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EDUCATION OF ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES IN KOSOVO

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Kosova Education Center

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List of Abbreviations

AET	Adult Education and Training
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
EU	European Union
CDBE	GIZ "Capacity Development in Basic Education"
COVID-19	CO (Coronavirus), VI (Viral), D (Disease)
MED	Municipal Education Directorate
PRTAN	Prevention and Response Teams toward Abandonment and Non-Registration
EU-SIMRAES 2	EU funded Support to the Implementation of the strategy for reintegration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities 2- education for Integration project
EWC	European Wergeland Center
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
PSEI	Pre-School Education Institutions
INCLUDE	Joint EU/CoE "Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education" project
IEP	International Education Projects
HEKS/EPER	Swiss Church Aid
UN	United Nations
KFOS	Kosovo Foundation for Open Society
KEC	Kosova Education Center

CoE	Council of Europe
KOSINT	“Kosovo Integration Initiative 2020” project
KRAEEN	Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians Early Years Network
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MEST	Ministry of Education. Science and Technology
MESTI	Ministry of Education. Science, Technology and Innovation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
KESP	Kosovo Education Strategic Plan
LC	Learning Center
REF	Roma Education Fund
SDC	Swiss Development Agency
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EWS	Early Warning System Module
AI	Administrative Instruction
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
VoRAE	Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians organization
MOCR	Municipality Office for Community and Returns

Executive Summary

Inclusion is the primary principle in the education system and it translates into respect for internationally accepted norms on education for all, with a focus on providing equal opportunities for vulnerable groups in society. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are one of the most vulnerable groups and their education requires special measures to ensure inclusion and appropriate education quality. Inclusion of these communities in Kosovo education system is regulated by comprehensive legislation and inclusive education policies. As part of these policies, there are two 5-year strategies addressing the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education that already are at the end of their implementation period. The Strategy for inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities in the Kosovo society, approved on 2017, is organized into four strategic action fields, education being one of them. Within this area, a number of activities are planned for the period to 2021. The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) was approved as well in 2017 and includes measures to enhance inclusion and quality of education for members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

The report uses information collected from different parties involved in activities oriented towards the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as well as data from secondary sources to understand the extent and the quality of the implementation of education policies focused on the education of members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. More specifically, the report presents the work done in past years, best practices, difficulties and stagnations.

This study aims to analyze the situation with the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities with regard to implementation of education policies and experiences from providers and beneficiaries of educational services. Furthermore, the research aims to understand the developments in various aspects of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Mixed **methodology has been used** to analyze the situation with the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Although quantitative data have been used in support of the study, the core of the study is of qualitative nature. Desk research was used initially to collect secondary data, reviewing legislation, policies, reports and other documents in the area of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian and other related areas. Two strategic documents, which indicate what should have been done by our society in terms of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community in the last five years, were selected to identify specific topics that have become part of this study. Therefore, the study is organized into specific topics, for which qualitative data were required, supported with quantitative data, whenever this was possible.

Short questionnaires with open questions were used to collect data, and the parties were required to give their contribution by providing first-hand data. Where needed, questionnaires were combined with interviews with these parties to clarify any aspect of study and to have more detailed information. In several cases, interviews

were conducted with some of the parties and a questionnaire was sent to orient them about the interview. Finally, the data collected lately in a workshop organized with representatives from 6 municipalities and CSOs from these municipalities were used in part of the study.

The study concluded that considerable progress has been achieved in the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in recent years, yet much remains to be done. MEST has already taken an institutional leading role in several aspects of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. There are efforts made in other aspects, and challenges as well. Municipalities responsible for many aspects in regards to the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities have increased their engagement as well, although they have not managed yet to take the lead in activities in this regard. Often, the approach of municipalities is reactive, subject to initiatives and requests coming from CSOs. In regards to institutions, lack of reliable data and insufficient monitoring was notable. Information is not properly communicated at vertical level. Many activities that were to be implemented at municipal level were missing, especially the ones related to regulations and plans at local level, whereas from central level no monitoring took place.

Donor community support continued through projects for the education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. At the same time, the request to have institutions take over the coordination of actions to increase inclusion and improve the quality of education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, including the financing of these actions, was clearly articulated. Institutions' reaction was positive. Increased activity was noticed from members of these communities, activists and CSOs working in area of education of these communities. In most cases, CSOs are at the forefront of addressing all the needs of these communities in education and beyond.

In accordance with the KESP and the Strategy for the inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities, most of the measures to stimulate and facilitate the enrolment and attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in different education levels were implemented. Such measures include: achievement of a registration quota (at least 5 students per school) of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students at upper secondary level of education; scholarships and mentoring provided to support students from these communities, in a joint process of all donor organizations, with the coordination from MESTI; and facilitation of enrolment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students through reserved seats. Meanwhile, in regard to scholarships for higher education students, the process could not be facilitated due to lack of a legal basis.

Learning Centers have enhanced their standard of operation, by harmonizing their programs with the Pre-University Education Curriculum, by supporting professional development of the staff and by encouraging them to continue their formal education and get teacher qualifications. In addition, the coordinated process of institutionalization of Learning Centers has begun. The adoption of AI 19/2018 on the Establishment and Functioning of Learning Centers and the development of the Guidelines for Implementation of this IA set the stage for this process. Currently the LC licensing process has started, enabling LCs to be financed by public funding.

Drop-outs and non-enrolment remain a factor weighting significantly more on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. PRTANs were established at school and municipality level, but often they are non-functional and in-

effective. When it comes to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, their role is covered by CSOs and mediators in the community. Reporting of cases via early warning module is low. Only 6 municipalities and 14 schools from these municipalities have reported cases of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students in EWS.

Unfortunately, MESTI does not have any data disaggregated by ethnicity in regards to returnees, therefore educational reintegration is done in the same way for all returned children. At local level, repatriated children are immediately reintegrated in schools, followed by student level evaluation, collection of documentation and language courses, as applicable. When it comes to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, there are CSOs that provide assistance in identifying the needs, collecting documents and enrolling children at school.

In regards to adult education and training, SMIA offers data for 8 municipalities where members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities benefited from AET programs. There are at least three more municipalities with a high number of members of these communities that are not included in these statistics, which poses questions that ought to be addressed in a different format at a later stage.

Although KESP envisages the development of a strategy that would promote inter-ethnic dialogue and contacts among communities, and the development of a policy to organize teaching on diversity and human and communities' rights for all the students, these documents were not prepared. In addition, no educational module specific to communities was reported to have been developed. The gap was filled by projects that were implemented and the ones being implemented by international agencies and organizations; they raised capacities of school leaders and teachers and provided practical guideline for competences for a democratic culture in schools, which promotes diversity, tolerance and coexistence.

Pandemics has had more severe effects on the situation with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, reducing their access to education, dropping the level of learning and limiting social interaction. MEDs and schools had no special plan to address the needs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, but they responded within their capabilities.

Although Roma language was introduced as an elective subject years ago in several municipalities, such as Gjakova and Ferizaj, it is no longer applied. Only the Municipality of Prizren provided a more sustainable solution, hiring a Roma teacher, who teaches Roma language in four schools in this municipality. Roma language in these schools is attended also by some Albanian students and students of other communities.

The number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students attending studies in faculties of education is growing year by year, accordingly the number of graduates from these communities as well. However, no increase in the number of teachers of these communities hired in public schools in Kosovo is noticed. Up to now, institutions have taken no measures to increase the number of employees from these communities; instead, they have chosen to apply equal treatment, irrespective of ethnicity.

The study has drawn several conclusions based on aspects where difficulties were identified as well as based on best practices. Some of the recommendations are related to policies and legislation and are mainly ad-

dressed to MESTI. They include recommendations to establish clear controlling mechanisms within the next strategic cycle; to review some AIs, to enable opportunities for mitigation measures for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children and students; to create a policy for a democratic culture to promote diversity, social inclusion and intercultural understanding, etc.

Other recommendations for MESTI are related to maintenance and dissemination of best practices, such as the one related to scholarships, to financing of Learning Centers, and to dissemination of best practices between municipalities.

Some of the recommendations are related to further measures stimulating the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and are addressed to MESTI and municipalities. They include: releasing the returnees from paying for the nostrification of documents; hiring teachers from these communities in public schools by giving them priority when advertising jobs etc.

INTRODUCTION

Kosovo is defined as a multi-ethnic society, governed democratically, based upon the principles of equality and respect for the rights and freedoms of all individuals, as well as protection of the rights of and participation by all Communities and their members[1]. So, it embraces the highest standards of protection and promotion of human rights for all communities, social inclusion and coexistence as elements of a functioning society.

In the education system, inclusion is the main principle and it is translated into respect for internationally accepted norms on education for all, with a focus on providing equal opportunities for vulnerable groups in society[2]. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are one of the most vulnerable groups and their education requires special measures to ensure inclusion and appropriate education quality. Inclusion of these communities in Kosovo education system is regulated by comprehensive legislation and inclusive education policies. As part of these policies, there are two 5-year strategies addressing the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education that already are at the end of their implementation period. The Strategy for inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities in the Kosovo society, approved on 2017, is organized into four strategic action fields, education being one of them. Within this field, a number of activities are planned for the period to 2021. The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) was approved as well in 2017 and includes measures to enhance inclusion and quality of education for members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

While we have no information that institutions have evaluated the implementation of these strategies, a number of reports have been published mainly by organizations and provide data for the extent to which measures have been implemented and objectives achieved. Considering that Kosovo Institutions have initiated the process for the new strategic cycle, in regards to inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the Kosovo society and the KESP also, it is expected to have an evaluation of implementation of the previous strategies.

Notwithstanding these developments, though related to them, this report uses information from different parties involved in the activities oriented towards education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and data from secondary sources to understand the extent and the quality of the implementation of education policies focused on the education of members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. In particular, the report reflects the work done during the last years, best practices, difficulties and stagnations.

1 Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=3702
2 Law on Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2770

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to analyze the situation with the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, in terms of education policy implementation and in terms of concrete experiences from providers and beneficiaries of educational services.

Moreover, the study aimed to understand the developments in various aspects of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. In particular, responses were required for the following questions:

- To what extent were the measures defined with educational policies focused on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities implemented, and how substantial were they?
- What are the experiences at central, local and community level (difficulties, stagnations, best practices, etc.) with regard to the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities?

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Although quantitative data have been used in support of the study, the core of the study is qualitative. Mixed methodology has been used to analyze the education situation with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Initially, desk research was used to collect secondary data, reviewing legislation, policies, reports and other documents in the field of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and other related fields. Documents reviewed include:

- International Human Rights Instruments;
- Education legislation in Kosovo;
- Strategies focused on the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities;
- Local strategies and local action plans focused on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities;
- Reports containing education statistics from MESTI for 2015/16 to 2020/2021;
- MICS – Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in Kosovo and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019/2020;
- Various reports related to the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

To further develop the study, two strategic documents that indicate what should have been done by our society in terms of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the last five years, were selected. These two strategic documents are:

- Strategy for the inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities in the Kosovo society 2017-2021[3]; and
- KESP – Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021[4].

Strategy for the inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities in the Kosovo society 2017-2021 has four strategic action fields, one of them being education, along with employment, health and housing. Education strategic field has been used for the needs of this study.

KESP 2017-2021 has 7 strategic objectives. For the needs of this study, the first objective that focuses on increasing participation and providing equal opportunities for the development, training, and education of every individual in pre-university education was analyzed. Within this objective, emphasis has been placed on the activities from expected outcomes 4, 5, 6 and 8, which are related to the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

The tables below summarize the activities, expected outcomes and objectives within these two strategies, that are related to the object of this study. There is overlapping in some of the activities in these strategies and this is understandable.

3 https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bda07dc7fb150ca1d1588bccf39b974a.pdf
4 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/02/20161006-psak-2017-2021_1.pdf

STRATEGY FOR THE INCLUSION OF ROMA AND ASHKALI COMUNITIES IN THE KOSOVO SOCIETY 2017-2021

FIELD: EDUCATION

Strategic Objective	Expected outcomes	Activities
Increase inclusion and provide opportunities for personal development, training and education for members of the Roma and Ashkali communities	**Outcome 1.1:** Improved participation in education of the members of the Roma and Ashkali communities	1.1.1 Incentivizing attendance in pre-school education
		1.1.2 Drafting action plans for the prevention of drop-outs and non-enrolment in all municipalities
		1.1.3 Stimulating measures to facilitate the enrolment and attendance of Roma and Ashkali children in secondary and higher levelsof education
		1.1.4 Drafting individualized education plans for repatriated learners
		1.1.5 Development of specific positive measures and preparatory programs for enrolment and retention of students of Roma and Ashkali communities in HEI
		1.1.6 Support to adult education programs
	Outcome 1.2: Improved performance of students of the Roma and Ashkali communities	1.2.1 Defining gender sensitive indicators for EMIS for Roma and Ashkali community members
		1.2.2 Elimination of segregation and discrimination against Roma and Ashkali community children
		1.2.3 Support to community-based learning centers
		1.2.4 Provision of supplemental learning for learners facing difficulties in learning
		1.2.5 Promotion of Roma language learning
	Outcome 1.3: Increased awareness among stakeholders to support education of the members of Roma and Ashkali communities	1.3.1 Development of awareness raising programs for parents regarding early childhood
		1.3.2 Organizing awareness raising activities of Roma and Ashkali communities regarding the importance of timely enrolment and school attendance, particularly focusing on girls
		1.3.3 Awareness raising of general population regarding the education of Roma and Ashkali communities

KOSOVO EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021		
Strategic Objective 1	**Outcome**	**Activities**
Increasing participation and providing equal opportunities for the development, training and education of every individual in pre-university education.	**Outcome 1.4** Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in primary education has increased by 10%, whereas in lower and upper secondary education has increased by 20%	1.4.1 Harmonizing Learning Centre programs.
		1.4.2 Drafting regulations by municipalities to facilitate the enrolment and attendance conditions of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-school and secondary education level
		1.4.3 Monitoring the implementation of mitigation measures for enrolment of children in preschool and upper secondary education level
		1.4.4. Training of teachers for teaching Roma language
		1.4.5 Organize activities to raise the awareness of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities on the importance of timely enrolment and school attendance, with special focus on girls.
	Outcome 1.5: All repatriated children are included in the education system and strengthen the mechanisms for organizing education in Diaspora	1.5.1 Monitor the implementation of repatriation legislation by MEST supervision group
		1.5.2 Drafting of individual plans for repatriated students
		1.5.3 Review of the repatriates' program.
		1.5.4 Training of teachers and municipal officials on the repatriation program
		1.5.5 Coordination and monitoring of supplementary classes by the MEST supervisory group
		1.5.6 Organizing activities for children in Diaspora

KOSOVO EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021		
Strategic Objective 1	**Outcome**	**Activities**
Increasing participation and providing equal opportunities for the development, training and education of every individual in pre-university education.	**Outcome 1.6:** Effective mechanisms are established to prevent drop-out and non-enrolment in pre-university education	1.6.1. Capacity building for prevention teams at the school, municipal and central level
		1.6.2. Revision of PRTANs role
		1.6.3. Improve sex-disaggregated data collection for drop-out and non-enrolment
		1.6.4. Development of action plans for prevention of drop-out and non-enrolment in schools in all municipalities
		1.6.5. Awareness-raising regarding education of other vulnerable categories
		1.6.6. Monitoring and assessment of progress reached in the implementation of policies that address drop-out and non-enrolment, and early warning for children at risk of drop-out
		1.6.7. Organization of accelerated learning for pupils that have dropped out or are not enrolled in school
	Outcome 1.8: There are effective mechanisms and policies in place to promote diversity through an integrated education system	1.8.1 Develop a strategy for promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and contact among communities
		1.8.2 Review language teaching provisions
		1.8.3 Measures to improve teaching of Albanian as a second language
		1.8.4 Development of community-specific educational modules
		1.8.5 Development of a policy on how to teach about diversity and human and communities' rights to all pupils

Based on these parts taken from these strategies, specific topics have been identified and addressed in this study. Therefore, the study is organized into specific topics and qualitative data were required for these topics, supported with quantitative data, whenever it was possible. At the same time, parties that could be used as sources of information were identified.

Short questionnaires with open questions were used to collect data, and the parties were required to give their contribution by providing first-hand data. Where needed, questionnaires were combined with interviews with the parties to clarify any aspect of study and to have more detailed information. In some instances, the questionnaire was sent to several parties for orientation and, based on the questionnaire, the interview was immediately conducted with that party. It depended on what was more convenient for the participant. Research instruments were customized according to different parties, containing the topics for which information were expected from these parties.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Substantial lack of necessary information is the main limitation of this study. Out of 11 municipalities with the largest number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, only 3 municipalities have completed the open questions questionnaire, prepared for this study. The fact that data were collected during October, when the election campaign was taking place, is not a justification for this behavior from most of the Municipal Directories of Education. It is the opposite. Also, some other institutional and non-institutional parties did not respond when asked for information for this study.

There is a remarkable lack of data for different aspects of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, especially in regards to disaggregation of data by ethnicity. In addition, when reviewing the data from education statistics, many errors were encountered. Lack of data and anomalies in statistical data have reduced their credibility and this presents the other limitation of this study.

STUDY CONTEXT

HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

The right to education is a fundamental human right. As such, it is universal. It means that all people, without distinction on any basis, are holders of this right. Moreover, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as the most fundamental instrument of human rights, proclaims the right of everyone to basic free education[5]. In the spirit of this Declaration, Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges member states, inter alia, to:

- make primary education compulsory and freely available for all;
- encourage the development of various forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child and take appropriate measures, such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
- make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by all appropriate means;
- take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and reduction of drop-out rates[6].

Article 29 of the Convention, meanwhile, instructs that the aim of the education should be, inter alia, to:

- The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin[7].

The right to education is fulfilled only if the education offered is qualitative. Thus, as proclaimed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, quality inclusive and equitable education and the promotion of life-long learning opportunities for all must be ensured[8].

5 https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/udhr.pdf
6 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf
7 Ibid.
8 https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?utm_source=EN&utm_medium=GSR&utm_content=US_UNDP_PaidSearch_Brand_English&utm_campaign=CENTRAL&c_src=CENTRAL&c_src2=GSR&gclid=Cj0KCQiAkNiMBhCxARIsAIDDKNVUBucU4mGGE-uej0c97RlrupLMNWgEMSBg9eY7_vozYrL253E0LtTQaAkzlEALw_wcB

From here, one can observe that it is extremely important to provide quality education to all equally, taking into account the specific needs of individuals and groups to which they belong, in order to enable the maximum development of personal and social potential.

Equal provision of educational services does not, however, ensure justice. Equal treatment is not necessarily fair treatment. Considering vulnerable social groups, international human rights instruments have gone one step further in addressing the specific needs of these groups in order to provide fair treatment. Thus, according to the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the protection of national minorities, states must ensure full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority in all spheres of economic, social, political and cultural life. This is ensured through the necessary and appropriate measures, which have as their starting point the special conditions of persons belonging to national minorities[9].

Kosovo is defined as a multi-ethnic and democratically governed society, based on the principles of equality before the law of all individuals and full respect of fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as the protection of rights and participation of all communities and their members[10]. *Chapter II of the Constitution - Fundamental Rights and Freedoms,* clarifies that "The principles of equal legal protection do not prevent the imposition of necessary measures for the protection and advancement of the rights of individuals and groups who are in an unequal position. Such measures shall be implemented only until the goal for which they were set is achieved."[11] Whereas in *Chapter III - The Rights of Communities and Their Members*, the state, depending on the need, assumes the responsibility to "adopt adequate measures to promote full and effective equality between members of communities in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life... ".[12]

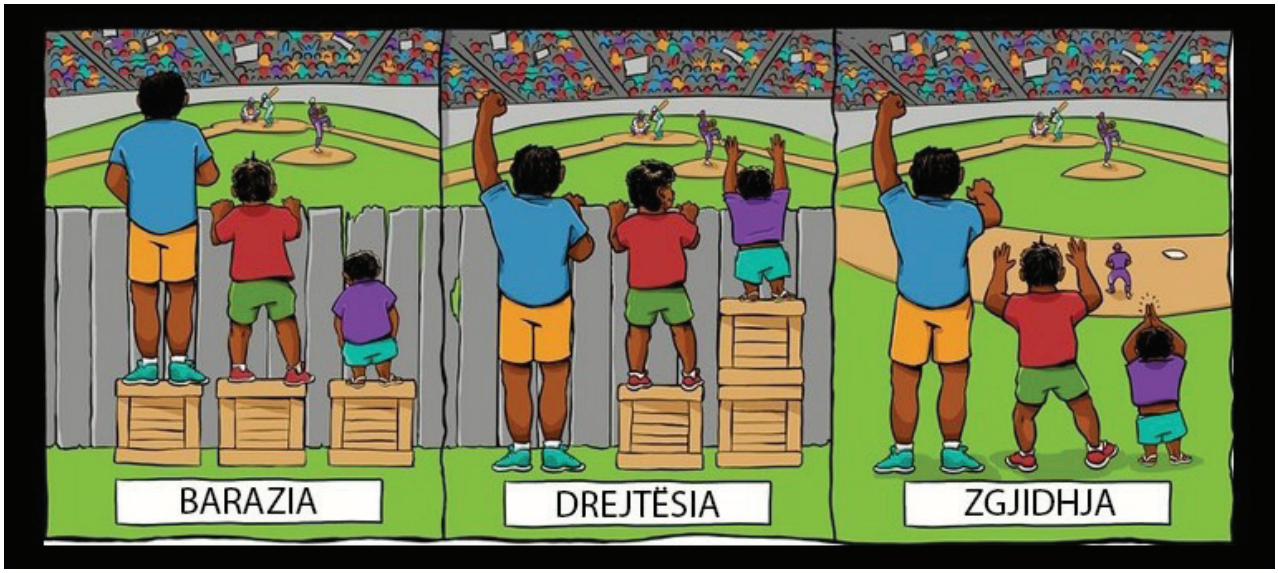
ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES AS A VULNERABLE GROUP IN EDUCATION

Ekzistojnë grupe të ndryshme shoqërore që për shkak të karakteristikave të tyre, tradicionalisht kanë qenë subjekte të shtypjes. Këto grupe e kanë përvojën e të jetuarit në margjina të shoqërisë, duke qenë sistematikisht të përjashtuar nga pjesëmarrja e plotë në shoqëri. Si të tilla, këto grupe nuk e kanë potencialin që vetë ta përmirësojnë situatën e tyre jetësore, prandaj kanë nevojë për masa të posaçme afirmative, në mënyrë që t'i gëzojnë të drejtat e tyre të njeriut në mënyrë të barabartë dhe efektive.

There are various social groups that due to their characteristics, have traditionally been subjects of oppression. These groups have the experience of living on the margins of society, being systematically excluded from full participation in society. As such, these groups do not have the potential to improve their own living conditions, therefore they need special affirmative action measures in order to enjoy their human rights equally and effectively.

9 Article 4 of the Convention https://rm.coe.int/16800c131a
10 Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=3702
11 Article 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo
12 Article 58 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo

Equality of all citizens, regardless of their origin is proclaimed as a basic social principle. It is based on the belief that all people should have the same opportunities to be successful and to have productive and enjoyable lives. While equality as a principle and as a governing approach has been widely embraced, much has recently been debated as to whether it is sufficient to treat all people properly. There is a debate as to whether equality suffices or whether justice is a more important principle. Although equality and justice are often used interchangeably, they differ in the effect they create on people's lives. Justice as a principle recognizes that not everyone has the same starting point in society. Some people or groups face difficult conditions and circumstances, which makes it difficult for them to achieve the same goals with the same effort. These groups have historically been at a disadvantage, which makes it difficult for members of these groups to be successful.



Taken and adapted from: #the4thBox Cut-out Edition, Interaction Institute for Social Change[13]

Therefore, it is not enough to provide equal treatment to vulnerable groups (image 1). They should be offered fair treatment (image 2) in terms of meeting the specific needs they have compared to the general population. This should happen until the structural barriers in society are removed (image 3), when special (affirmative) measures are no longer needed.

The Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo have traditionally faced difficult living circumstances, due to the low degree of integration into society, social exclusion and insufficient addressing of their needs. These communities face high levels of poverty, low living standards, poor housing conditions and poor health.[14]

13 https://interactioninstitute.org/the4thbox-cutout/
14 European Commission Kosovo Report https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/kosovo-report-2021_en . Also, OSCE: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/c/443590_2.pdf

Due to these circumstances, the children of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities do not have the same starting point in general development and especially in education as do the children of the majority community. This, at the very early age brings them into an unequal position with their peers and this inequality follows them into the further stages of development and education. Optimal development in early childhood occurs only in a stimulating environment, where in addition to the safety and protection of children, access to early childhood quality education, access to textbooks and learning materials, and interaction with adults who provide care with proper responsibility and attention is also required. Such an environment is usually not provided to the children of these communities, therefore inequalities in the development of these children appear compared to their peers of the majority population. The Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) in Kosovo and the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo 2019/2020[15] provide data proving the unenviable situation of children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities regarding the indicators mentioned above, compared to the general population.

Education policies in Kosovo promote a range of specific measures that help members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities increase educational attainment, as a way to reduce the gap between them and the general population, created by their specific situation as members of these communities.

15 https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/1936/file/MICS%20Snapshots%20.pdf

MICS: Indicators of the development in the early childhood

Indicator	General population	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities
Children 3-4 years old who have attended an early childhood education program	15%	8%
Children 2-4 years old who, in the 3 days leading up to the poll, have been involved by an adult family member in activities promoting learning or preparation for school	63%	37%
Children under 5 years old who have 3 or more books at home	27%	4%

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION OF ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES

The two main policies that have shown the way in the field of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo 2017/21 and the Education Strategic Plan in Kosovo (KESP) 2017/21. Many of the measures planned within these strategic documents were meant to be implemented at the local level. However, these measures were regularly linked to the central level in terms of coordination and / or oversight by central institutions.

Historically, since the establishment of our institutions, institutional capacity in terms of both human and financial resources has been lacking. This has been observed altogether even during this five-year period. While in some topics related to the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities there has been an active approach of institutions and competent leadership in the process, in other topics institutions have awaited initiatives from abroad. In these cases, donor organizations and international development agencies have taken the lead through projects and programs that have been in line with educational policies in this area. Non-governmental organizations working in the field of education and especially those engaged in the field of education of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, have also been active during this period in projects aimed at improving various aspects of education among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

STIMULATION AND FACILITATION OF ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Enrollment and attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children at different levels of education remains extremely low compared to the overall average. The 2019/20[16] Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities provides data on the large difference in the attendance of children from these communities in education compared to the general population. While 84% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children of primary school age attend primary school, only two-thirds of the children of these communities of lower secondary school age attend this level of education, and further only one-third of these children attend upper secondary school. Attendance at early childhood education is extremely low even at the national level with only 15% of children aged 35-59 months old attending preschool education. Even worse, only 8% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children of this age are placed in pre-school education institutions.

16 https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/1936/file/MICS%20Snapshots%20.pdf

MICS 2019/20: Education attendance rate

Level	General population	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities
Early childhood education (35 – 59 months)	15%	8
Pre-school education	84%	45%
Primary education	96%	84%
Lower secondary education	94%	64%
Upper secondary education	87%	31%

The low level of inclusion of children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, especially in pre-school and upper secondary education, justifies the projection of measures to stimulate and facilitate enrollment and attendance in pre-school and upper secondary education.

RAISING AWARENESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMELY ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The awareness of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities about the importance of timely enrollment of their children and regular school attendance has increased significantly compared to many years ago. However, awareness-raising activities and campaigns are still measures that stimulate and facilitate the enrollment and attendance of these children in school.

Awareness campaigns are organized regularly at the local level. In some municipalities, these campaigns are planned and organized in cooperation between municipalities and NGOs working in the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, but in most municipalities the NGOs are the providers of these campaigns, while municipalities sometimes offer some support (e.g., with information from the birth register, etc.), and sometimes do not participate in them in any way. NGOs have been very effective in organizing these campaigns. Between May and June of every year, they begin the process of identification of all children from these communities who should be enrolled in school, alongside information campaigns. These campaigns target the families, and they are organized through information sessions, distribution of leaflets, production and publication of awareness video spots, organization of public events, and even door-to-door visits to families. A big role is played by community mediators, who know their community well and have the knowledge and skills to mediate between the community and institutions.

Good examples are reported from Gjakova, where for several years various organizations have joined other activists and institutions making this campaign a joint project under the umbrella of the Community Advisory Group, which is an informal group that has proven to be very effective in processes related to the education of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

FACILITATION OF ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE OF ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL AND SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL

KESP 2017-2021 foresees the drafting of regulations by municipalities to facilitate the conditions of enrollment and attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children at the preschool and secondary level. Only the municipality of Obiliq has drafted such a regulation. The joint EU-CoE project INCLUDE (Capacity Building for Inclusive Education[17]), which is being implemented, will, among other things, help some municipalities build their capacity to reduce the existing barriers to enrollment in education of Roma Ashkali and Egyptian

17 https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/building-capacity-for-inclusion-in-education/home

communities and of children with special needs. The MESTI Division for Community Education, which co-operates with this project, hopes that these municipalities will also benefit from such regulations.

Regarding preschool education, there are municipalities that, although they do not have these regulations in place, try to facilitate the registration of children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, while other municipalities state that they receive equal treatment according to the criteria and regulations of the PSEIs. There is no information, however, that MESTI has regulated or instructed in any way the facilitation of enrollment in preschool education. AI 19/2016 on the inclusion of children in preschool institutions in Kosovo[18] provides for the exemption from payment for children from vulnerable groups, specifying some such groups, but without including as such a group the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Some organizations that manage learning centers within the programs of learning centers have offered and continue to offer early childhood education programs, the beneficiaries of which are mainly the children of these communities. However, these programs are not ongoing, as they depend on the funds available within the projects they implement. In some cases, more stable cooperation has been reported between these organizations and municipalities, when municipalities take over the salaries of educators, such as the example of cooperation between Caritas Switzerland in Kosovo and the municipality of Gjakova and the municipality of Prizren.

Regarding the facilitation of enrollment in upper secondary education, municipalities regularly take these measures by reserving in each upper secondary school at least 5 places for enrollment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students who have failed to enroll according to admission criteria. In this regard, a ministerial decision regarding the reservation of these seats has contributed.

It has not been proven that there is a process of monitoring the implementation of facilitation measures for the enrollment of children at the preschool level and in upper secondary schools.

STIMULATION THROUGH THE SCHOLARSHIP AND MENTORING SYSTEM

Students of upper secondary level from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are additionally stimulated to attend and complete this level of education by being offered scholarships. MEST, with the help of donor organizations, since 2014 has provided scholarships for these students. In 2016, projects offering scholarships that were funded by the EU, HEKS / EPER and REF merged under the coordination of the MEST to unify the scholarship delivery system. GIZ was also part of the funding in the subsequent years. Thus, the EU project EU-SIMRAES 2 engaged an expert to facilitate the process of drafting common criteria for scholarship beneficiaries for students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Since then, the call for scholarships was common and all students applied to MEST. The parties providing scholarships then took over a number of scholarship grantees to support them. Furthermore, the EU-SIMRAES 2 project also funded the design of a web-based database, which serves to manage scholarship information. Each scholarship provider organiza-

18 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/09/19-ua-nr-19-2016-per-perfshirjen-e-femijeve-ne-institucionet-parashkollore-ne-kosove-rotated.pdf

tion and the MEST itself had user accounts and data were entered and processed in real time. Unfortunately, after the completion of the EU-SIMRAES 2 project, MEST failed to take over the management of the database to continue using it. It is reported that an Excel database has been used for the last two years.

From 2016/17, 500-600 students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities have benefited from the scholarship program every year. The amount of the scholarship for one student for one year was 300 Euros.

Students of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities that have applied and were granted the scholarships

2016/17	Applicants	686	2019/20	Applicants	812
	Beneficiaries	501		Beneficiaries	500
2017/18	Applicants	724	2020/21	Applicants	700
	Beneficiaries	507		Beneficiaries	585
2018/19	Applicants	785	2021/22	Applicants	N/A
	Beneficiaries	601		Beneficiaries	N/A

In the current school year 2021/22, MEST has alone prepared the scholarship process. Funds have been secured for the allocation of 500 scholarships. At the time of preparation of this report, the scholarship application process for the school year 2021/22 has been ongoing, therefore there is no information on the number of applicants and beneficiaries for this year.

From 2016/17, for three consecutive years, at least half of the students who received scholarships, have also benefited from the mentoring program. To build mentoring capacity, EU-SIMRAES 2 and REF have trained and certified as mentors at least 50 upper secondary school teachers. These teachers have engaged with students and their families in support through mentoring, in order to increase the learning achievements of these students. We were told by the community education division at MESTI that it is not known if MEST can continue the mentoring process.

FACILITATION OF ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS FROM ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

To facilitate the enrollment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students in higher education, the Government has issued AI 09/2016[19] on the Application of Affirmative Measures and Reserved Seats for the registration of candidates from non-majority communities in public institutions of higher education. This AI sets for each academic unit the quota of 12% of the reserved places for enrollment of students from non-majority communities, which will be distributed on the basis of candidates registered from non-majority communities, until the quota is met. It is reported that in general this quota of reserved seats is respected by the academic units of public universities. However, CSOs express doubts about cases of abuse of these quotas by students of the majority community, as in addition to the student self-declaration of ethnicity when applying for registration, AI does not require public institutions of higher education (HEIs) to do any other verification of ethnicity. Although the self-declaration form mentions the article on false declaration according to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo, cases of false declaration may occur and they may go unnoticed. Supporting Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students with scholarships is another form of facilitating attendance and completion of studies. AI 09/2016 states that students from majority and non-majority communities are beneficiaries of scholarship financial support schemes, based on the legislation in force, but there is no item in this AI where priority is given to students from non-majority communities to benefit from this financial support with scholarships. Despite the fact that Administrative Instruction 14/2017[20] on the Allocation of Scholarships determines the categories of students with priority status, these seven categories do not include students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Consequently, students from these communities do not benefit from scholarship calls published by MESTI. Furthermore, from the community education division at MESTI we have learned that a fund of 20,000 euros per year has been dedicated to scholarships for students of these communities, but this fund had to be merged into the general scholarship fund, due to lack of a legal framework stipulating alternative uses for it.

On the other hand, other sources of financial support with scholarships for students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are reported. Some municipalities offer scholarships to students from those municipalities. A good practice of facilitating the benefit of municipal scholarships for students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities has been demonstrated in Gjakova. The municipality has a regulation on subsidies based on which the call for scholarships is made. At the initiative of the MOCR and in cooperation with the MED, last year an item was set in the call for scholarships, where 5 scholarships were awarded to students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Students of these communities have competed within these communities for these 5 scholarships.

Different projects and organizations are other sources of support for students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. It is reported that Roma Education Fund (REF), through the program implemented by Roma Versitas Kosovo, is supporting Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students to pursue and complete higher education. It was not possible to obtain additional information about this effort from Roma Versitas Kosovo.

19 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/06/ua-masht-09-2016-aplikimi-i-masave-afirmative-dhe-vendeve-te-rez-al.pdf
20 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/12/ua-masht-14-2017-per-ndarjen-e-bursave.pdf

THE WORK OF LEARNING CENTERS

LEARNING CENTERS: AN OVERVIEW

The concept of learning centers was first presented in the early 2000s. In the initial stages, community centers were opened, with the financial support of donor organizations and agencies, in localities with a higher number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. These centers provided various services to community members. Over time, the work of these centers focused more on supporting the children of these communities, in terms of helping them continue their education and improving their learning outcomes. Consequently, they were increasingly conceived as learning centers, where children from these communities receive additional learning support. However, some LCs provided additional services and activities for the children who attended these centers, but also for their families, such as literacy program for parents, activities and counseling on health and social issues, awareness campaigns, etc.

Until 2016, the number of learning centers in Kosovo was about 40 of them. The positive impact of the learning centers for the children of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, but also for other children who needed additional learning support was appreciated by all parties. The European Commission in its annual reports on Kosovo has regularly acknowledged the role of learning centers in reducing the significant number of school dropouts and enabling further integration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities into the education system[21]. A study on the impact and sustainability of learning centers conducted in 2015[22] by UBO Consulting, for the needs of UNICEF, EU and CoE, shows that the impact of learning centers has been positive in: social inclusion of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities; improved school performance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children; reducing school dropout and returning to school children of street conditions; and reducing segregation and exclusion.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF LEARNING CENTERS

The Government of Kosovo has included in the strategic planning for the period 2017-2021 the provision by MEST and municipalities of support for learning centers, either through the financial support of the NGOs that administer them, or through the provision of working space in public facilities, especially in schools. It was also planned to develop the legal basis for the institutionalization of these centers in terms of developing standards of operation, curricula and staff engaged in those centers[23]. Consequently, in this 5-year strategic cycle of education, there were sufficient developments in this regard. Initially, there was a mobilization of CSOs to coordinate efforts to institutionalize learning centers. These efforts were also supported by donor organizations and agencies, which for some time had requested that the institutions take over the financing and other support of the learning centers. The reaction from MEST was positive. With the support of the KOSINT 2020 project, MEST coordinated the participatory process for drafting the AI on the establishment and

21 European Commission Kosovo*2016 Report: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2018-12/20161109_report_kosovo.pdf
22 http://uboconsulting.com/PDF/al/Study_on_Impact_and_Sustainability_of_the_Learning_Centers-ALB.PDF
23 Strategy on inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo society 2017-2021 https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bda07dc7fb150ca1d1588bccf39b974a.pdf

functioning of learning centers. The result of this process was the approval of AI 19/2018[24]. To facilitate the implementation of the AI, the process continued with the development of a guideline for the implementation of this AI[25]. This guide was also drafted in a participatory process, which was coordinated by MEST and supported by GIZ.

Based on AI 19/2018 and the guideline for its implementation, from June 2020 the call for applications for registration of learning centers has been announced. The Division for Education of Communities has provided information that by November 2021 there are 40 learning centers that have applied for registration. Of these, 16 LCs have been registered, 4 are in the process of decision making, while 20 are in the process of review by the commission.

Finally, this year for the first time a public fund has been allocated to fund NGOs managing learning centers. The allocated fund is about 200,000 euros. In the call made by MEST, three organizations that have learning centers have benefited and the value of financial support for them is a total of 97,000 euros. The rest of the allocated fund will be carried over to next year and this fund is expected to increase to 400,000 euros.

CURRENT WORK OF LEARNING CENTERS

Meanwhile, in recent years the learning centers have operated being managed by NGOs through projects funded by donor organizations. It is estimated that there are about 80 learning centers operating in Kosovo. The work of the learning centers during this period has gained in quality, thanks to the harmonization of the programs of the centers with pre-university education curriculum, as well as thanks to the professional development of the learning centers' teaching staff. In addition, organizations managing learning centers have encouraged staff who were not qualified to pursue formal education and qualify as teaching staff. A more recent study on the impact of learning centers on the inclusion of children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education, conducted in 2018[26] by the KOSINT 2020 project, shows the perspective of parents on the contribution of learning centers, where the contribution of centers accentuates in:

- better integration of children;
- improved communication/language skills;
- greater socializing;
- improved school performance; and
- motivation to pursue formal education.

24 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/12/ua-nr-19-masht-per-themelimin-dhe-funksionimin-e-qendrave-mesimore-x.pdf
25 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2019/12/udhezues.pdf
26 http://kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ndikimi-i-QMve-ne-Kosove_eng.pdf

Particularly active were donor organizations which, in addition to influencing the acceleration of the institutionalization of learning centers, greatly influenced the coordination of assistance to learning centers from various sources. To increase the impact of investment in learning centers and to avoid duplication or multiplication of investments for the same beneficiaries, periodic donor community coordination meetings were organized, often with the participation of the management of larger projects assisting learning centers. Participants in these meetings were the EU Office, GIZ, ADA, SDC, etc.

Thanks to increased cooperation with municipalities, many learning centers were accommodated in school facilities, increasing the number of school-based centers. Municipalities undertook to cover municipal expenditures for the work of the centers. Some municipalities, such as Gjakova and Obiliq, even began to cover the municipal expenses of community-based centers. Some municipalities have already found possibilities to take over the salaries of LC staff. Cooperation was increased at the level of LC management and schools, as well as between school teachers and LC facilitators. Thus, municipalities are preparing to co-manage or take over the management of learning centers. As an example, it has been learned from VoRAE that this organization no longer has any LCs in direct management, because they have moved to the management of municipalities. Whereas, the organization engages in monitoring and capacity building.

ADRESSING SCHOOL DROPOUT

The dropout rate of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities has been consistently higher than that of the general population. The same trend has continued to be observed in recent years, as well. In the annual statistical reports containing educational indicators, the data on dropout are provided in general, without being divided by ethnicity. For the purpose of this study, the EMIS office provided data on dropouts of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, which are presented by school years in the following tables.

Dropout of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities 2016/17

Level	Ashkali			Roma			Egyptian			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Primary/lower secondary	40	21	61	4	3	7	19	13	32	63	37	100
Upper secondary	0	0	0	8	11	19	0	0	0	8	11	19
Total	**40**	**21**	**61**	**12**	**14**	**26**	**19**	**13**	**32**	**71**	**48**	**119**

Dropout of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities 2017/18

Level	Ashkali			Roma			Egyptian			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Primary/lower secondary	26	28	54	12	2	14	3	3	6	41	33	74
Upper secondary	0	0	0	2	1	3	11	0	11	13	1	14
Total	**26**	**28**	**54**	**14**	**3**	**17**	**14**	**3**	**17**	**54**	**34**	**88**

Dropout of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities 2018/19

Level	Ashkali			Roma			Egyptian			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Primary/lower secondary	27	21	48	5	2	7	12	4	16	44	27	71
Upper secondary	2	1	3	5	0	5	4	0	4	11	1	12
Total	**29**	**22**	**51**	**10**	**2**	**12**	**16**	**4**	**20**	**55**	**28**	**83**

Dropout of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities 2019/20

Level	Ashkali			Roma			Egyptian			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Primary/lower secondary	12	14	26	0	0	0	9	3	12	21	17	38
Upper secondary	1	1	2	4	3	7	1	2	3	6	6	12
Total	**13**	**15**	**28**	**4**	**3**	**7**	**10**	**5**	**15**	**27**	**23**	**50**

Dropout of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities 2020/21

Level	Ashkali			Roma			Egyptian			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Primary/lower secondary	27	25	52	3	0	3	6	2	8	36	27	63
Upper secondary	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	4	3	1	4
Total	**27**	**25**	**52**	**3**	**0**	**3**	**9**	**3**	**12**	**39**	**28**	**67**

Meanwhile, data on dropout of all students from the annual statistical reports were obtained and compared. The difference is huge. At the primary/lower secondary level, the dropout rate of all students in the last 5 years is between 0.06% and 0.10%, while the dropout rate of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is between 0.65% and 1.85%. At the upper secondary level, the dropout rate of all students in the last 5 years is between 1.20% and 1.80%, while the dropout rate of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is between 0.75% and 2.53%. The lowest rate of 0.75 % was reported in 2020/21, during the Covid-19 pandemic time. In the circumstances when learning went from one scenario to another, it was difficult to track the attendance in education, therefore reporting is not reliable.

Dropout rate of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, compared to the overall dropout rate, by school years:

Level	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	Roma Ashkali Egyptian	Total	Roma Ashkali Egyptian	Total	Roma Ashkali Egyptian	Total	Roma Ashkali Egyptian	Total	Roma Ashkali Egyptian	Total
Primary, lower secondary	1.85	0.06	1.30	0.10	1.23	0.10	0.65	0.10	1.06	N/A
Upper secondary	N/A	1.60	2.53	1.80	2.06	1.80	2.08	1.20	0.75	N/A

The abbreviation N/A (not applicable) in the table, for the year 2020/21, implies that data on dropout rate for this year are not yet available as MESTI has not yet published the annual statistical report with educational indicators. In 2016/17 an anomaly in the number of Ashkali students for this year was encountered, because only 2 Ashkali students of upper secondary level were reported. This is unbelievable given that in other years the number of these students ranged between 224 and 261.

Over the years, a number of steps have been taken to address student dropout and non-enrolment, including:

- In 2012, AI 19/2012 on the establishment and strengthening of Prevention and Response Teams for Abandonment and Non-enrolment in compulsory education[27];
- In 2014, the manual for school Prevention and Response Teams for Abandonment and Non-enrolment in compulsory education was published[28];
- In the school year 2016/17, Early Warning System (EWS) was added in the EMIS, which generates information on cases that are at risk of dropout, which are identified and reported by schools;
- In 2018, AI 08/2018 on the establishment and strengthening of Prevention and Response Teams for Abandonment and Non-enrolment in pre-university education was promulgated[29];

Sources from the MESTI report that the revision of the Manual for Dropout Prevention and Response Teams for Abandonment and Non-enrolment in mandatory education is ongoing, so as to adapt it to the new AI 08/2018. As for this AI, unlike the previous AI 19/2012, the new AI provides for the establishment of PRTANs at the level of upper secondary schools, i.e. beyond compulsory education. This AI also provides provisions for the Early Warning System (EWS) module in the EMIS.

The legislation and regulations on dropout and don-enrolment response contain no instructions about addressing dropout cases for children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

27 https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=8222
28 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/12/manual-for-school-prevention-and-response-1.pdf
29 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/06/8-ua-masht-nr-08-2018-per-themelimin-dhe-fuqizimin-e-ekipeve-parandalimdhe-kbm-napu.pdf

Municipalities report that PRTANs have been established and are functional. MESTI also reports that these teams have been established at school and municipality levels, but not all the teams are functional and operating according to the regulations, and not all the schools are implementing the work model provided. Meanwhile, the PRTAN has been established at the MESTI level, as well. Nevertheless, there is no information on a subsequent communication system between the various levels of PRTANs. The MESTI did not claim that there has been any monitoring and evaluation of the progress achieved in the implementation of policies addressing abandonment and non-enrolment as well as early warning for children at risk of abandonment.

Regarding the early warning system module, the MESTI indicates that there are few cases reported, but since the start of the module implementation, cases have been increasingly reported through years. Data from the EMIS show that since 2016/17, when reporting to the EWS module started, only 6 municipalities and only 14 schools from these municipalities reported cases of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students at risk of abandonment. Only from the municipality of Gjakova each year cases have been reported. There are 5 schools of this municipality that have reported cases at least one year, while "Mustafa Bakija" school have done this every year.

Reporting in the EWS module for students of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities

Years	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Cases of reporting	**11**	**12**	**29**	**23**	**35**
Gjakova	Mustafa Bakija	Mustafa Bakija	Mustafa Bakija	Mustafa Bakija	Mustafa Bakija
		Yll Morina	Yll Morina	Yll Morina	Yll Morina
	Zef Lush Marku		Zef Lush Marku		
				Mazllum Këpuska	
				Selman Riza	
Ferizaj	Tefik Çanga	Tefik Çanga	Tefik Çanga		Tefik Çanga
			Ahmet Hoxha		
Prishtina				Emin Duraku	
					Asim Vokshi
Prizreni			Lekë Dukagjini		
			Mati Logoreci		
			Ibrahim Fehmiu		
Fushë Kosova			Selman Riza		
Kamenica	Idriz Seferi				

The data received from the Municipal Office for Communities and Returns (MOCR) in Gjakova correspond to the aforementioned data, which proves that the PRTAN at the municipal level is very active, thus meeting with all school PRTANs annually and addressing cases which could not be successfully addressed at the school level.
The General Education Division at MESTI states that action plans to prevent school dropout and non-enrolment are in place in all the municipalities, but they do not provide any evidence of this. Whereas, out of the three municipalities that have provided data for this study, the municipality of Fushe Kosovo states that there is an action plan in place, while in Gjakova and Podujevë such plans are not developed. However, MEDs state that cases of dropout and non-registration are addressed in accordance with the rules and regardless of students' nationality. Meanwhile, regarding the effectiveness of PRTANs in schools, they state that these teams do not have financial support and work voluntarily, out of their regular jobs.
Municipalities acknowledge the great role of CSOs in addressing cases of abandonment and non-registration. These organizations with the support of various projects have established an effective system of identification of children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities abandoned or unregistered and engage with schools and families in enrolling or returning them back to school. These organizations also have the advantage of knowing the community well as most of them are community-based organizations. CSOs confirm this themselves.

Most of the time, PRTANs are not functional. Challenges begin with teachers who do not provide timely information to the school principal or the administration teams. They only report when the child has 100-200 absences and, even then, no field visits are made unless CSOs invite PRTAN to visit the family. In these cases, NGOs feel compelled to continue communicating with the parents and the child trying to convince the latter to return to school. (CSO from Prizren)

This is also confirmed by an assessment report on the effectiveness of PRTANs, which focuses on the effectiveness of PRTANs among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children[30], published in 2019 in the framework of the project KOSINT 2020. This report highlights the role of CSOs and the activities they carry out in this regard, including the following:

- CSOs have a key role in identifying children who are not registered in school, especially the organizations that focus their activity on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities;

- Some organizations use their activities in the community to identify children who are of school age but are not enrolled in school. Furthermore, these organizations assist children who are not in the school enrollment lists to enroll;

30 http://www.kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Report_focused_on_effectiveness_of_prtans_among_roma-_ashkali_and_egyptian_children-1_ENG.pdf

- Cases of dropout by students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities often are addressed to a community-based mediator.

The same report also indicates that schools do not seriously address cases of dropping out or non-enrolment of children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and proceeds to explain the consequences of such lack of seriousness. There are two types of these cases:

- Cases of school dropout, especially of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, which are usually recorded in the school administration as ungraded students and are not registered in the EWS. It also happens that cases of school dropout are not reported in time. This results in students missing the entire school year due to a relatively long absence from school and the lack of supplementary learning/ extra classes to catch-up.

- Cases of non-enrolment in the first grade are not recorded in the EWS. Sometimes the school does not have information about these children who have reached the age of enrollment in the first grade but who do not show up at school to get registered. Sometimes, students who start the first grade drop out of school at the beginning of the first grade. They are not considered dropouts but children who have to wait one more year to reach the physical and psychological maturity required for first grade. Consequently, these students are not reported as dropouts and their cases are not recorded in the EWS.

Both these cases point to negligence, which, besides the damage caused by the loss of the school year, they increase the likelihood that dropout or non-enrolment of these children will be continue due to the difficulties of adaptation to subsequent generations of their peers.

Although KESP foresees the organization of accelerated classes for students who have dropped out or are not registered in school, there is no proof of such classes being organized. It was reported that such a class was organized in "Emin Duraku" school in Gjakova years ago, but it is no longer being organized.

RIINTEGRATION OF REPATRIATED CHILDREN IN EDUCATION

The reintegration of repatriated persons is regulated by Government Regulation no. 22/2020 for the reintegration of repatriated persons[31]. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is the institution that coordinates the overall process of reintegration, and a number of central and local institutions are involved in this process. According to the regulation, repatriated children should be immediately reintegrated in education, i.e. they should be placed in schools and further supported according to their needs for sustainable reintegration.

The system and process of reintegrating repatriated children have been done successfully by MIA, and it can even be a good example for other areas too. (Officer at MOCR Gjakova)

A number of measures have been taken by MESTI to establish the framework for the reintegration of repatriated persons in education:

- AI 01/2016 stipulates the conditions, criteria and procedures for the organization of supplementary learning for repatriated students [32];
- AI 16/2016 stipulates the principles and procedures for the recognition of diplomas, degrees and qualifications of vocational and university schools obtained outside the Republic of Kosovo was issued[33];
- Textbooks for supplementary learning have been drafted and provided;
- On average, 200-300 students are included in supplementary learning annually;
- The school documentation of the repatriated children is assessed.

Unfortunately, there is no data on the returned (repatriated) students by ethnicity, therefore MESTI has not received specific information regarding the reintegration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in education. All the returned cases are treated in the same way.

At the local level, MOCRs are the ones that usually identify the needs of returnees and assist other institutions in addressing these needs. These institutions show that returnees from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities have the greatest need to meet. CSOs also play an important role in the reintegration of

31 https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=31862
32 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/01/ua-masht-nr-01-2016-per-caktimin-e-kushteve-kritereve-per-mesimin-plotesues-riatdhes-imrotated.pdf
33 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/09/16-ua-masht-16-2016-per-proc-e-njohjeve-te-dip-rotated.pdf

children of repatriated Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education. Organizations make regular family visits when they find out about returned families. They help identify needs, arrange documentation, and enroll children in school.

Data from the field indicate that the reintegration process in education is difficult for children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Some of these difficulties are:

- Often returned children lack school documentation. Parents cannot prove the level of education their children have completed in the country from where they have been returned. Schools conduct an assessment to determine the level of education they need to pursue. Often there are disagreements between schools and families in terms of which level their children should attend;

- There are problems with nostrification of documentation. Families have to pay for the translation of certificates or schoolbooks. In addition, they have to go to the ministry several times during this process;

- There are cases of children who have significant language difficulties due to the long stay of their families abroad.

A good practice is demonstrated by Nevo Koncepti organization, which has agreements with the Municipality of Prizren and the Municipality of Suhareka to support Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children repatriated from EU countries. The organization cooperates closely with the regional official of the MIA and the MOCR, whereby information on families of these returning communities is received on a monthly basis. Once the information is received, the families are continuously contacted, to receive from them initial information on the number of family members, age, education, qualifications/skills, residence and health. Initially children return to the school. They are provided with school supplies and are included in the homework program. In parallel, the translation and nostrification of documents in MESTI is organized. Class tutors and teachers pay a special attention to the socialization of children in school and where needed, the assistance of a psychologist is sought.

During 2020 and 2021 the number of repatriated Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families decreased. Although MESTI does not have information on possible waves of returnees, MOCR and CSOs warn about this. These parties say that we should be prepared, because although the pandemic has halted the process of repatriation, there are returnees that are expected from the long waiting lists.

To improve cooperation within various institutions and non-institutional parties at the municipal level, the GIZ funded "Capacity Development in Basic Education in Kosovo (CDBE)" project - the component of inclusive education for returnees and ethnic minorities, developed a guide for cross sector collaboration at the local level regarding the reintegration of returned children into education, especially of the children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities[34]. A guide on the profile of the community mediator was also draft-

34 Cross Sector collaboration: Cross Sector collaboration at local level with regard to educational (re-)integration of children returning from migration in particular children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities, GIZ, Prishtina, February 2018

ed[35]. Based on these guides, KEC conducted a training program for cross sector collaboration. These trainings were provided to various municipal institutions and CSOs in many municipalities.

In the next phase GIZ-CDBE provided support to the municipalities of Podujeva, Obiliq, Shtime and Gjakova on the educational reintegration and social inclusion of returned children and children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. These municipalities were supported on the implementation of municipal action plans for the reintegration of returnee children and children of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities into education. These plans had been also drafted by the respective municipalities. The support was provided in cross sector collaboration at the local level, capacity building of schools for inclusion, etc.

ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Adult education and training are provided for all those persons who are older than the age provided in the Law on Pre-university Education to attend an educational level. So, these are people who have passed the age of high school and do not have a degree of this level. Due to significantly lower participation and higher dropout rate, especially in upper secondary education by students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the attendance of AET programs enables these young people to benefit from such programs, especially from various vocational training programs, which gives them the opportunity to directly connect to the labor market.

Adult education and training is regulated by Law no. 04 / L-143 on Adult Education and Training in the Republic of Kosovo[36], as well as with several AIs issued by MESTI on specific issues related to AET.

MEDs from the three municipalities that provided information for this study claimed that adult education and training is provided in their municipalities. In all three municipalities there are AET beneficiaries from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Fushe Kosova provides an easy option to facilitate the attendance of these communities, by not paying.

The data obtained from the EMIS office confirm the provision of AET programs in these three municipalities, including also South Mitrovica, Prishtina, Istog, Obiliq and Lipjan. There is no data for other municipalities with a large number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, such as Prizren, Ferizaj and Peja. It is hard to believe that these municipalities offer AET programs and there are no beneficiaries of these programs from these communities.

35 Shaping the profile of "Community -Mediator" in Kosovo, GIZ, Prishtina, February 2018
36 https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2868

Students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, beneficiaries of AET programs

Years	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Fushë Kosovë					
Hoxhë Kadri Prishtina	4	1	1		2
Minatori					1
South Mitrovica					
Hasan Prishtina		7		6	4
Gjakova					
Nexhmedin Nixha		2	1		1
Podujeva					
Isa Boletini			1	1	
Istog					
Mit'hat Frashëri	1				
Prishtina					
Shtjefën Gjeçovi	2				
Lipjan					
Adem Gllavica	14				
Obiliq					
Ismail Dumoshi			3		
Total:	**21**	**10**	**6**	**7**	**8**

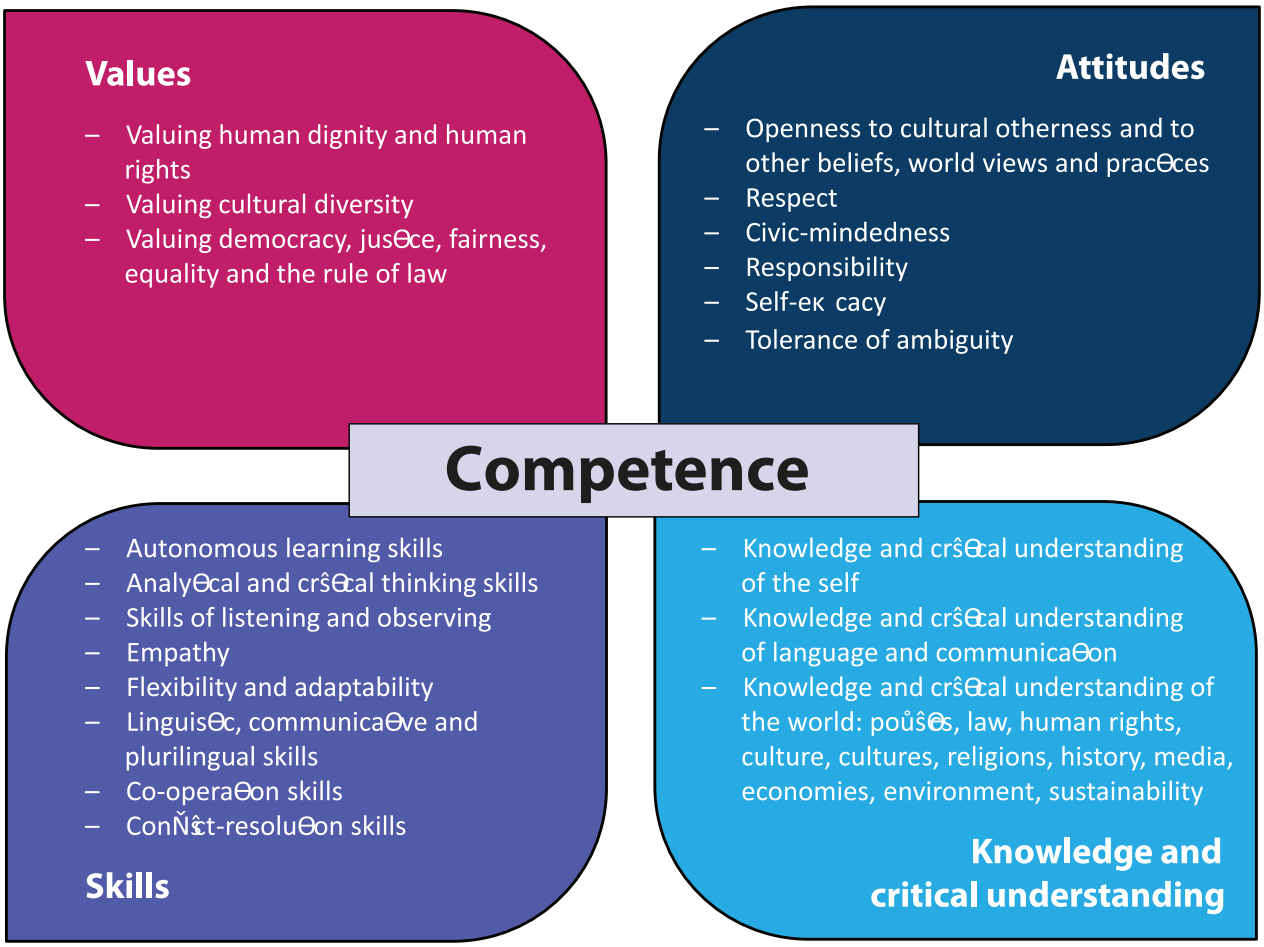
PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY THROUGH AN INTEGRATED EDUCATION SYSTEM

The pre-university education curriculum framework dedicates one single paragraph to "learning to live together", even in the context of the challenge: "Presents one of the main challenges in an open and cross-dependent world, including constructive management of differences, peaceful resolution of conflicts, tolerance, self-respect, respect for others, intercultural understanding and effective communication ..."[37] and further "This includes the promotion of values and practices related to inclusiveness, intercultural vision, democratic citizenship and human rights in the context of public, professional and private life".[38] Civic competence is one of the competencies envisaged by the curriculum framework, through which it contributes to learning to live together. There we find the result of learning about valuing diversity and demonstrating tolerance, understanding, respect and an open attitude to differences. However, no basic guidelines are given on how to translate this into educational practices.

KESP has foreseen the development of a strategy for the promotion of interethnic dialogue and contacts between communities. MESTI informs that such a special strategy is not in place. In 2018, a draft guide was drafted, supported by the OSCE, but it did not enter into force for political reasons, as it was more closely linked to relations with the Serb community.

KESP has also planned the development of a policy for the organization of teaching on diversity and human and community rights for all students. The development of specific education modules for communities is also envisaged. Such a policy has not been reported to have been developed. However, there are a number of projects that have been implemented in the past and projects that are currently being implemented in Kosovo, which promote the democratic culture of schools, teaching about diversity, tolerance and coexistence, which on the one hand develop the capacities of school leadership and teachers for aspects of evaluating diversity and promoting coexistence, while on the other hand have published guides, which serve to educational professionals in their everyday work with their inclusive classrooms and schools. Many of these projects assist the education system in providing access to quality education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, as well as for children with disabilities. One project that is being implemented is the joint EU/CoE project "Building capacity for Inclusion in Education" (INCLUDE)[39] which is building the capacity of municipalities and schools in this regard. Other organizations such as the IPE Center of the Zurich University for Teacher Education and the European Wergeland Center (EWC) are also present in Kosovo with similar projects. These projects are regularly implemented in cooperation with KEC as a local organization with expertise in this field and in building educational capacities, as well as with other local organizations. All these projects are based on the concept of competencies for democratic culture promoted by the Council of Europe. This concept is based on the model of 20 competencies systematized in four major categories: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding.

37 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/03/korniza-kurrikulare-finale.pdf
38 Ibid
39 https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/building-capacity-for-inclusion-in-education/home



Obtained from: "Competences for a democratic culture: Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies"[40]

Regarding the promotion of diversity at the school and teaching level in Kosovo, municipalities indicate that some schools organize intercultural activities, often in cooperation with CSOs. Municipalities also assist in organizing events/holidays for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. While, regarding teaching of diversity and coexistence in school programs, it is said that it is done through several school subjects. On the other hand, CSOs say that school teachers and leadership should engage more in promoting diversity and intercultural coexistence within and outside the school.

40 https://www.living-democracy.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CDC_EN.pdf

I have seen a video about a school program in a school that has the largest number of students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, whereby no students from these communities were included. The justification was that they did not know how to be in the program or that they were too shy. This school and its leadership appear to be "fine" on paper, but in reality it is not fine. (community activist)

According to the CSOs experience, it appears that often schools, and especially teachers, themselves, are not aware of cultures of these communities, therefore they do not possess skills to promote them properly.

I had the chance to teach about "Cultures and languages in Kosovo". I noticed that none from the majority community members was aware of Roma culture, because the curriculum does not provide any information on this topic. When diversity is mentioned, reference is made to diversity in the US, when there is no other place with more diversity than Kosovo. Teachers do not talk about these things, either. They just follow the book, without additional research on this issue. We need more creativity in preparing students to be decent citizens. (teacher of Roma language)

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Covid-19 pandemic disequilibrated the situation globally. It continues to affect many areas, including education. In Kosovo, the pandemic has worsened the situation by increasing losses in education and deepening inequalities. The impact of the pandemic is even more reflected in the education situation of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, reducing their access to education, reducing their level of learning, and affecting social interaction. A recent study conducted by KEC on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pre-university education in Kosovo, regarding the inclusiveness of children/students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education during the pandemic, states, inter alia, "Participation of children from minority communities in education, and of many other low-income children, was low. Due to low participation, the performance of most of these children is expected to be low. Low participation is related to the lack of internet, technology, but also the lack of teaching materials." [41]

41 http://www.kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Ndikimi-i-COVID19-ne-Arsimin-Parauniversitar-ENG.pdf

The general manual of the MES for the organization of teaching in the school year 2020/2021 under the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic[42], has warned of the deepening of inequalities due to the situation with the pandemic, therefore a priority is considered the provision of equal opportunities, by addressing differences in the learning process. The manual suggested that in order to ensure access to quality and inclusive education for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children during the implementation of the educational process, educators/teachers should be inclusive, adaptable and use appropriate forms of work. The above-mentioned report on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pre-university education in Kosovo concluded that "there is no specific policy developed to avoid deepening of educational inequalities during the pandemic".[43]

In October 2021, within the "Prospect 3" project, KFOS organized a two-day workshop on the implementation of educational policies for the integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students at the local level, focusing on the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. The workshop was attended by representatives of the Municipal Education Directorates of the 6 partner municipalities and representatives of the partner CSOs in the project. This workshop presented the challenges that the local level has faced during the pandemic, the adaptations or solutions made/found, as well as the opportunities that emerged. The main challenge mentioned was the aspect of information technology and in this regard, it was claimed that in the beginning an immediate trauma was shown, followed by difficulties in remote learning, lack of electricity, lack of technological equipment in families, as well as little support from parents. MEDs and schools did not have a specific plan to address the needs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. The work of learning centers that support the children of these communities also changed. They also had a break in their ordinary work. The approach was more responsive, depending on the case and location. Some of the applied solutions were:

- Increased communication between schools and learning centers in sharing information/data;
- Engaged additional tutors in the LC to maintain the attendance and support children in remote learning circumstances;
- Purchase of electronic equipment for students of these communities;
- Payment of internet for some of the families in need; etc.

42 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2020/08/udhezuesi-i-pergjithshem-mash-07-09-2020-final.pdf
43 http://www.kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Ndikimi-i-COVID19-ne-Arsimin-Parauniversitar-ENG.pdf

TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ROMA LANGUAGE

Roma language is the mother tongue of the Roma community. According to the constitution, everyone should be able to be educated in their own language. In Kosovo, classes are conducted in Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian and Turkish, depending on the locations of those schools. However, the situation is different with Roma language, due to the lack of human and material resources.

MESTI has established policies for teaching and learning the Roma language. So, not teaching and learning in the Roma language, but teaching and learning of the Roma language as a subject. The teaching of the Roma language as an elective subject has been piloted since 2008, while since 2010 it has been accredited and three textbooks have been drafted for the first level of the Roma language. According to MESTI, an open competition is planned for the textbooks of the second level of Roma language, as well as for the revision of curricula. Roma language as an elective subject was offered in some municipalities years ago, such as in Gjakova and Ferizaj, but it was not maintained due to the lack of funding. Only in the Municipality of Prizren a long-term solution was made, as a Roma teacher has been hired and she teaches Roma language in four schools of this municipality. About 80 students attend classes, including 4 Albanian students, as well as students from other communities.

Years ago, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities were almost invisible, being supported only by donors and organizations such as KEC. Today we have financial support of as well as close relations with education institutions. (Teacher of Roma language)

MESTI informs that this process is planned to be extended to other municipalities too. As an example, they show that in Gjakova the call for Roma language teachers has already been opened, but there were no qualified candidates. This information was also shared by the Municipality of Gjakova. MESTI announces that distance learning in the Roma language has been arranged and the footage is available on the "E-learning" platform.

EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS OF ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES

Decades ago, the number of qualified teachers from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities was extremely small. According to educational statistics, this situation is changing year after year as an increasing number of young people from these communities continue their studies in higher education, among which an increasing number in the faculties of education. Statistics obtained from the EMIS further show that most of the students of these communities who enroll in the education faculties year after year are girls, which is another advantage. Meanwhile, the number of graduates is increasing.

Students of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities registered in the Faculty of Education[44]

	Year 2017			Year 2018			Year 2019			Year 2020		
Students	**F**	**M**	**T**	**F**	**M**	**T**	**F**	**M**	**T**	**F**	**M**	**T**
Roma	3	0	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	11	1	12
Ashkali	2	0	2	5	1	6	2	6	8	5	0	5
Egyptian	4	1	5	3	1	4	4	1	5	2	0	2
Total	**9**	**1**	**10**	**10**	**2**	**12**	**6**	**7**	**13**	**18**	**1**	**19**

Many years ago, high school students were engaged in the learning centers as volunteers to help elementary school children with homework. Today, we can hardly find any of them. LCs staff are either students or already qualified teachers from these communities. Furthermore, LCs are encouraging their staff to continue their studies in the faculty of education, as it is already necessary for the LCs staff to have a qualification in teaching.

On the other hand, at the national level our schools employed a total of 21 teachers, and this number is the same as in 2013/14.

Teachers of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities by school years[45]

	2013/14	2013/14	2013/14	2013/14	2013/14	2013/14	2013/14	2013/14
Rom	6	7	7	7	9	6	9	9
Ashkali	8	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
Egyptian	7	6	6	6	5	5	6	6
Total:	**21**	**20**	**19**	**19**	**20**	**17**	**21**	**21**
% in all teachers	**0.09**	**0.09**	**0.08**	**0.08**	**0.09**	**0.07**	**0.09**	**0.09**

44 Data from the EMIS office
45 "Educational statistics" publication

Municipalities consider that the increase of the number of teachers from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is important, while CSOs see this as necessary. A number of benefits from the employment of teachers from these communities are listed. KEC and other organizations that are part of the KRAEEN network, in parallel with the preparation of this report are using the data of this study to prepare an advocacy document for the employment of members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the education sector in Kosovo.

CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION

Due to the specific circumstances of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the collaboration of many parties is required to provide a quality and comprehensive education for them. Horizontal cross sector collaboration at the local level is very important, because the fulfillment of educational needs is connected to and dependent to other sectors, such as: civil status sector, health and social welfare sector, housing, etc. No less important is the collaboration between institutions and civil society, given that in our country, CSOs are still irreplaceable resources in education, especially in the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

For the purpose of this study, the opinion of CSOs engaged in education of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities was obtained. The information obtained shows that the cooperation level and quality vary from one municipality to another. Difficulties are reported in terms of the negligence and lack of proper interest of institutional parties when it comes to the education of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, insufficient political will and poor inter-institutional communication. However, good experiences are also reported.

The Community Advisory Group in Gjakova acts as an informal entity, and it is composed of CSOs and institutions, such as MED, MOCR, SWC, PRTAN, etc. As a group, we consider that we have managed to accomplish unifying actions, on the one hand by efficiently addressing all issues related to education of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, and, on the other hand, by avoiding overlapping services or activities in the field (CSO from Gjakova).

CSOs consider that the establishment of cross sector commissions or teams within municipalities are necessary to address the educational aspects of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Increased political pressure and will is also recommended.

CONCLUSIONS

Remarkable progress has been achieved in the last years in the area of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Increased activity was noticed from members of these communities, activists and CSOs working in the field of education of these communities. The support of donor community continued through projects in support of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, but at the same time the request to have institutions take over the coordination of actions to increase inclusion and improvement of quality of education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, including the financing of these actions, was clearly articulated. Institutions' reaction was positive. However, there were difficulties faced in certain aspects of education of these communities and room for improvement was identified.

Performance of institutions

The MEST has already taken the leading role in several aspects of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. In other aspects there are efforts observed, and challenges as well. Municipalities, also responsible in many aspects in regards to the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, have increased their engagement as well, although they have not managed yet to take the lead in activities in this regard. Often, the approach of municipalities is reactive, subject to initiatives and requests coming from CSOs.

Lack of reliable data and insufficient reporting and monitoring was notable. Information is not properly communicated at vertical level. Many activities that were to be implemented at municipal level were missing, especially the ones related to regulations and plans at local level, whereas from central level no monitoring took place. Further, there is no effective system at local level to report for the activities implemented. In such circumstances, administrative units within MESTI, that should have monitored certain aspects of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, have not documented the processes that fall under their responsibility. It was disagreeable to get information that were more of impressions rather than data and facts from the interviews with the heads of these units.

The role of the donor community

Agencies and donor organizations have played an important role in improving the life of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo. Beside other areas, many projects and programs from these organizations were oriented towards the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Most of the projects have been implemented by local organizations specialized in the area of education and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, in full cooperation with the institutions.

In the last years, agencies and donor organizations have advanced their cooperation, creating synergies between projects, economizing investments and avoiding making double or multiple investments for the same beneficiary, that were mostly related to projects supporting Learning Centers. In addition, they were unified in their standing that institutions should take over the coordination for the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, including the financial burden.

The engagement of donor community in providing their contribution to institutions to advance the implementation of education policies is highly appreciated. Among other things, they provided expert support with the sublegal acts, helped in developing capacities at central and local level institutions in different areas related to the education of these communities.

Stimulation and facilitation of registration and attendance in education

In accordance with the KESP and the Strategy for the inclusion of Roma and Ashkali communities, most of the measures to stimulate and facilitate the enrolment and attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in different education levels were implemented. It has been more challenging in pre-school education level, primarily because the rate of inclusion in this level of education is very low in general. Whereas, at upper secondary level of education, registration quota was applied (at least 5 students per school) for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students, and the support of students of these communities with scholarships and mentoring resulted highly effective. MESTI has taken over the coordination of activities with the scholarship donors, drafting scholarship criteria, preparing a joint call at country level and providing around 500-600 scholarships per year, in the last 6 years. Some of the scholarship beneficiaries, have benefited also from mentoring programs provided by partner organizations and their projects.

Registration of students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in higher education was facilitated by providing 12% of reserved seats for minority communities (for all minority communities). However, there are doubts that there have been cases of misuse by students of ethnic majority in this regard, and no control mechanism was evidenced. In regards to scholarships, although the Division for Education of Communities had 20,000 Euros available per year for these students, the funds could not be used due to lack of a legal basis. Consequently, the funds were merged into scholarship fund for all students. In this regard, AI 14/2017[46] on scholarship allocation, although defines certain prioritized categories of students, does not include Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students in the list. The same shortcoming was noticed also with the AI 19/2016[47] on inclusion of children in preschool institutions in Kosovo. The instruction does not clearly categorize the children of these communities as a marginalized group.

46 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/12/ua-masht-14-2017-per-ndarjen-e-bursave.pdf
47 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/09/19-ua-nr-19-2016-per-perfshirjen-e-femijeve-ne-institucionet-parashkollore-ne-kosove-rotated.pdf

Activity of Learning Centers

For a long time now, the work carried out by Learning Centers is considered to be one of the greatest contributions in increasing the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education and social inclusion of these communities. There have been two positive processes developed in the last years. Primarily, Learning Centers have enhanced their standard of operation, by harmonizing their programs with the Pre-University Education Curricula, supporting professional development of the staff and encouraging them to continue their formal education towards teacher qualification. Secondly, the coordinated process of institutionalization of Learning Centers has begun. The AI 19/2018 drafted on the Establishment and Functioning of Learning Centers[48] and the IA Implementation Guideline set the stage for this process. Currently the LCs licensing process has started, enabling LCs to be financed by public funding.

Addressing the drop-out

Drop-out and non-enrolment remain factors weighting significantly more on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. Despite the legal framework to prevent and respond towards drop-out and non-enrolment, there is no evidence that mechanisms established for this purpose are functional. PRTANs were established at school and municipal level, but often they are non-functional and ineffective. When it comes to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, their role is covered by CSOs and community mediators. Efforts to develop capacities of members of PRTAN are sporadic, rather than systematic or coordinated. One of the reasons could be the limited human resources at the MESTI level. In general, there is no bottom-up reporting about the operation of these PRTANs. Reporting of cases via early warning module is low. Only 6 municipalities and 14 schools from these municipalities have reported cases of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students in EWS.

Reintegration of returned children in education

Reintegration of returned children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education is done within the framework defined with the Regulation No. 22/2020 on reintegration of repatriated persons[49]. Returning is coordinated by MIA and the process is considered a good example of coordination to be applied in other areas as well. Unfortunately, MESTI does not have any data disaggregated by ethnicity in regards to returnees, therefore educational reintegration is done in the same way for all returned children. At local level, repatriated children are immediately reintegrated to schools, to continue then after with student level assessment, collection of documentation and language courses, as applicable. When it comes to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, it is reported that there is lack of documentation, and that affects the assessment done to define the level of education the child should attend; there are also challenges in regards to nostrification of these documents. Again, CSOs are the ones to perform regular visits to families when they become aware about any returned family. They help with the needs' identification, collection of documentation and enrolment of children at school.

48 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/12/ua-nr-19-masht-per-themelimin-dhe-funksionimin-e-qendrave-mesimore-x.pdf
49 https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=31862

Having in mind the important role of all sectors at municipal level in the area of returnees and the impact these sectors have for a sustainable reintegration in education, GIZ-CDBE has raised capacities of municipalities for cross sector collaboration with regard to educational re-integration of children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and children with special needs.

Adult education and training

Adult's education and training is a very important aspect of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, because of the lower participation and considerably higher drop-out by students of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, especially in upper secondary education. Attendance of AET programs enables these youngsters to benefit from such programs, linking them directly to labor market.

EMIS offers data for 8 municipalities where members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities benefited from AET programs in the last 5 years. There are at least three more municipalities with a high number of these communities that are not included in these statistics, giving rise to some questions.

There is no evidence for any special strategy or approach for members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in regards to AET. In here as well the treatment is equal, with exceptions. A good practice is the one in Fushë-Kosova, where members of these communities are released from paying to attend AET programs.

Promotion of diversity through education system

All parties within the education system, starting from central level to teachers, are responsible to promote diversity through education system. Although KESP envisages the development of a strategy that would promote inter-ethnic dialogue and contacts among communities, and the development of a policy to organize teaching on diversity and human and communities' rights for all the students, these documents were not prepared. In addition, no educational module specifically developed for communities was reported. The gap was filled by projects that were implemented and the ones being implemented by international agencies and organizations; they raised capacities of school leadership and teachers and provided practical guideline for competences for a democratic culture in schools, which promotes diversity, tolerance and coexistence.

However, from the experience of CSOs and activists who work in the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, there are very few examples of learning about diversity, and cultures of these communities in schools. Teachers often do not have competencies in this field, because they themselves do not know the cultures of these communities. Thus, teachers usually do not leave from the comfort zone to explore alternative resources that they would address in their classes.

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic worsened the situation in Kosovo by increasing losses in education and deepening inequalities. The pandemic severely affected the education situation of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, reducing their access to education, reducing their level of learning, and affecting social interaction. Although the MES had warned of inequalities deepening due to the pandemic and suggested the inclusion, adaptation and appropriate methodologies of work with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, this was difficult in practice. MEDs and schools did not have a specific plan to address the needs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. Learning centers also had difficulties. Through a reactive approach, LCs increased their staff to provide assistance in-person, while in cooperation with institutions and donors, children were supported with electronic devices, and families were supported with internet.

Teaching and learning of Roma Language

The teaching of Roma language was tested and then accredited by MESTI. Three textbooks have been drafted for the first level of Roma language, while MESTI plans to open a competition for the textbooks of the second level of Roma language, as well as for the revision of the curricula. While Roma language as an elective subject had been offered in some municipalities years ago, such as in Gjakova and Ferizaj, that did not manage being maintained. Only in the Municipality of Prizren a long-term solution was made, as a Roma teacher has been employed to teach Roma language in four schools of this municipality. It is encouraging the fact that some Albanian students and students from other communities are interested in attending the Roma language subject. MESTI plans to expand the subject of Roma Language to other municipalities, but it seems that there is no interest expressed from qualified teachers in the competitions for Roma language teachers.

Educational professionals of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities

The number of students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities who attend studies in faculties of education is increasing year by year, and as a result the number of graduates from these communities too. However, there is no increase in the number of teachers from these communities employed in public schools in Kosovo. So far, the institutions have not taken measures to increase the number of employees from these communities and instead have chosen the approach of equal treatment, regardless of ethnicity. Meanwhile, all parties consider the importance of increasing the number of teachers of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities employed in our schools.

Cross sector collaboration

Meeting the educational needs of children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities is related to and dependent to other spheres of life such as: civil status, health, social welfare, housing, etc. Therefore, horizontal cross sector collaboration at the local level is very important, especially when it comes to responding to dropouts and educational reintegration of returned children. This includes cooperation with civil society, given that in our country, CSOs are still irreplaceable resources in the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

In the experience of CSOs engaged in education of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the level and quality of cooperation vary between municipalities. Difficulties are reported in terms of negligence and lack of interest from institutional parties, insufficient political will and poor inter-institutional communication. However, there are also good examples of inter-institutional action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis of the data collected and the information reviewed in this study and from the conclusions drawn, it can be seen that there has been a significant progress in some aspects in the education of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, which are presented through positive indicators, and good practices. However, there are also important aspects where there are difficulties and stagnations and where there is room for improvement. From both, identified difficulties, as well as good practices, some recommendations have been drawn, which will help, primarily institutions, and also the CSOs and other parties in their work. Recommendations are given below:

- Both KESP and the strategy for the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are in the initial planning stage for the next strategic period. To date, the institutions have not published any assessment report on the implementation of existing strategies ending this year. Perhaps this assessment will be part of the situation analysis, as an important step in planning the next strategic cycle. However, a range of publications by various parties should be used, referring to issues related to the education of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

- MESTI should provide clear control mechanisms to implement the measures that will be foreseen in the KESP action plan for the next period, so that the responsible institutions for leading or supporting those measures would really act in accordance with their responsibilities;

- Communication between municipalities and MESTI should be improved, regular reporting on the one hand and proper monitoring on the other hand should be ensured, as well as an effective system of process documentation should be maintained, as they serve for more informed decision-making in the future;

- When drafting and reviewing policies, laws and bylaws, MESTI should have a consistent approach regarding the definition of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as a vulnerable group in education and regarding special measures for them. Thus, AI 14/2017[50] on the allocation of scholarships should be revised in order to include students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as a priority category, and this should be reflected in the call for scholarships for students. The same should be done with AI 19/2016[51] for the inclusion of children in pre-school institutions in Kosovo, whereby the children of these communities should be clearly defined as a marginalized group.

- MESTI should maintain the annual scholarship budget planned for upper secondary students of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and for learning centers. If possible, increasing the budget to finance learning centers must be considered;

50 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/12/ua-masht-14-2017-per-ndarjen-e-bursave.pdf
51 https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2016/09/19-ua-nr-19-2016-per-perfshirjen-e-femijeve-ne-institucionet-parashkollore-ne-kosove-rotated.pdf

- MESTI should exempt students of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities from paying for the nostrification of documents and facilitate this process as much as possible;

- MESTI should make use of good practices at the level of any municipal and take care of disseminating to other municipalities. Practices such as the effective functioning of the community advisory group in Gjakova, teaching Roma language as an elective subject in Prizren, or scholarships offered by the Municipality of Gjakova for students from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, can be disseminated through the organization of public events to present good practices, posting information on the MESTI website and social networks, organizing exchanges between municipalities in the form of study visits, etc. This can be done also by the municipalities themselves, or in cooperation between them and MESTI;

- In order to promote diversity, social inclusion and intercultural understanding, MESTI should draft an educational policy to promote democratic culture in schools, based on the Council of Europe's Concept of Competences for Democratic Culture[52]. To implement this policy, training programs in this field that have already been piloted in Kosovo schools and are accredited by MESTI can be used;

- It is necessary to maintain and promote Roma culture and language. Therefore, the possibility of opening a Roma language department at the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina" should be considered;

- MESTI should continue its efforts to promote the Roma language, by drafting additional textbooks, continuing with the training of teachers for teaching the Roma language and reviewing the curriculum of the Roma language as an elective subject;

- Municipalities, especially those with members of the Roma community, should provide Roma language teaching and hire Roma language teachers;

- Municipalities where Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are in higher numbers, should take over the employment of community mediators[53], in order to ensure consistency in a number of issues related to the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, where the influence of the community mediator can be great;

- Municipalities should, as far as possible, cover municipal fees (and other expenses) for community-based learning centers;

- Municipalities should take as much responsibility as possible over the employment of teachers in school-based learning centers;

52 https://www.living-democracy.com/competencies-for-democratic-culture/
53 Shaping the profile of "Community Mediator" in Kosovo, GIZ, Prishtina, February 2018

- Municipalities should determine, within the legal framework, that in the competition for the recruitment of teachers in schools, the employment of teachers from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities should be given priority, subject to conditions of fulfillment of the recruitment criteria;

- Municipalities should focus on cross sector collaboration, to address the sustainable educational reintegration of returnee children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and also to address the other educational needs of children of these communities. The guide published by GIZ-CDBE "Cross sectoral collaboration",[54] distributed to all municipalities, can serve as a guide for this.

- Municipalities and schools should encourage parental involvement among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the education of their children. This implies training parents to fulfill their parental duties in terms of supporting their children's learning.

54 Cross Sector collaboration: Cross Sector collaboration at local level with regard to educational (re-)integration of children returning from migration in particular children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, GIZ, Prishtina, February 2018

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