spain. Webometrics estimates the size and web presence of higher education institutions and has a fairly good correlation with other international rankings in the case of the most prestigious higher education institutions in the world. The 2021 edition of Webometrics has placed the University of Prishtina in the 3022nd position in the world. A comparison of the University of Prishtina ranking with the

140 ORCA (QAIN), 2020, Raport i monitorimit të NARIC Kosova 2, <http://orca-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/RAPORTI-I-MONITORIMIT-TE-NARIC-KOSOVA-2.pdf>

universities of other Western Balkan capitals, with the exception of the University of Tirana, shows that the current positioning of higher education in Kosovo leaves much to be desired (Figure 33).

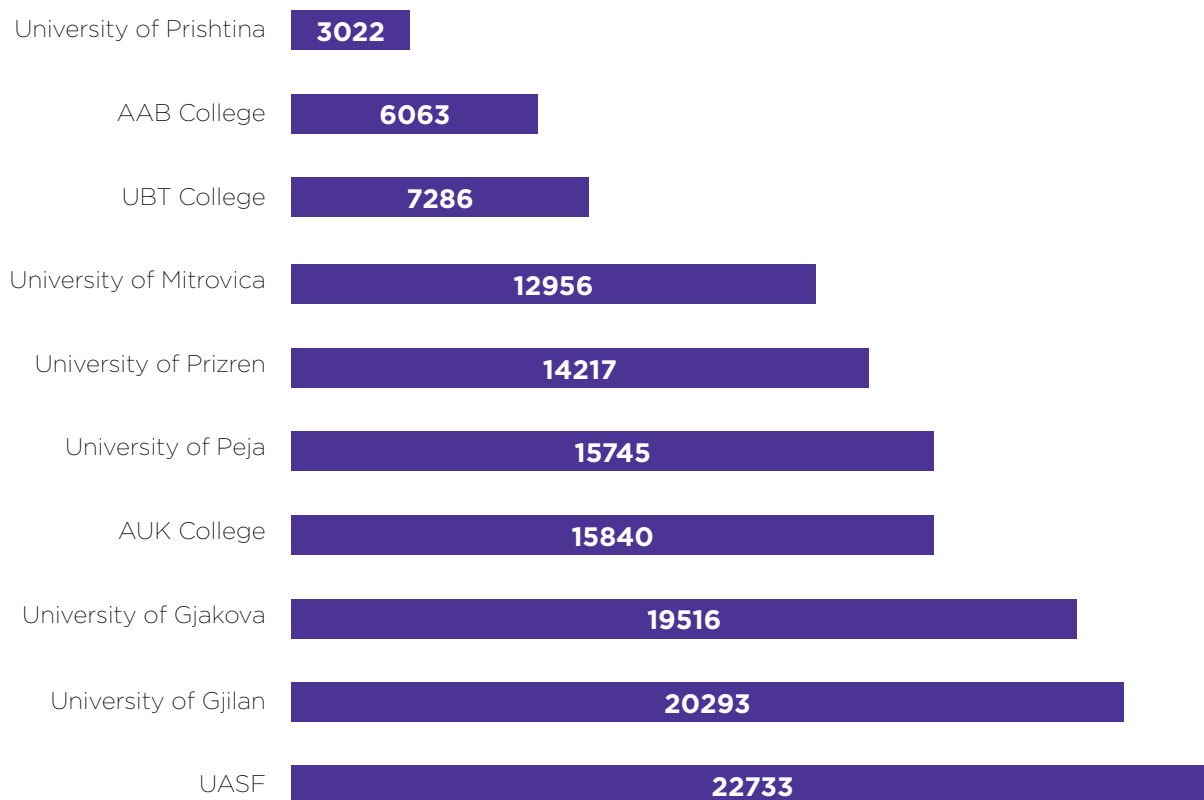
Figure 33 Webometrics ranking of universities in the region



Source: www.webometrics.info, Ranking January 2021.

While comparing the ranking of higher education institutions in Kosovo, it is seen that the University of Prishtina is in the best position at the national level (Figure 34)

Figure 34 Webometrics ranking of higher education institutions in Kosovo



Source: www.webometrics.info, Ranking January 2021.

MESTI has still not established the Agency for State Examinations, as provided by the Law on Regulated Professions approved at the end of 2016. The functioning of the bodies provided for in the Law on Regulated Professions and the definition of regulated professions is a criterion for supplementing the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. During 2017-2019, the Division for Regulated Professions was established and functionalized within the Department of Higher Education/MESTI. In this regard AI 21/2018 on the duties and responsibilities of the State Council for Regulated Professions and AI 18/2020 on criteria and procedures for gaining the right to practice the regulated profession have been approved.

11.5 Infrastructure for teaching and scientific research

In Kosovo, the activity of research and scientific development is regulated through the Law on Scientific Research Activity, which defines the organization, governance as well as rights and obligations of scientists and researchers, while in scientific innovation, transfer of knowledge and technology, are dealt with in more detail in the Law on Scientific Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology. The main providers of research and scientific/artistic development are the Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts, higher education institutions and research institutes. Despite the fact that all these institutions in their strategic documents present a largely common vision regarding the requirements for adequate research and development policies, their reforms and challenges in terms of the scientific/artistic research approach are fragmented, with apparent lack of an integrated approach.¹⁴¹ In this regard, a considerable number of common objectives remain unfulfilled, requiring immediate reaction, such as: better cooperation between the science and business sectors and acceleration of the transfer of technology; the establishment and operation of excellence centers for research and development; increasing the potential of young researchers and strengthening the capacity to participate in European and wider programs and initiatives; identifying and encouraging diaspora researchers to connect with scientific/artistic research institutions in the country, etc.

The main challenges for scientific research in Kosovo are related to human resources, infrastructure and non-functional equipment. Higher education institutions face a lack of physical space, as well as laboratory equipment and instruments. The lack of adequate infrastructure for research work presents a challenge and shortcomings for participation in the "Horizon 2020" program, since the construction of cooperation consortia takes into account the conditions for research work in higher education institutions. Furthermore, higher education institutions have no adequate research strategies, and possess limited funding and weak capacities to engage in international cooperation projects.

The National Science Council (NSC) was established in 2007 and was operational until 2011, when, despite the shortcomings it faced, it managed to draft the National Science Program (NSP) 2010-2015 and the standards for scientific work in Kosovo. However, after 2011 the Kosovo Assembly never managed to secure a consensus to appoint NSC members.

11.6 Information management system in higher education

In the period 2015-2017, the Information Management System in Higher Education (SMIAL) was developed, enabling the generation of data needed for the situation analysis in this sector and informed decision-making. This step represents an improvement over the previous situation, evident from the latest summaries of education statistics, which provide useful data on the number of students and academic staff in higher education. During 2017/18, the AI was amended twice to change and supplement the Information Management System in Higher Education. However, SMIAL lacks ongoing technical support to address barriers to data entry and the publication of complete data in accordance with the SMIAL concept has not yet started.

¹⁴¹ ASHAK (2021). Platform for Education Recovery in Kosovo.

MESTI has not yet developed the national indicators of higher education, although this activity was expected to end in 2018. The development of higher education indicators is essential for measuring the performance of higher education institutions. The collection and processing of indicators is important for the implementation of the funding formula and the promotion of quality in higher education.

11.7 Liaison with the labor market

A structural shortcoming of higher education in Kosovo is the development of study programs that do not reflect the real needs of the labor market. These programs also lack interdisciplinarity, practical training, as well as connection with scientific research. The mismatch of labor market needs with the knowledge gained in higher education is identified as one of the main obstacles to employment growth and economic development in the country. In many cases lecturers teach subjects that are outdated and resist changing and adapting to the ever-increasing demands of the labor market. Skills with modern technology are not an integral part of the curriculum.

Industrial boards exist in almost all academic units of public institutions of higher education. Based on accreditation evaluation reports, experts have noted that in most cases boards are formally established, their meetings are irregular, and that there is no systematic communication between universities and employers. In addition, there is no cooperation in terms of involving relevant stakeholders in other strategic planning and decision-making processes of higher education institutions in Kosovo. For example, there are no cases when experts of the field participate in the process of drafting strategic plans, study programs, or in professional commissions of higher education institutions which would enable the university to better respond to the local and domestic labor market needs.

KAA has revised its Accreditation Manual requiring institutions to demonstrate communication and cooperation with industries. Meetings with industry representatives are mandatory during the visit of international accreditation experts. However, higher education institutions have not been able to make much progress in this regard due to the failure to review their internal regulations and policies. It is not yet proven through official documents how the demands of the labor market are taken into account when reviewing study programs, or what are the instruments through which these inputs from the industry are obtained.

Table 14 provides an overview of programs accredited in 2019 according to the fields of study defined by Eurostat. The table shows that about 60% of the study programs are in the field of education, arts and humanities, social sciences and services.

Table 14 Accredited programs in the academic year 2018/19 according to fields of study

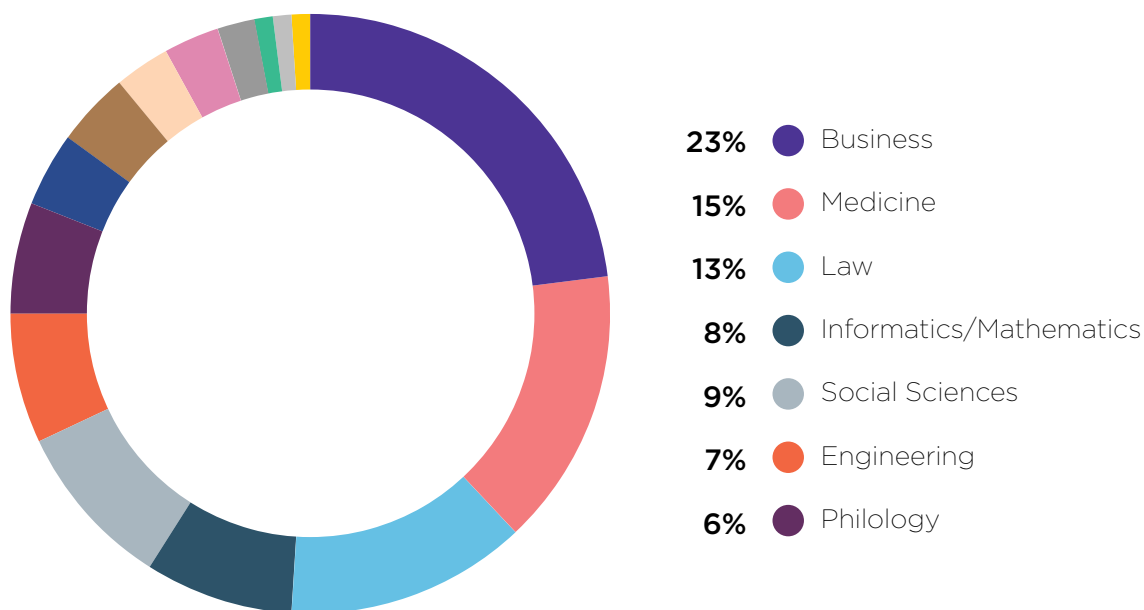
Areas of study	Public sector	Private sector	Total	Total (%)
Education	15	0	15	5.1%
Humanities and arts	45	28	73	25%
Social sciences, business and justice	31	47	78	26.7%
Natural sciences, mathematics and computer science	28	9	37	12.7%
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	24	13	37	12.7%
Agriculture and veterinary medicine	11	4	15	5.1%
Services	6	3	9	3%
Health and well-being	12	16	28	9.6%
Total	172	120	292	

Source: Kosovo Accreditation Agency¹⁴²

142 <http://akreditimi-ks.org/docs/Downloads/Accreditation/kshc20092019/kshc20092019.pdf>

Figures 35 and 36 show students enrolled for the first time in higher education institutions in Kosovo in 2018/19 according to ESAC fields. The largest number of students and educational programs are in the category of social sciences and law studies. In 2018, there is a significant increase in the number of students in medical fields, mainly in medical care and nursing in the private sector.¹⁴³

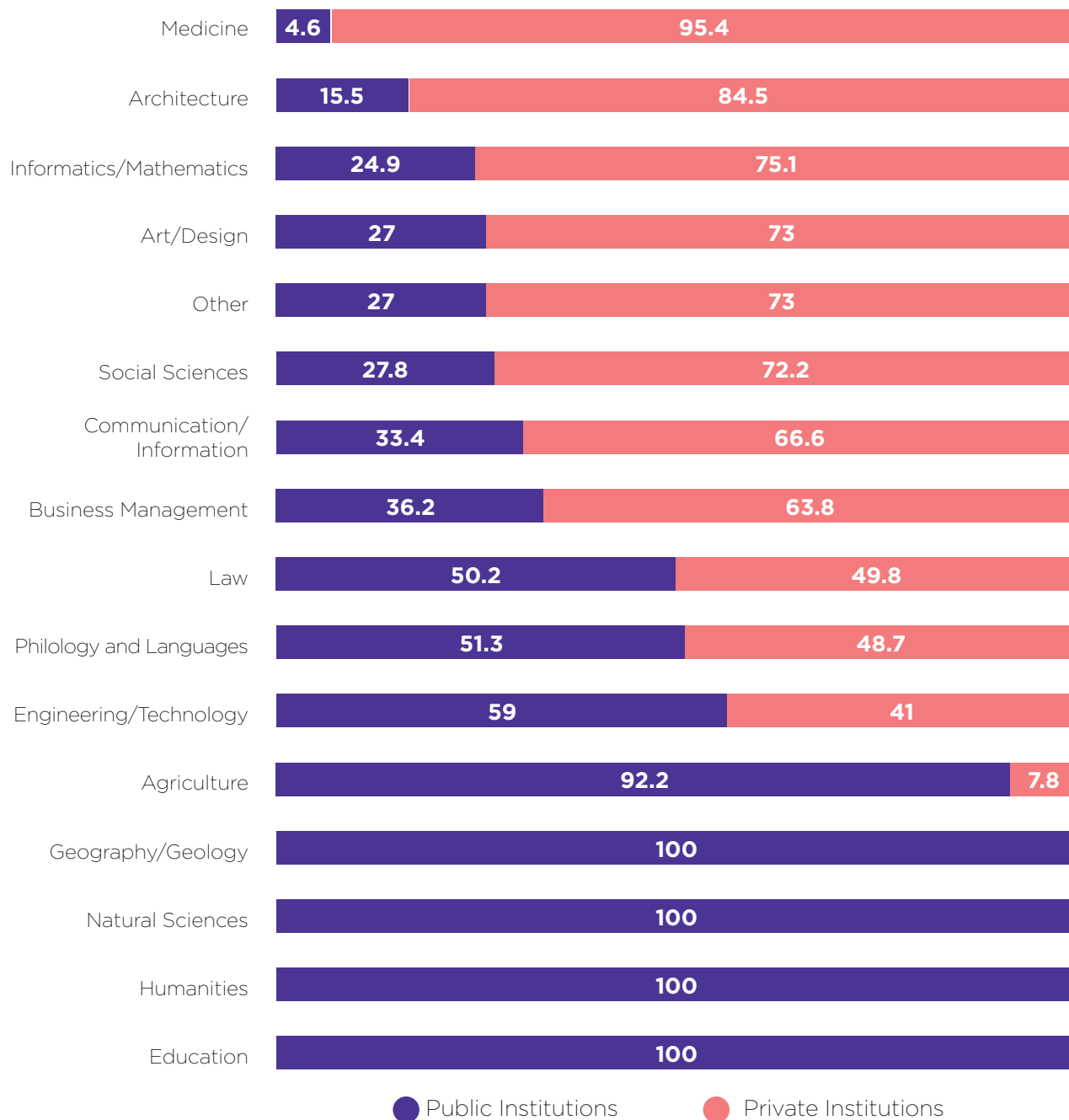
Figure 35 Students enrolled in 2018/2019 according to ESAC fields



Source: MASHTI / SMIAL, 2019

143 MASHT, Raport Vjetor i Vlerësimit të PSAK për vitin 2018 dhe MASHT, Raport Vjetor i Vlerësimit të PSAK për vitin 2019.

Figure 36 Course selection of students enrolled in 2018 by ESAC fields and institutions

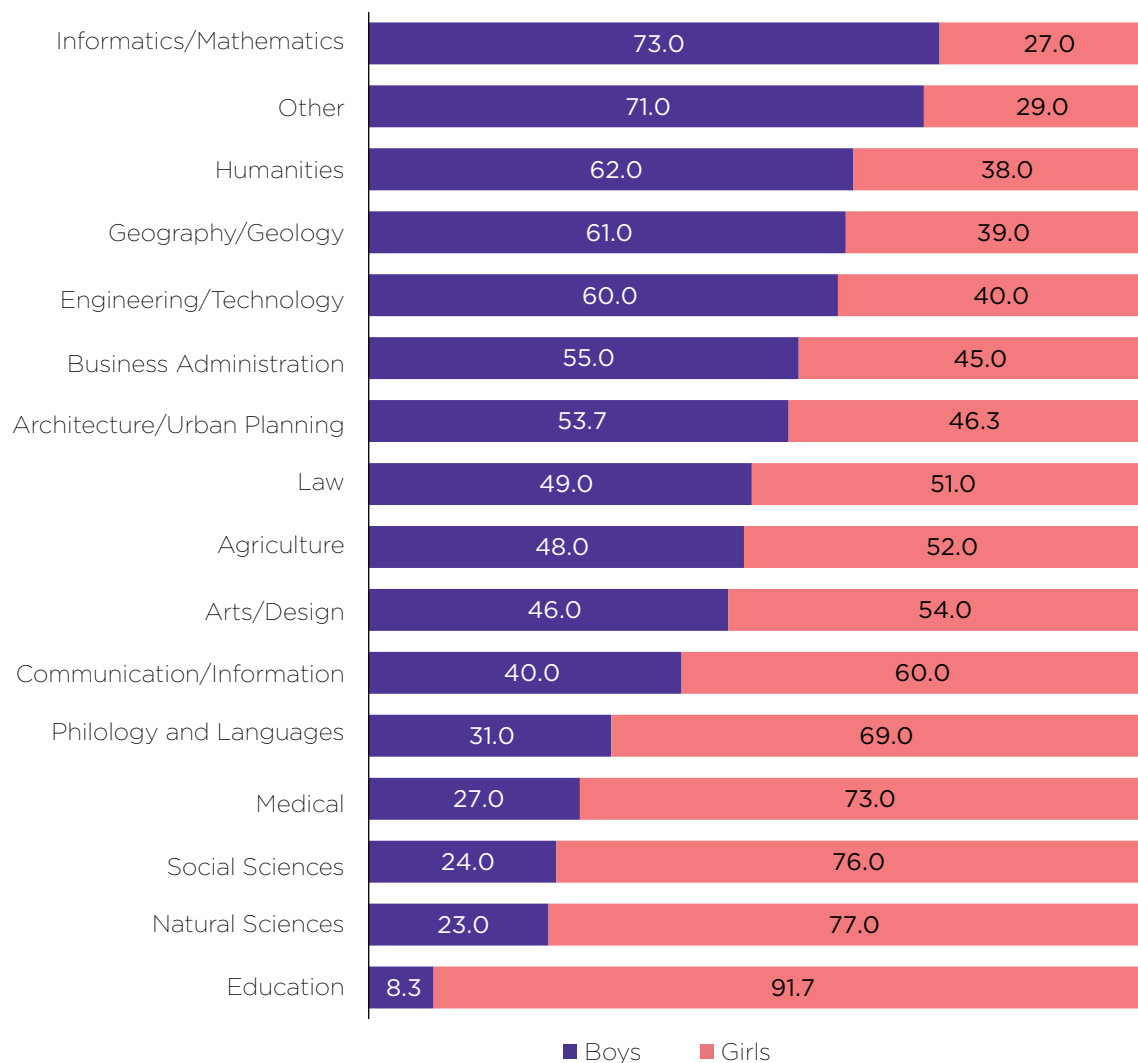


Source: MESTI, 2018

There is a marked difference in course selection in certain fields of study in higher education by gender. Girls

(over 90%) tend to opt for programs in education, natural sciences, social sciences, medicine, communication and linguistics. The boys dominate in computer science, humanities, geography/geology and engineering/technology. A balanced gender orientation is observed in architecture, business and justice.

Figure 37 Course selection of students by gender in 2018/19 according to ESAC fields



Source: MESTI, 2019

Students' course selection in science, technology, engineering and mathematics remains low. The degree of students opting to enroll in the fields of social sciences, humanities, business and law is very high compared to market dynamics. There is no comprehensive study on the fit between graduate skills and labor market needs. However, there is ample evidence to the contrary. The number of unemployed graduate (bachelor/master) students is increasing significantly. In 2019 there were over 12,000 unemployed graduates, while businesses are looking for skilled workers. Student internship remains an undeveloped area. The study programs do not formally envisage any internship of students as part of the curriculum; the engagement in internship is done individually by students and not in an institutionalized manner. Except for specific study programs where internships are unavoidable, in most other study programs, higher education institutions do not provide internships.

The lack of incentives for bringing the labor market needs closer to the university study curricula is also observed in the MESTI, whereby although the KESP foresees the support of 30 partnership initiatives between higher education institutions and businesses, this is not happening. Also, no study has been conducted on the relationship between educational programs and the labor market, and there has been no attempt to create a system that examines and directs students to areas of high demand in the market.

11.8 Scientific publications

Although scientific research is an important aspect of the development of higher education, it is not part of the study programs and is not integrated in the activities of higher education institutions in Kosovo. Teaching is the main activity of the academic staff, while the research work is conducted on an ad-hoc basis, without any discussion platform for scientific research. The number of scientific publications in indexed international journals of the higher education institutions' staff remains small.

In order for the academic staff to publish in credible scientific journals, MESTI has issued Administrative Instruction (MESTI) no. 01/2018 on the principles of international platforms and magazines' recognition. Published papers should be indexed in one of the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO host, WorldCat or Directory of Open Access Journals.¹⁴⁴ The main purpose of this Regulation was to systematize the principles of recognition of international journals in all institutions of higher education, to prevent ethical violations and to systematize the procedure of professional and academic development.

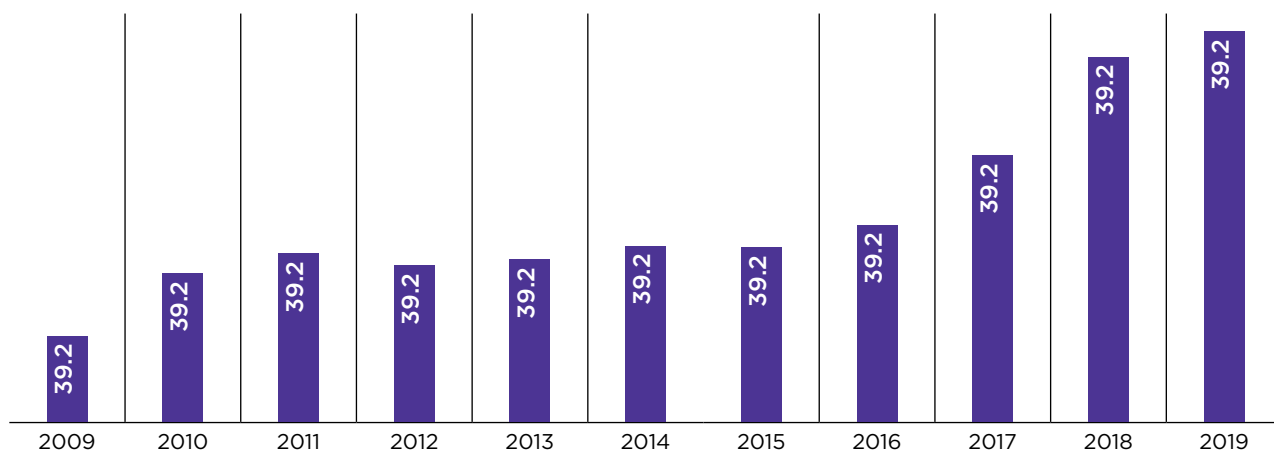
In Kosovo, in accordance with the current opportunities for scientific research, publications have been made in many journals and symposia of local and international character. In recent years, as a result of individual and team engagement of researchers, a considerable number of scientific publications in international journals have been identified. However, in many cases they remain on the margins of publications made at will and mainly to obtain academic degrees, and not as part of the academic culture to research and generate new knowledge that helps the development of the country, or the institutions in particular.

The KESP envisages a continuous increase of publications in indexed international journals. Kosovo does not

¹⁴⁴ MESTI, 2018. Udhëzimi Administrativ Nr: 01/2018. <https://bit.ly/2yO6n0L>

have a system for measuring scientific productivity either in terms of volume or of the quality of publications. According to World Bank data on the number of scientific publications (2018), the number of scientific publications from Kosovo in international indexed journals has gradually increased since 2009.¹⁴⁵ The number of scientific/technical publications in international indexed journals has doubled compared to 2015. Based on comparative data in the Western Balkans, in recent years Kosovo has exceeded the number of scientific publications of Albania and Montenegro. Serbia accounts for the majority (70%) of all scientific/technical publications in the Western Balkans.

Figure 38 Number of scientific publications in indexed journals 2009-2019



Source: World Bank 2019¹⁴⁶

Public institutions of higher education in Kosovo do not have funding for scientific research and do not financially support their members to publicize in scientific journals. On the other hand, there is a lack of public information on the expenditures in the science fund by MESTI.

Most higher education institutions have formally established procedures and mechanisms for implementing ethics principles in the teaching and research process. However, the existence of these bodies is not known to the entire academic community; ethics committees are not all functional, and the application of Code of Ethics procedures is not done in a transparent and public manner.¹⁴⁷ There are different reports by civil society regarding doubts about the authenticity of academic staff scientific papers.

145 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IP.JRN.ARTC.SC?end=2018&locations=XK&start=2000&view=chart>

146 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IP.JRN.ARTC.SC?end=2018&locations=XK&start=2008>

147 ASHAK (2021). Platform for Education Recovery in Kosovo.

11.9 Higher education legislation

The KESP envisages the revision and approval of the Law on Higher Education in 2017, but this has not been done. The process of starting the revision of the Law on Higher Education has been protracted and this has greatly influenced the dynamics of the drafting of other acts. In 2018, the Law on Scientific Innovation, Knowledge Transfer and Technology was approved, regulating the field of scientific innovation, knowledge transfer and technology in Kosovo.¹⁴⁸

During 2019, the Concept Paper on Law of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, but the draft law has not been finalized yet. Moreover, the Law on Regulated Professions is not yet being implemented.

11.10 Higher education funding

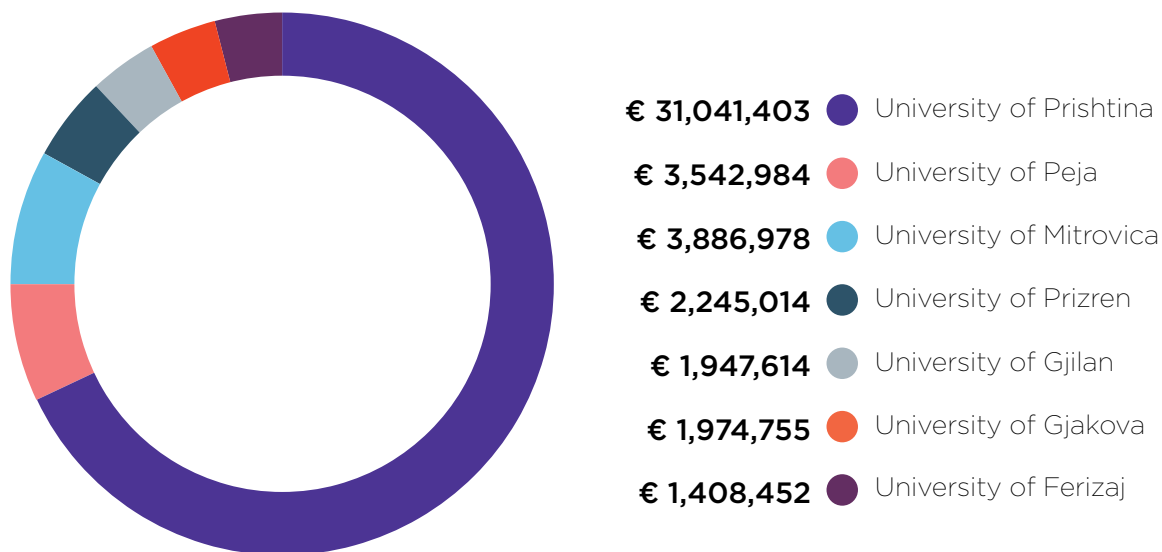
Kosovo has not yet developed a methodology for financing higher education institutions which promotes effectiveness and accountability, despite the fact that the legal framework for higher education sets out the development of effective performance-based funding mechanisms. Funding of higher education institutions is not done on the grounds of a performance plan which would enable the monitoring of their work and promote the building of a culture of responsibility and accountability.

Most of the funding for public institutions of higher education is dedicated to the University of Prishtina (67.4%). The other six public higher education institutions account for 32.6% of expenditures. The total budget allocated to public institutions of higher education in Kosovo in 2020 is 46 million EUR.¹⁴⁹ The University of Prishtina continues to remain a special budgeting category while other public universities are like financial sub-programs of higher education for MESTI.

¹⁴⁸ <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=18188>

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Finance Law No. 07 / L-014 on amending the Law no. 07 / L-001 on budgetary allocations for the Kosovo budget for 2020. <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=27690>

Figure 39 Financing of public institutions of higher education 2020

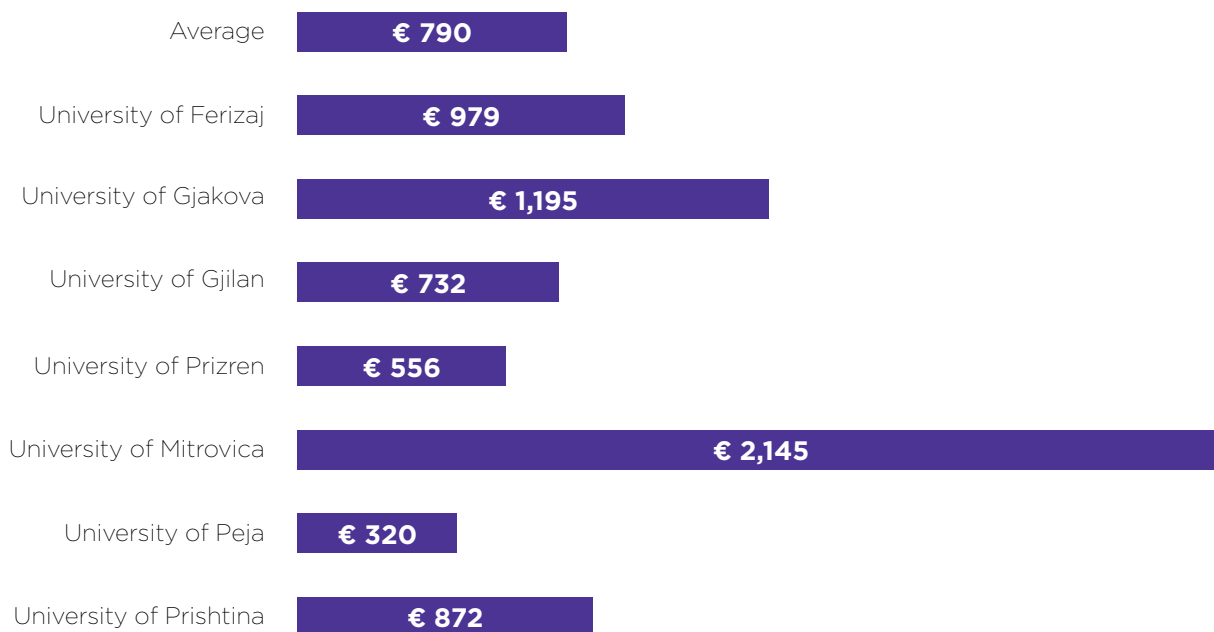


Source: Ministry of Finance, 2020

The budgets of these universities are prepared on a historical basis, with the amount initially allocated used as a starting point. Furthermore, the adequate cost of respective sub-programs has not been possible to calculate so far due to lack of agreement on how to structure university branches and faculties, and how to limit the total number of students in these universities (required due to limited financial resources allocated to higher education). The universities lack the basic data needed to develop a system based on their funding formula. This is one of the main obstacles to implementing the formula-based funding and decentralizing the budget execution.

Regarding public institutions of higher education, budgets allocated to public universities are from 2 to 3.5 million euros separately for 6 of the public universities, not including the University of Prishtina which has a budget of 31 million euros, which again when compared to other regional universities, such as the University of Ljubljana with around € 290 million, the University of Zagreb with around € 330 million, the University of Belgrade around with € 160 million, and the University of Sofia with a budget of around € 120 million, remains extremely low.

Average per capita spending in 2020 highlights significant difficulties experienced by public universities in providing quality studies. The University of Peja and the University of Prizren enroll many students compared to their degree of funding. The average cost per student in public universities is € 790.

Figure 40 Annual expenditures per student in public institutions of higher education 2020

Source: Ministry of Finance, 2020 and Education Statistics 2019/20, MESTI

11.11 Academic staff mobility

Kosovo participates in academic mobility schemes such as: CEEPUS, Erasmus + and benefits from various forms of bilateral and multilateral support in higher education. Mobility opportunities for staff and students are numerous, although insufficient knowledge of English by staff and students limits their opportunities of utilizing these schemes. In the Erasmus + program, Kosovo has expanded its participation in other new schemes from 2017. In the Erasmus + program Kosovo participates in the actions of "Key 1 - Exchanges and joint diploma programs" and in the actions "Key 2 - the action for capacity building in higher education". 1934 members of the academic staff and students from Kosovo have received mobility scholarships from the Erasmus + program during 2017-2019, while Kosovo has hosted 1027 mobilities.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ <http://erasmuspluskosovo.org/en/erasmus/projects/>

Table 15 Student and academic staff mobility at Erasmus + (KA1) 2017-2019

KA1: International Credit Mobility	2017	2018	2019	Gjithsej
Receiving exchanges (incoming)	512	517	905	1934
Outgoing exchanges	260	267	500	1027
Total	772	784	1405	2961

Source: Erasmus + Kosovo

Since 2008 Kosovo participates in the Central European Exchanges Program for University Studies (CEEPUS), which supports the cooperation partnership between the universities of Central and Southern Europe and promotes inter-university cooperation through the exchange of academic staff, researchers and students. The following table presents data on the number of beneficiaries (students and academic staff) from the CEEPUS program in the 2008-2019 period.

Table 16 Number of beneficiaries of the CEEPUS program exchange scheme 2008-2019

CEEPUS	students	Academic staff	Total
Receiving exchanges (incoming)	19	129	148
Outgoing exchanges	201	67	268
Total	220	196	416

Source: MESTI, 2019

11.12 Participation in international programs

Kosovo participates with a very small number of projects in the EU program for financing research and innovation "Horizon 2020". In the 2014-2021 period, there were 113 applications from Kosovo, of which 104 were eligible applications. Compared to other Western Balkan countries, Kosovo's participation in this program remains quite low. Insufficient capacities for research and international networking are factors that affect the low level of participation. The small number of applications in the "Horizon 2020" program is presented in the table below, through comparison between Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries. Kosovo has the lowest applications in the region (113), as well as the lowest supported applications (19). Kosovo is far behind Serbia, which is a leading country in the region with 3,803 applications, of which 395 are supported. The table

below provides information on the number of applicants and the contribution requested by the EU from the Western Balkan countries.

Table 17 Applications in the Horizon 2020 program in the 2014-2021 period

Country	Received applications	Supported applications	Contribution requested by the EU	Applications
Serbia	2996	395	130,3 mil EUR	3803
North Macedonia	705	79	12,95 mil EUR	853
Montenegro	247	37	4,52 mil EUR	302
Kosovo	104	19	2,56 mil EUR	113
Bosnia and Herzegovina	560	67	8,56 mil EUR	701
Albania	435	45	5,27 mil EUR	543

Source: European Commission, Horizon 2020 Program Platform¹⁵¹

While analyzing the required contributions by type of organization, it was noticed that applications from Kosovo are mainly from NGOs, small and medium enterprises, or from individuals / groups of researchers. To date, only the University of Prishtina and the University of Prizren have won a grant under the Horizon 2020 program. It seems that the main problem lies in the lack of interest on the part of higher education institutions and their academic staff. The unwillingness of higher education institutions in Kosovo to apply for such international research calls is directly related to the institutional research culture, which does not allow such initiatives to fund research.

In the COST Association (European Cooperation for Science and Technology), where from 2018 Kosovo has held the status of a neighboring country, according to data about 20 researchers from Kosovo are already part of COST actions and have started their activities.

The European Commission has organized information sessions on the opportunities offered under the Erasmus +, Horizon 2020 and COST programs. On the other hand, there was a lack of support for application in European programs (Horizon 2020) by MESTI. Higher education institutions in Kosovo traditionally have various bilateral agreements with partner universities throughout Europe. Bilateral agreements are the first step towards joining efforts to apply for state, European or other funds. For example, the University of Prishtina has almost 400 such bilateral agreements with higher education institutions and institutes in Europe and the USA. Yet, most bilateral agreements remain a manifestation of a goodwill of cooperation, and are not accompanied by a budget for implementation.

¹⁵¹ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/sense/app/e02e4fad-3333-421f-a12a-874ac2d9f0db/sheet/941d3afe-da24-4c2e-99eb-b7f-cbd8529ee/state/analysis>

12. Achievement in relation to indicators

Participation and Inclusion

Strategic Objective 1: Increase inclusion and equal opportunities for development, training and education of every individual in pre-university education

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Gross involvement in preschool education	15.7%	20%	8.5%	
Gross involvement in pre-primary education	79.6%	100%	79.4%	
Gross inclusion of children aged 4 and 5 in preschool education	40.7%	55%	45.8%	
Gross inclusion in primary education	96.4%	100%	88.3%	
Gross inclusion in lower secondary education	99.5%	100%	93.4%	
Gross inclusion in upper secondary education	84.5%	90%	88.8%	
Gender Parity Index Level: Preschool (0-5 years old)	0.92	0.95	0.91	
Gender Parity Index Level: Pre-primary (5 years old)	0.94	0.93	0.92	
Gender Parity Index Level: Primary (6-10 years old)	0.93	0.94	0.95	
Gender Parity Index Level: Lower Secondary (11-14 years old)	0.94	0.93	0.93	
Gender parity index Level: Upper Secondary (15-17 years old)	0.89	0.94	0.95	
Transition rate in upper secondary education	97.2%	/	96.8%	
The rate of “early leavers” aged 18-24 (Usually provided by the Labor Market Survey)	/	/	/	

Strategic Objective 1: Increase inclusion and equal opportunities for development, training and education of every individual in pre-university education

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Inclusion of children with special needs in compulsory education	44.6% ¹⁶ (M: 50.3%, F: 37.2%)	60% (for M and F)	44.1%	The evaluation of all children with special educational needs has not been carried out.
Inclusion of children with special needs in upper secondary education	17.9% (M: 19.5%, F: 15.8%)	30% (for M and F)	25%	The evaluation of all children with special educational needs has not been carried out.
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary education	53.9%	70%	44.9%	
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in primary education	85.3%	95%	84.1%	
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in lower secondary education	65%	85%	63.7%	
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in upper secondary education	30.3%	50%	31%	
Transition rate in upper secondary education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children	69.9%	80%	70.79%	
Gender Parity Index for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities Level: Primary	1.01	1	0.97	
Gender Parity Index for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities Level: Lower Secondary	0.94	1	0.98	
Gender Parity Index for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities Level: Upper Middle	0.80	0.90	0.99	
Inclusion of repatriated children in the education system	/	100%	100%	
Number of children from the diaspora participating in educational activities	/	/	/	
Reducing the rate of compulsory school dropout	0.20%	0.10%	0.10%	
Reduced dropout rate of upper secondary education	1.70%	1%	1.20%	
Number of children with special talents identified within the education system	/	300/year	284	

Education System Management

Strategic Objective 2: Quality and efficient management of the education system, based on transparency and accountability

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Percentage of trained members of school governing boards	822 trained participants or a total of 272 Schools	50%	/	Accurate data are missing
Percentage of trained school directors and deputy directors	490 Directors from the BEP Program and about 500 others have been trained by GIZ	100% for basic training; and 50% for advanced training	Basic training for all because it is a legal obligation.	MESTI for educational governance and leadership – around 730 people (mostly teachers). SBASHK for leadership and strategic planning - 1,097 people. British Council for Management and Leadership for 21st Century Schools - Over 400 school leaders and teachers.
Number of staff in MEDs trained in educational leadership	55 (by GIZ, IDEP, USAID)	70	5	In recent years it has not been organized.
Number of primary school students studying in one shift	25.4% (or 198 schools out of a total of 779) 3	1/3	/	Accurate data are missing About 60% of schools have less than 250 students. Over 200 schools (shared classrooms) operate with less than 50 students or about 4 students per class.
School space per student	3.5 m ³ - The gross area of schools is approximately 1,300,000 m ³	4 m ²	/	Accurate data are missing
Number of schools equipped with individual lockers for students	/	/ 30% of schools	/	Accurate data are missing In some schools, parents have provided classrooms with individual lockers for students on their own initiative.
Number of schools to be equipped with inventory	/	60 schools	Over 100 schools	
Number of schools that will be equipped with sports packages	/	40 schools	24	

Strategic Objective 2: Quality and efficient management of the education system, based on transparency and accountability

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Number of preschool institutions to be built	/	18 preschool institutions	Over 10	In recent years, MESTI with its financial resources or with the funding of development partners has built over 10 preschool institutions.
Renovation of school buildings	/	250 school buildings	Over 15 schools	It is estimated that the goal set for the renovation of 250 school buildings was a technical error.
Construction of new school facilities	/	25 new school buildings	Over 25 schools	
Construction of facilities for higher education institutions	/	3 buildings		Construction of facilities for higher education institutions is managed by the respective university.
Training of school management and teaching staff on school safety and health	/	50%	/	Several campaigns have been carried out in schools to raise students' awareness on reproductive health, family planning, pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted infections, and other such topics.
Number of schools equipped with first aid kits	/	100	/	Accurate data are missing
Number of MESTI staff trained in planning, policy making and monitoring	/	50	/	Various and ongoing trainings have been provided within the projects of development partners in education but there is no comprehensive evidence.
Number of regulations and procedures adopted for effective communication	/	5	/	/
Number of school networks established	/	150	/	/
Number of municipal development plans approved	/	36	Over 10	/

Strategic Objective 2: Quality and efficient management of the education system, based on transparency and accountability

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Percentage of schools that have a budget code and manage their own budget	/	/ 100%	/	/
Number of policies on EIMS data management	/	2	/	/
Number of staff trained in entering and using EIMS data	/	700 people at school level	/	Accurate data are missing

Quality assurance

Strategic Objective 3: Development of a functional quality assurance system, in line with international standards

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Percentage of schools that have undergone external evaluation	2 vocational schools	100%	6.3% 68 schools	
Percentage of schools that have a QC appointed	69 vocational schools	100%	100%	Accurate data are missing
Number of municipalities that have established professional groups to provide support to schools	0	36	20 ¹⁵²	Data from the organizations that have supported this process in the respective municipalities
Number of municipalities that have drafted plans for the development of education	6 municipalities have drafted education development plans;	36	13	Data from the organizations that have supported this process in the respective municipalities
Number of school staff and MEDs trained in quality assurance	375 employees from vocational schools involved in NQA training ; 261 trained by the Twinning Project	3,300	About 400 schools	Data from the organizations that have supported this process in the respective municipalities
Number of clicks on the quality assurance portal		50,000/year	/	The portal has not been developed
Number of administrators and supervisors trained		2,000 administrators and 600 supervisors	0	Only information sessions on procedures were provided
Number of questions / requests placed in the question bank		5000	/	/

¹⁵² Ky është numri i Ekipeve profesionale për ZHPM, por mungojnë të dhënat nëse këto ekipe kanë përkrahur shkollat në menaxhimin e cilësisë .

Teacher Development

Strategic Objective 4: Improving the quality of teaching through an effective and sustainable system for the preparation and professional development of teachers

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Percentage of teachers participating in professional development programs	2011—N: 9, 386 P:41%; 2012- N: 13,577 P: 58%; 2013 - N: 12,124 P: 53%; 2014 - N: 12,301 P: 54%; 2015 - N: 9,173 P: 39%;	50%/vit	2017 - 47.2% 2018 - 33.5% 2019 - 24.7%	According to data from MESTI Report on KESP Evaluation for 2019.
Percentage of teachers participating in professional development programs	-	1	/	No data available
Total number of professional development hours held	2011: 598,87245; 2012: 773,088; 2013: 445,871; 2014: 861,215; 2015: 691,320	500,000 orë/vit	2017 - 457,597 2018 - 357,590 2019 - 301,617	
Number of teachers who have undergone performance appraisal	147	20%/vit	2018 - 1% (216 mësimdhënës) 2019 - 1% (227 mësimdhënës)	
Percentage of beginning teachers offered "entry into the profession" support	-	50%	/	It has not started yet, as the regulatory staff is missing.
Percentage of teachers who have obtained an advanced license or renewed their initial license	-	35%	2018 - 1% (216 mësimdhënës) 2019 - 1% (227 mësimdhënës)	These teachers have undergone only the re-licensing process.
Gender index of teachers who have obtained an advanced license or have renewed their initial license	-	1	/	No data available

Strategic Objective 4: Improving the quality of teaching through an effective and sustainable system for the preparation and professional development of teachers

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Candidates' interest in educational profiles	2014: BA: 14.77%; Applicants: 3,467 Accepted: 512; 2015: BA: 15.65%; Applicants: 2,942 Accepted: 460; MA subject programs: 49%; Applicants: 820; Accepted 400.	20%	/	The interest has increased significantly: at the BA level it reaches a competition of 10 applications per placement. In Master programs up to 5 applications for a placement.
Average of Matura and entrance exam results in programs prepared by teachers	–	–	/	In recent years there are over 80% of students who have an average grade in high school of 5.0 while others are close by.
Duration of studies ("Survival rate") of students in educational programs, bachelor level	31.7% (F: 32.5%); 2011/12: 2,339 (F: 1,820) registered in the first year; 2014/15: 742 (F: 592) graduates	40%	/	No data available

Teaching and learning

Strategic Objective 5: Advancing learning through quality teaching, implementing competency-based curricula and utilizing high quality teaching resources

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Number of directors, deputy directors, municipal education officials and inspectors trained to implement the new curriculum	All directors and deputy directors of pilot schools (about 120), about 30 municipal officials, 17 education inspectors	1,500	During these years the trainings of teachers for the implementation of the curriculum were at the center of attention, while trainings in this field for educational officials in MEDs and the leadership of the schools have been left aside. Regional meetings were held with school directors, MEDs and other education representatives regarding information on the new curriculum.	Since the beginning of the new subject curricula implementation starting with the school year 2016/2017, at the system level mainly 5-6 daily trainings for the implementation of the curricula have been provided, and follow-up activities for the certification of teachers were developed. No special training for education inspectors is provided.
Reducing the percentage of 15-year-olds who do not show satisfactory performance in reading, math and science	-		Kosovar students performed below the OECD average, scoring 353 in reading, 366 in mathematics and 365 in science. 66% of tested Kosovar students performed below the second level, namely very poorly. Only 0.1% of respondents were at levels 5-6 (above average).	Kosovo has not marked a significant improvement in the results of the international PISA test in 2018. Among 79 countries of the world, PISA 2018 ranked Kosovo third from the bottom with a result below the average of participating countries.
Number of teachers trained in the development and use of electronic materials	1,800 (viti 2014)	10,000	Data missing	/

Strategic Objective 5: Advancing learning through quality teaching, implementing competency-based curricula and utilizing high quality teaching resources

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Percentage of schools that have broadband Internet access	37.9% (2014); 413 out of 1,096 schools	90%	16.2% of Kosovo public main schools do not have internet access. 84.8% of shared classrooms in Kosovo public schools do not have internet access. Out of the total number of public school facilities in Kosovo which is 1,094 (primary schools and separate classes), 705 of them or about 64.4% have internet access, while 389 or about 35.6% do not have internet access.	This indicates large differences, especially for remote rural areas, where shared classrooms are mainly organized. Lack of internet access is not due to the technical impossibility for internet access, but due to the monthly cost of internet. Even schools with internet access in most cases do not provide internet throughout the school facilities, but only in certain staff offices and possibly in ICT cabinets.
Computer-student relationship	1:46 (2014)	1:30	1:37	The total number of computers in all public schools in Kosovo is 8,894.

Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning

Strategic Objective 5: Harmonize vocational education and training with the demands of the labor market in the country and beyond, and create an open system of adult learning.

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement
Percentage of vocational education profiles for which approved profession standards exist	From 140 profiles in schools, of which at least 28 have approved professional standards; NQA has only evidence of 40 standards approved	100%	92 out of 122 profiles offered in vocational schools are not based on occupational standards, which means that more than 77% of the profiles offered by VET are not based on the needs of the labor market.
Gender parity index in vocational education	0.63 ; (M: 25,758, F: 16182)	0.7	0.71
Gender parity index in technical directions	0.25	0.40	0.22
Increasing the number of students in deficient profiles	37.8%	50%	In 2019/20, 18,236 students or 44.7% of the total number of students in VET attended school in deficient profiles.
Average of the total number of practical and professional internship hours for students	/	170 hours / year	/
% of students who benefit from career counseling	10%	30% / year	/
Teaching mobility in education and initial vocational training	/	1%	/
Total number of hours in adult education programs	/	200,000 hours / year	/
Gender parity index in adult education	/	1	0.53
% of adults participating in lifelong learning programs	/	/	/

Higher Education

Objective 7: Increase the quality and competitiveness of higher education by promoting excellence in teaching, research, artistic creativity, innovation and internationalization.

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Number of students per 100,000 inhabitants	6,669	/	5,295	In the academic year 2019/20 there are 95,176 students. Meanwhile, the population of Kosovo in 2019 is estimated at 1,797,434 inhabitants.
Gross enrollment rate (number of students as % of population aged 18-22)	69.1%;	/	56.7%	In the academic year 2019/20 there are 95,176 students. Meanwhile, the population of Kosovo aged 18-22 in 2019 is estimated at 167,616 inhabitants.
Percentage of persons aged 30-34 with higher education	10.4%;	20%	/	/
Gender parity index in higher education	1.01 (2014/15)	1	1.4	Women make up 58.7% of students in the public sector and 57.7% of students in the private sector.
"Survival" rate	43.29%;	60%	/	During 2018/19, about 11,354 students graduated at the bachelor and master levels in various study programs in both public and private sectors. The private sector contributes about 15.2% of graduates.
Professor-student ratio	Ratio: 1:47; In public HEIs: 1:67; In private and non-public HEIs: 1:29	1:40	Në institucionet publike: 1:45	According to data in 2019/20, in public institutions of higher education in Kosovo there are 1,297 members of academic staff in regular employment.
Increasing the number of papers published in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science	826 (2003-2013)	25%/year	278.43	The number of scientific publications in indexed international journals of the higher education institutions' staff remains small. According to World Bank data (2018), the number of scientific publications from Kosovo in international indexed journals has gradually increased since 2009. The number of scientific/technical publications in international indexed journals has doubled compared to 2015.

Objective 7: Increase the quality and competitiveness of higher education by promoting excellence in teaching, research, artistic creativity, innovation and internationalization.

Indicators	Basis	Aim	Achievement	Clarification
Number of students enrolled in doctoral programs	254 (2013/14)	50/year	202	In the 2016/17–2019/20 period, only the University of Prishtina has offered 15 doctoral programs, accepting 202 candidates.
Number of students receiving scholarships to pursue doctoral studies abroad	113	20 /year	/	Since 2017, a limited number of scholarships have been offered for this purpose. In the 2017-18 period the HERAS project has supported 9 members of the academic staff of public institutions for doctoral and post-doctoral studies, while MESTI has supported 4 candidates for doctoral studies and in cooperation with international development partners has supported 4 students for doctoral studies in Hungary, 1 in Japan and 2 in Greece.
Total number of professional development hours held	1944	10,000 hours/year	/	No data available
Number of students in EQF level programs 5	112 (F 59 and M 53)	1000 / year	/	Only one Level V program: Energy Engineering and Management, Level V, 120 ECTS, UBT College
Number of months of mobility for academic staff	250	60 months / year	/	1934 members of the academic staff and students from Kosovo have received mobility scholarships from the Erasmus + program during 2017-2019, while Kosovo has hosted 1027 mobilities.
Number of months of mobility for students	304	60 months / year	/	
Teaching mobility in higher education	/	/	/	/
Percentage of study programs conducted in English	0.97%	5%	/	No data available

