

FINANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN KOSOVO

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Introduction

Education of children with disabilities is a challenge for all countries aiming at accomplishing the principle of equal opportunities for all children regardless of religion, culture, race, gender, disability or diversity, as a fundamental right of every person.

In many education systems in different countries, inclusiveness has now become a reality, but followed with many difficulties. Kosovo is also facing this issue, and is making efforts toward the realization of the concept of inclusive education.

The many reforms that have taken place in Kosovo in the recent years have had a strong impact in the field of education as well. With the implementation of reforms at all levels of education, new concepts and processes have also been introduced with regards to the role and the place inclusive education should have.

Such requests present the need for hard work to be done starting from decision-making institutions all the way to schools, so that they are able to take on such a role, which is very challenging. To accomplish such a mission, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has worked towards establishing the legal infrastructure and inclusive policies that will enable the education of all children and ensure an inclusive environment. Despite the achievements in several areas, there are still many issues that need to be worked on in order to ensure their implementation in practice. The main challenge in this aspect remains the budgeting based on the needs and disability characteristics, which so far has not taken into consideration the minimum needs of children with disabilities.

This document aims to meet the minimum requirements of children with disabilities in order to realize their participation and right to education.

The document will serve for two purposes:

1. The criteria for children with disabilities formula in schools will inform/enrich the state curriculum of pre-university education by detailing the needs of children with disabilities. This is because the criteria for the formula for pre-university education are expected to be changed by MEST, therefore the result deriving from this paper aims to be part of the criteria of the revised formula for pre-university education.
2. It will assist municipalities in planning and extending inclusiveness by helping them plan their needs and budgeting for their implementation.

This document includes two parts:

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|-------------|---|
| First part | includes the organization of the education of children with disabilities and the current state of financing pre-university education; |
| Second part | includes the methodology, financing parameters and the cost by type and degree of disability. |
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2. Organizing inclusive education for pupils with disabilities

The reforms implemented in pre-university education in Kosovo did not have the same trend also in the education of pupils with disabilities. This is due to the fact that with the decentralization process (Law No. 03 / L-068 on Education in the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo), municipalities are provided with the competencies in organizing pre-university education (including early childhood education from 0-6 years old, primary, secondary and higher education). Due to the specifics that the education of pupils with disabilities has, MEST continued to maintain these competences until January 2014, when these capacities were built so that inclusive education as well is managed at municipal level.

The transfer of competencies to the municipal level has been accompanied by many challenges - from human resources, legal and infrastructural capacities, to problems in the field of financing inclusive education - which have a great impact on providing the services needed for pupils with disabilities.

In 2012, pursuant to the Law no. 04 / L-032 on Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo, MEST promulgated the Administrative Instruction no. 07/2012 on Professional Assessment of Children with Special Educational Needs. This instruction refers to all municipalities for the establishment of municipal assessment teams that will make pedagogical assessment of children with disabilities, in order to provide education and teaching that is in line with their needs and potentials.

Municipalities have established municipal evaluation teams and have begun the process of pedagogical evaluation of children with disabilities and with learning difficulties by which the forms of support and the list of pedagogical needs are defined.

The services identified by the municipal evaluation team should be planned and budgeted by the municipality. The budgeted services include: assistant teacher/ educator, assistant, necessary tools, and didactic materials, transportation and other necessary services. Therefore, these services need to have specific parameters for inclusive education of children with disabilities, which will be integrated into the revised Formula of Funds for Pre-University Education in Kosovo.

The review of the Formula of Funds and the definition of parameters that address the needs mentioned above is also related to the implementation of the Law on Pre-University Education (2011), namely Article 40, which is in line with international norms as foreseen under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Salamanca Statement (1994), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) and other relevant international conventions or recommendations.

3. Methodology

To draft this document, a comprehensive approach has been used, including various players that have contributed to the identification, analysis and evaluation of the educational needs of children with disabilities in pre-university education. MEST has established a working group that has contributed to the process of drafting/defining the criteria for financing education for children with disabilities. Within the working group, besides MEST, there were also representatives from the Municipal Education Directorates (MEDs), schools, Resource Center, support teachers, Save the Children and local and international consultants. A bottom-up approach was used, thus identifying the educational needs of children with disabilities in educational institutions and addressing them within the working group.

In the initial workshop, the working group composed by a wide range of players in the education field, carried out an analysis of the situation and the needs in the field of education of pupils with disabilities. This workshop also identified the needs that should be considered. Also, at this stage, international experts were involved, who have supported drawing from their experiences in matters that need to be considered while setting the parameters.

During the analysis of the situation, earlier researches in the field of financing pre-university education in Kosovo were taken into consideration. Furthermore, the current situation in three municipalities of different sizes as per number of pupils, was taken as a model: one large municipality (Gjilan), one middle municipality (Drenas) and one small municipality (Hani i Elezit).

During the work, the working group was focused on defining the minimum financial parameters defined as individual services and goods for the child and goods at the municipal level.

Individual services and goods for the child are considered:

- Didactic material for a child,
- Transport service for a child,
- Support teacher/educator and assistant with the ratio << pupil - teacher/assistant >> (this differs from the type and degree of disability; however, it results in an average for information on national formula purposes).

Goods at the municipal level are considered:

- Additional equipment for children with disabilities. It is worth pointing out that these tools can be used for many years given that they are considered municipal purchases and therefore are in use by educational institutions, depending on the number of children with disabilities registered in educational institutions.

4.

Financing pre-university education

Financing of pre-university education is regulated by the Law no.03 / L-049 on Local Government Finances from which municipal funding for pre-university education, namely the Specific Grant of Pre-University Education, derives.

Pre-university education in Kosovo, which includes pre-school education (1-6 years), elementary (grades 1-5), secondary (grades 6-9) and higher education (grades 10-12), is funded from the specific grant of pre-university education; a grant that is based on the open system per pupil.

According to MEST, in 2017 the pre-university education had a total of 401,902 registered pupils, out of which 312,781 pupils are in elementary and secondary education (grades 1-9) and 88,331 students in higher education (grades 10-12).

The specific grant for pre-university education for 2017 approved by the Grants Commission, according to the draft law on the budget of the Republic of Kosovo for 2017 is in the amount of EUR 163,432,014.

THE SPECIFIC GRANT

The specific education grant is based on an open system, taking into account the criteria and parameters in the formula and the pre-university education policies by MEST.

There is a Grants Commission that approves specific grants. Financing the Education Grant aims to address the level of pre-primary and vocational schools, schools in remote rural areas, advancement of career teachers, professional development of teacher trainings or at the workplace, basic staff for new schools, reforming, school-level funding and a pedagogue for each parent school.

The existing state curriculum criteria for pre-university education are:



The state criteria or parameters for the allocation of full norms (20 hours per week) are as follows:

- The ratio of <<pupil - teacher>> for elementary, lower and upper secondary schools (gymnasiums) for the majority community: 1 teacher for 21.3 pupils.
- The ratio of <<pupil - teacher>> for upper secondary schools (vocational schools) for the majority community: 1 teacher for 17.2 students.
- ☐ The ratio of <<pupil - teacher>> for elementary, lower and upper secondary schools (gymnasiums, vocational schools) for the minority community: 1 teacher for 14.2 pupils.
- ☐ The ratio of <<pupil - teacher >> for mountainous areas: 1 teacher for 14 pupils (for all schools 700 m above the sea level)
- ☐ Administrative/technical staff: a manager or director and a secretary for each school
- ☐ Psychologists/pedagogues (4 psychologists/pedagogues per municipality in 7 large municipalities and 2 psychologists/pedagogues per municipality in small municipalities)
- ☐ The ratio <<pupils – support staff >>: 1 security guard per school; 1 cleaner for 170 pupils (based on the Administrative Instruction 18/2009: Student-teacher ratio and student-non-teaching staff ratio as well as the number of pupils for parallel defined for the purpose of determining (i) state education grant for municipalities and (ii) staff allocations made by the municipality for schools).

Based on the aforementioned criteria, the Government of Kosovo divides 28,491 full norms, out of which 23,144 full norms for teachers, 1,583 full norms for administrative staff, 80 full norms for psychologists/pedagogues and 3,684 full norms for support staff on an annual basis.

FINANCING IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN KOSOVO (PER PUPIL)

The Government of Kosovo, based on financing of pre-university education, allocated 407.46 EUR per pupil in 2017, out of which 5.24 EUR for goods and services per pupil, and the rest for salaries.

[Note: Budgetary Circular 2017/01, Ministry of Finance, Republic of Kosovo, 13.05.2016, page 11]

It is worth pointing out that this funding also includes children with disabilities, whose needs are currently calculated the same as for all other children.

As a result of these criteria, for a calendar year of pre-university education, EUR 161,332,014 is allocated for salaries and compensations and EUR 2,100,000 for goods and services

The basic package of expenditures for children with disabilities

The basic package of expenditures includes all types of services, equipment and materials needed to ensure the active and qualitative participation of children with disabilities in pre-university education. Types of proposed materials and services have been identified by educational institutions and civil society organizations, based on the existing needs of children with disabilities and the current situation in educational institutions.

The basic package of expenditures includes:

- Didactic material for the child
- Transport for the child
- Support teacher/educator and assistant for children with disabilities
- Training of teachers/educators
- Sign Language Interpreter
- Additional equipment

4.1 Didactic material for the child

The didactic material is a package of essential materials to ensure quality education and active participation of the child in the learning process, based on their individual needs, requirements and potentials.

Didactic material includes the following:

Brainteaser toys	€	7.00
Sensory toys	€	25.00
Illustrations	€	0.20
Plastic framed photos	€	0.30
Paper	€	3.50
Paint palettes	€	1.50
Puzzles	€	8.60
Plasticine	€	0.90
Crayons	€	1.80
Color books	€	0.40
Drawings	€	4.30
Pens of different thickness	€	1.60
Posters for schools	€	1.50
Imaginative toys	€	10.00
Practical material	€	10.00
Picture posters for schools	€	20.00
Magnet letters	€	12.00
Magnet tables	€	50.00
Fine motor skill materials	€	25.00
Communication cards	€	50.00
Didactic cubes	€	22.00
Handling tools	€	30.00
Brail alphabet paper	€	0.10
Flavored painting markers	€	2.00
Sound books	€	25.00
Fluorescent notebooks	€	5.00
Large letter books, as needed	€	0.10
Enlarged illustrations	€	15.00
Tools for socio-emotional skill development	€	25.00

The above listed didactic material is determined depending on the type and degree of the disability. Thus, for different types and degrees of disability, specific materials are used.

4.2 Transport for the child

For each child with disabilities, regardless of the type and degree of disability, the transportation should be provided. The required annual amount for pupils is 180 EUR, by calculating 1 EUR for a two way destination: from home to school and vice versa.

4.3 Support teacher/educator and assistant

In order to create better learning conditions, since 2009 MEST has included some new profiles of professional staff for the education of children\pupils with disabilities, who have the role of professional support and assistance in educational institutions. Based on the current situation and payroll calculations for the two main staff profiles: support teacher/educator and assistant for children with disabilities.

Profile	Hours a week	Cost per hour	Gross salary	Ratio
Support Teacher/educator	40	€ 3.06	€ 490	8.0
Assistant	40	€ 2.10	€ 336	5.5

The qualification for these two staff profiles is defined in the Administrative Instruction 05/2016. These staff profiles are an integral part of the criteria of the formula for children with disabilities, so they are combined in cost per pupil. The schedule or the time dedicated to the pupil and the size of the group differs from the type and degree of disability, so for more details see the table and the ratio <<pupil-teacher" in point 6 of this document.

4.4 Training of teachers/educators

Continuous professional training of teachers/educators is distinct and is currently provided by MEST and other partners. The cost of the training for a teacher/educator is calculated according to the practice of Save the Children, which is very active in building the professional capacities of teachers/educators on inclusive education. The minimum training cost per teacher/educator for a 12-module training program is 252 EUR for a teacher/educator or 21 EUR for a training module.

Although the training of teachers is currently under the competence of MEST, in this case they are considered as a municipal purchase and therefore integrated into the formula for children with disabilities. Thus, this is included/indexed per pupil by proportioning the size of the respective group by type and degree of the disability.

4.5 Sign Language Interpreter

Based on the current situation, due to the lack of sign language interpreter per each child with hearing impairment, the municipalities, depending on the needs identified, employ sign language interpreters, calculating the same parameters as for the assistant.

4.6 Additional equipment for children with disabilities (at the municipal level)

These supportive tools are equipment purchased and owned by MEDs and are provided to educational institutions that have registered children with disabilities. The equipment in question must be taken from one institution to the other institution, depending on the needs.

These support tools include:

Tactile tables (to learn Braille system)	€	3,000.00
Braille computers	€	1,295.00
Mechanical notetaker for Braille	€	1,295.00
Orientation tools	€	100.00
Acoustic programmes (Joys, cobra)	€	1,295.00
Sound record player	€	70.00
Additional desk tools	€	100.00
Computer	€	400.00
Magnifying monitor	€	2,595.00
Light magnifiers	€	250.00
Optic glasses	€	150.00
Tablet	€	150.00

This equipment is considered as municipal purchases and therefore are not included in the formula for children with disabilities, so they are not included in the cost per pupil. The didactic materials needed for pupils with visual impairment at the country level are provided by "Xheladin Deda" resource center in Peja, which has the Braille unit specialized in the adaptation and production of various materials in the Braille system.

5. Variances of types of disabilities and special educational needs

Inclusive education for children with disabilities in Kosovo is in the stage of organizing and advancing educational services for children with disabilities. To ensure qualitative and inclusive education, this formula should reflect the educational needs of children with disabilities. Currently, the Education Information Management System (EMIS) provides data by types of disability, but the current funding formula does not calculate expenditure by type and degree of disability of EMIS. This implies that currently the allocated budget for children with disabilities is the same as for children with typical development.

This funding formula for inclusive education of children with disabilities is based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and uses the disability division or classification as in the table below.

Type of disability	Degree of disability		
	Severe	Medium	Slight
Multiple Physical, Intellectual Disabilities, Down Syndrome, Autism, etc.	Severe disability	Medium	Slight
Hearing impairment	Over 120Db	Over 90DBb	56Db - 70Db
Visual impairment	Blind	<90% impairment	<50%mpairment

Each type of disability has three levels: severe, medium and slight impairment. Decibel categorization is used for hearing impairments, whereas for the visual impairment the categorization of the visual degree is used.

INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF FUNCTIONING, DISABILITY AND HEALTH:

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) belongs to the family of classifications of the World Health Organization and aims to provide a conceptual framework, as well as a common language and terminology in the identification, treatment and study of chronic problems and disabilities in babies, children and adolescents in different health, social, and policy-making contexts. ICF has been drafted to record the characteristics of the developing child and the impact of the surrounding environment.

ICF can be used by service providers, consumers and anyone interested in the health, education and well-being of children and young people. It provides a common and universal language for implementation in the clinical, public health and research field to facilitate documentation and measurement of health and disability problems of children and young people.

5.1 Additional needs of children with disabilities

As explained on page 7, for 2017, the Government of Kosovo has allocated EUR 407.46 per pupil, a value that is funded by the specific grant of pre-university education. The additional funding, justified through this document, serves to children with disabilities currently calculated with the same parameters as funding of all other children. The table below illustrates how additional costs by the type and degree of disability should be calculated. The median in horizontal calculation and the average in vertical calculation sets the average at country level as a minimum funding requirement for children with disabilities.

Based on the type and degree of disability as well as the characteristics of the personnel and additional materials, the following proposals come out:

The annual calculation of the additional per pupil for children with disabilities

Type of disability	The ratio pupil – personnel	For sign language	Annual salaries (EUR)	Training of teachers (EUR)	Goods (once purchase; EUR)	Annual transportation (EUR)	TOTAL (EUR)
Down Syndrome			588.00	25.00	40.60	180.00	833.60
Support teacher	10:1		588.00	25.00			
Assistant							
Autism			2,751.00	158.00	107.10	180.00	3,196.10
Support teacher	8:1		735.00	32.00			
Assistant	2:1		2,016.00	126.00			
Multiple disabilities			1,596.00	88.00	120.10	180.00	1,984.10
Support teacher	10:1		588.00	25.00			
Assistant	4:1		1,008.00	63.00			
Physical disability			294.00	13.00		180.00	487.00
Support teacher	20:1		294.00	13.00			
Assistant							
Intellectual disability			1,596.00	88.00	129.10	180.00	1,993.10
Support teacher	10:1		588.00	25.00			
Assistant	4:1		1,008.00	63.00			
Hearing impairment						180.00	180.00
Support teacher							
Sign language interpreter		1					
Visual impairment			294.00	13.00	55.40	180.00	542.40
Support teacher	20:1		294.00	13.00			
Assistant							
MESATARJA ETË GJITHA DËMTIMEVE	1,662.00	19.00	64.60	180.00	1,925.60		
Support teacher	13.0		452.00	19.00			
Assistant	3.3		1,210.00				
Sign language interpreter one per municipality)		1					

This additional funding enables inclusive schools to promote and provide education for all children, including children with disabilities. Each year MEST will receive the data sent by municipalities on the number and specific needs of children with disabilities who are enrolled in educational institutions during that year, based on decisions issued by the municipal/regional evaluation team.

It is worth noting that the goods are one-time purchase, while the cost of personnel and transportation is annual.

6. Proposed funding for pupils with special needs in the national formula for pre-university education

The criteria for funding formula for the pre-university education are expected to be changed by MEST and therefore the parameters set out in this paper aim to be part of the revised pre-university education formula.

The expenditures per pupil with disability or the average of all types of disabilities is 1,926 EUR or 4.7 times higher than the current expenditure of around 407 EUR per pupil for pre-university education funded by the general grant. The difference of 1,519 EUR is the additional necessary funding per pupil, for children with disabilities requiring solutions under the national formula.

7. Conclusions

According to the Salamanca Statement, which states that the education system that takes into account variety of children's characteristics and needs, is the most effective tool to combat discriminatory attitudes and to create welcoming environments, thus building an inclusive society. MEST, through this formula aims to fulfill the right of children with disabilities to access qualitative and inclusive education, learning together with all children, despite the difficulties or changes they may have. This will be achieved by creating the appropriate conditions for children with disabilities so that they can have as little barriers as possible, caused by the environment where they interact.

This paper "Financing Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities" will help educational institutions to ensure that necessary capacities and services for pupils with disabilities have access to and actively participate in the learning process. Therefore, the inclusion of these funding parameters for children with disabilities in the revised education formula will implement the principle of inclusive education, which is part of education policy.

Contributors who participated in drafting the document “Financing Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities”

- Department for Politics in Pre-University Education, MEST
- Education Division of Pupils with Special Needs, MEST

We thank for their contribution and support during this process:

- Working group:

1. Sharr Kurtishi, Local expert and author of document
2. Lulavere Behluli, Head of Education Division of Pupils with Special Needs, MEST
3. Naime Reçica, Officer in the Education Division of Pupils with Needs, MEST
4. Valid Zhubi, Coordinator for Program Implementation, Save the Children
5. Melita Kabashi, Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator, Save the Children
6. Remzije Krasniqi, Director, SOS Village
7. Albion Zeka, HandiKOS

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