



Save the Children

GUARANTEERING CHILDREN'S FUTURE

**How to end child poverty and social exclusion
in Europe**

Country report: Kosovo

About the report

In 2021, the European Union (EU) championed the rights of children growing up at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU by adopting the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation¹ – a comprehensive policy framework that aims at tackling child poverty and breaking the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage through securing the access of children in need to key service areas – and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)² which calls on EU Member States to allocate appropriate financial resources to address child poverty and implement the Child Guarantee. At the same time, the agreed European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan aims to lift at least 5 million children out of poverty by 2030³.

The Guaranteeing Children's Future – How to End Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe illustrates the challenges faced by children and families living in poverty or social exclusion in 14 European countries and territories: 9 EU Member States (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Romania) and 5 Non-EU Member States and territories⁴ (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Iceland and Northern Ireland). The report aims to influence the design of the national Child Guarantee Action Plans and child poverty reduction measures in non-EU Member States.

The report provides information on the levels of child poverty and identifies children in need in the 14 examined countries.

It analyses the state of children's access to the key services in each country, the participation of children and civil society in decision-making procedures, and the allocation of EU funds and national budgets for child poverty reduction and social inclusion measures. The report also highlights the work of Save the Children in each of these countries to support children and families in need. Furthermore, it provides recommendations on the Child Guarantee Action Plans that EU Member States will submit by March 2022. The report also covers non-EU Member States as Save the Children considers the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation as an exemplary policy framework which can inspire and serve as a basis for policy making in countries outside the EU.

The findings and recommendations of this report are structured around the service areas of the Child Guarantee Council Recommendation, namely:



Early childhood
education and
care



Inclusive education
and school-based
activities



Healthcare



Healthy
nutrition



Adequate
housing

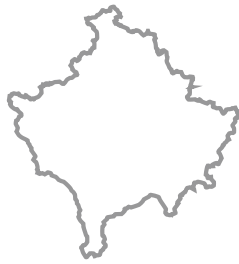
The report is divided into three main sections:

- 1 The comparative analysis of the results of the 14 country pages;
- 2 Country pages covering the challenges that children in need and their families face in 14 countries in focus, the role of Save the Children and recommendations on the Child Guarantee Action Plans or child poverty reduction measures;
- 3 Recommendations for the EU and Member States on the successful implementation of the Child Guarantee and on child poverty reduction measures for countries outside the EU.

For a copy of the full report ‘Guaranteeing Children’s Future – How to End Child Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe’, [see here](#).



Kosovo



Summary

At the beginning of 2020, the child poverty rate in Kosovo reached 20.7%. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities endure discrimination on the ethnical basis as they belong to one of the most vulnerable groups. In addition, children with disabilities, children growing up in rural areas and poor households are among the most discriminated against.

The COVID-19 has forced the government to re-allocate resources to fight the pandemic, therefore, directly and indirectly slowing down the progress on the fight against poverty. Children's access to ECEC and education in Kosovo is limited due to a variety of reasons such as the few places available for public ECEC, the lack of parental support, the lack of inclusive education for children with disabilities and the big gender gap in education where only 70% of girls benefit from secondary education after primary school, compared to 95% of boys. Children's access to education worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to online education. Almost half of the children in Kosovo declared to have learnt little to nothing during that period. Save the Children is present in Kosovo since 1997 working directly with children and families in need in a holistic approach. At the same time, it has created and supports child-led groups at the local and national level to advocate and participate in processes regarding the delivery of their rights. Save the Children in Kosovo advocates for the establishment of good practices, capacity building of civil society and

Key facts

6.2%

In 2019, only 6.2% of children aged 0 – 5 attended preschool.

14.6%

14.6% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children under five years remain stunted and 2.5% severely stunted.

30%

Around 30% of Kosovo's population is unable to obtain health services due to extreme poverty.

70% vs 95%

The lack of parental support, the lack of inclusive education for children with disabilities and the big gender gap in education where only 70% of girls benefit from secondary education after primary school, compared to 95% of boys.

local duty bearers to respond to the needs of children. Save the Children in Kosovo calls on the government to develop child poverty reduction policies that will incorporate inclusive practices and support families with children in need in an integrated way. To this end, appropriate EU and national financial resources shall be directed to support systemic changes and achieve long lasting positive results.

National updates

CHILD POVERTY IN KOSOVO



Kosovo has one of the highest poverty levels in south-eastern Europe, with a 20.7% child poverty rate at the beginning of 2020⁵.

Although Kosovo was steadily progressing to reduce poverty and increase general welfare⁶, the COVID-19 crisis has forced the Government to re-allocate resources to fight the pandemic, thereby directly and indirectly halting the progress on the fight against poverty. While there is no data available to show the change in percentage for children's poverty increase, according to a report of the World Bank, projections suggest that 57.000-148.000 people in Kosovo could fall into poverty, while the middle class could shrink by as many as 100.000 people. This is equivalent to an increase of 4-10 percentage points of the poverty rate. Moreover, the World Bank reports that more than half of people falling into poverty do not currently benefit from any social programme. Another striking finding of a report carried out by WorldVision on COVID-19 and children⁷, revealed that 13.3% of surveyed children in Kosovo declared to contribute to the family income.

CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN KOSOVO



Children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are one of the most vulnerable groups in Kosovo as they face discrimination on ethnical basis and belong to one of the poorest categories.

The burden of accessing healthcare services amid COVID-19 is especially unique for children with disabilities who, due to the suspension of non-emergent and elective, social, rehabilitation and healthcare services, were at high risk of missing out on essential healthcare. Also, these children had enormous difficulties with online education since distance learning is not designed with children with disabilities in mind, thus leaving their educational needs unattended. Save the Children in Kosovo has contributed to the establishment of a user-friendly platform for children with disabilities during COVID-19 and supported their caregivers on its use.

Increased poverty amid COVID-19 has pushed many families and children of vulnerable low socio-economic backgrounds to seek more extreme forms of survival including child labour, early marriage, and sexual exploitation, with staggering consequences.

Children living in rural areas lack access to ECEC and enrolment rates are low especially among girls. These children were especially held back during COVID-19 since their households tend to have a lower income and thus are affected by the digital divide to access online education.

CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SERVICES AS DESCRIBED IN THE CHILD GUARANTEE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

Early childhood education and care, inclusive education and school-based activities, and a healthy meal each school day



Effective and free access to early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ECEC services are provided through a fragmented sectoral approach and the level of attendance for children in preschool education in Kosovo is low. In 2019, only 6.2% of children aged 0 – 5 attended preschool.

The reasons for so low levels of attendance are due to:

- Lack of spaces in areas outside the capital and a few larger cities. Rural areas are largely uncovered by services.
- Some parents are not informed or cannot afford to take their children to centres too far away from their homes/jobs, or simply are not aware of the value of ECEC.
- Public pre-school education is free but there are limited places available for children aged 0-5. Private providers exist but there are barriers to entry such as the related costs.
- Education for children aged 5-6 is offered in public schools while for those aged 0-5 is offered in separate facilities outside schools, making it easier for some parents to take their children to ECEC when they turn 5 years old.

Although no attendance numbers exist for children with disabilities, it can be assumed that their attendance rate is very low mainly due to a combination of factors, such as inaccessible facilities, lack of designated educational staff, lack of resources, and lack of public transportation for children in need.

Attendance to ECEC programmes by girls and boys aged 3-6 is reported to be as low as 33.9% and is only 5% for girls and boys from RAE communities, which is very low compared to 93.9% in EU countries⁸. Additionally, only 18% of children aged 3-6 have sufficient levels of literacy and numeracy. These very low numbers contribute to an onset of the early attainment gap for many marginalised children, in particular for those from minority communities.

Keeping in mind that unemployment is much higher among women than men, particularly in rural areas, and because there is a noticeable lack of ECEC services in rural areas, unemployed mothers or other close family members provide care for pre-school children. The lack of ECEC services in rural areas does not only limit opportunities for mothers

and other care providers to enter the labour market and gain employment, but also limits the children's development potential which is not sufficiently promoted and fulfilled without access to quality and integrated ECEC services. In urban areas where employment of both men and women is higher, there is an increased demand for ECEC services.

The government's response and use of funds



Kosovo has developed a very strong legal framework that promotes a non-discriminatory and inclusive society, and the country is striving to make steady progress towards the SDGs. The Government of Kosovo acknowledges in the National Development Strategy 2016-2021 that the increased inclusion of children in ECEC lays the foundation for better academic success later in life, decreases inequalities between the genders, and raises human capital. Despite legislative frameworks being largely harmonised with international standards and abiding by UNCRC language, information gaps exist in terms of monitoring country performance (i.e., alternative reporting) measured against such standards. Key trends reflect slow progress on addressing children's needs through a holistic approach and weak coordination of mechanisms at local and central level to provide integrated services and enable access to inclusive education.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) with support from Save the Children in Kosovo and UNICEF put in place an early childhood education platform (an online learning platform for children aged 0 - 6 years) and a distance learning platform for children with disabilities, so that children could continue their learning.

During 2020 and 2021, the EU provided funding for child protection and ECEC through UNICEF, and for social services through Save the Children.

Effective and free access to education



The Global COVID-19 Research Survey⁹ revealed that 43.6% of children in Kosovo learnt little to nothing during the pandemic.

Another survey¹⁰ supported by Save the Children in Kosovo that looked into the challenges and the achievements of the distance learning system organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, identified the actions needed to improve their experience, namely:

- teachers need better preparation for classes;
- longer duration of classroom time;
- less homework and clearer rules for homework assignments;
- children being able to express their opinions; children having more interesting activities during lessons and the possibility to communicate peer-to-peer and with their teachers.

There are big gender gaps in Kosovo when it comes to educational attainment, particularly in rural areas. Only 70% of girls benefit from secondary education after primary school, compared to 95% of boys. This is due to patriarchal attitudes, cultural expectations that girls/women should stay at home and help around the house, whereas schools are sometimes too far from their homes making it unsafe for girls to travel long distances. Children with disabilities are also discriminated against due to a lack of resources and capacities in schools and Municipal Education Directorates (MED) to deliver inclusive education, and lack of coordination and response mechanisms to support the development of these capacities. The governing institutions at local level and the schools are falling short to create quality inclusive schools for children with disabilities.

The governing institutions at local level and schools are falling short to create quality inclusive schools for children with disabilities. The overall number of children with disabilities out of school is not measured systematically

and their enrolment in education is estimated at around 40%. This leaves a vast majority of children deprived of their basic right to education, socialisation, and other opportunities available to their peers.

Effective and free access to one healthy meal each school day

There is no effective access to sufficient and healthy nutrition in schools as only the capital Pristina offers a free nutrition programme for children attending primary schools. However, several stakeholders as well as parents, have questioned its nutritional value¹¹.

The government's response and use of funds



Inclusive education has been at the core of several strategies developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) since 2010. However, there is an overall lack of understanding of children's needs in shaping designated programmes for inclusion and a lack of awareness on the importance of inclusive practices, tools, and resources to ensure that all children benefit from inclusive mainstream education, despite their background. Following the decentralization of education, the competencies between the central and local governance in education have become unclear. MES is responsible for the development of policies, curriculum, inspection, and the provision of optimum condition for work in general, and municipalities are responsible for school performance. There is a lack of resources and capacities at the municipal level to deliver inclusive education and to support the work of Municipal Pedagogical Evaluation Teams as a mechanism to direct children with disabilities into mainstream education. Pedagogical evaluation of children with disabilities is regulated by Administrative Instruction in place since 2012 and revised in 2017. However, the Pedagogical Evaluation Teams (PET) established across Kosovo so far, often lack the capacities and

resources to perform their work. In all the instances, PETs that are not directly supported by Save the Children in Kosovo and do not even have proper space to assess children's needs. Assessments take place in offices, which are often inaccessible and have no child appeal. In addition, they lack assessment tools and other instruments necessary to perform their work.

In 2020, the INCLUDE project (Building capacity for inclusion in education¹²) aimed to improve access to quality education of students from groups of children in need in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, was launched. It is expected to be carried out over a period of four years.

Save the Children Italy and Save the Children Switzerland, supported by various donors such as the Ferrari Foundation, Medicor, Kanton Zurich and others, have also provided significant funding towards improving and expanding ECEC services in rural and urban areas in Kosovo. These funds, managed and implemented by Save the Children in Kosovo, have improved access to and quality of education by promoting inclusive and participatory approaches to the education of children from marginalised groups who are deprived of quality learning opportunities and have the poorest learning outcomes with a particular focus on pre-primary and primary education. This was also evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when Save the Children in Kosovo worked with the Ministry of Education to develop a distance learning platform for children with disabilities. Children from poor families were supported with care packages, including tablets and technological tools, in order to access the distance learning platform during the lockdown period so that they could continue their education.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) put in place several online platforms to allow children to continue their learning:

- E-learning platform, an online learning platform, entailing video lessons, which were also broadcasted daily on the

national television "RTK".

- E-scholar learning platform, an online learning platform for pupils of grades 1-9.
- Inclusive Distance learning platform, an online learning platform for children with disabilities.

All platforms, except for the Inclusive Education platform, are available in four languages: Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, and Bosnian.

In March 2020, Save the Children in Kosovo immediately reached out to the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) to understand their needs and to support with adapting interventions for children with disabilities. Save the Children in Kosovo supported the Ministry of Education in the development of the distance learning platforms.

Healthcare

Effective and free access to quality healthcare



Around 30% of Kosovo's population is unable to obtain health services due to extreme poverty. At the same time, Kosovo has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Europe and the lowest immunisation coverage for the most vulnerable groups, which implicates low probability to survive and high-risk consequences for maternal and child health, thus reflecting the violation of the right to survive and proper development. UNICEF reports that Health outcomes for non-majority communities RAE children are even worse. Immunisation coverage among these children is much lower, and only 30% of children are fully immunised¹³. Sexual and reproductive health rights of adolescents are not respected, positioning adolescents in a risk with high consequences of health status and wellbeing. Lack of specialised services in certain medical units imposes patients to seek out-of-country services, which have higher costs and limit some groups of children to meet their life-threatening health needs. Low sanitation and wash practices in the public system settings

(i.e., schools, hospitals) contribute to the prevalence of conditions that lead to diseases and poor health in general.

The government's response and the use of funds



In August 2020, the Assembly of Kosovo adopted a new law to prevent and combat the COVID-19 pandemic, which provides a solid legal basis for public health related restrictions of fundamental rights.

The Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Department of Psychology of the University of Pristina, launched a free phone therapy and counselling line to offer psychological support to all citizens who feel the pressure of the pandemic.

Home visits under the Universal Progressive Home Visiting Programme were carried out virtually during the pandemic. However, the quality of healthcare services provided to new mothers and new-borns virtually remains somewhat questionable.

The EU has mobilised significant funds to help Western Balkan countries in the recovery process¹⁴ and adopted a package of €70 million under the IPA II to facilitate the access of Western Balkans partners to COVID-19 vaccines procured by EU Member States¹⁵. These actions have been coordinated with Kosovo's institutions and civil society, including Save the Children in Kosovo.

Healthy nutrition



Effective access to sufficient and healthy nutrition

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted by UNICEF shows that the nutrition status of children remains a public health concern, where 14.6% of RAE children under five years remain stunted and 2.5% severely stunted.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, poorer households will encounter more difficulties advancing in nutrition, with serious longer-term consequences that may take years to recover from¹⁶. In addition, children with mothers who gave birth at a young age or who have no education are more likely to be malnourished. There is no effective access to sufficient and healthy nutrition in schools as only the capital Pristina offers a nutrition programme for children attending primary schools. No systematic campaign promoting healthy eating and nutritional food has taken place in the last 5 years.

Adequate housing



Effective access to adequate housing

Housing issues in Kosovo have been adversely affected by the recent armed conflict in the country. There is no national mechanism in place for systematic data collection and policymaking. The housing needs of the groups of children most in need, including those from RAE communities remain unattended. The domestic and gender-based violence in households during COVID-19 lockdowns increased the vulnerabilities of children and women. In response to this, the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, opened a temporary safe space to shelter survivors of domestic and gender-based violence who had to quarantine and became eligible for shelter in Kosovo government-funded facilities.

The government's response and use of funds



In December 2020, a new law¹⁷ entered into force to alleviate the economic consequences created in the country and to provide a legal basis to help entities affected by the COVID-19. The Parliament adopted a Recovery Package that provides short-term financial support, loans, and cash injection for businesses affected by COVID-19. It also provides bonuses for

healthcare workers, police, and other staff deemed essential. The Package also foresees a small raise in pensions and other social assistance schemes.

Kosovo's government continues to undertake ad hoc policy making with prevailing obstacles for inclusive and evidence-based policy making, which does not interlink strategic priorities with the budgeting processes at national and local level. The EU progress report for Kosovo shows that regarding children's rights, Kosovo's legal framework is largely in line with the EU and international standards, but implementation remains limited¹⁸.

IPA II funds were re-programmed by the EU Office in Kosovo, in coordination with the government, to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU provided direct financial support to the Government to cover urgent and emergency needs related to the pandemic¹⁹. Kosovo has already received €24.05 million as part of the EU's overall assistance to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, to support the modernisation of Kosovo's public administration and to strengthen public finance management. The EU also re-allocated some funding to tackle priority needs in the areas of social services, social protection, access to healthcare and other emerging needs, of which Save the Children in Kosovo is an implementing partner²⁰.

The new Law on Child Protection provides an explicit ban on the corporal punishment in all settings and mandates relevant governing bodies to initiate executive actions for implementing the Law at local level. This is aimed to support the creating of clear mandates for financing of services, staff resourcing and accountability between the duty-bearers at national and local level. Save the Children in Kosovo and civil society continue to advocate for a child-centred policy design of the new Law on ECEC and the Law on Social Services.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND CHILD PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES



Save the Children has created and supports child-led groups in the local and national level that advocate for institutionalising child participation and campaign to influence decision-making on issues that impact the delivery of their rights.

As for the allocation of EU funds, these are usually allocated in consultation with civil society organisations. The EU Office in Kosovo organises formal meetings with CSOs, which are given ample opportunities to raise their concerns and propose solutions/recommendations. The EU also utilises multiple channels to solicit feedback, including formal meetings, informal gatherings, direct feedback mechanisms via e-mail, using the TACSO (Technical Assistance to CSOs in the Western Balkans) instrument, etc. Generally, Save the Children's views are considered, and the EU often asks its opinions and feedback on key issues related to children and their wellbeing. Nevertheless, when it came to EU funds re-programming towards COVID-19, the civil society was partially consulted and on a very limited basis (partly due to the nature of the emergency and partly due to the lack of technical expertise of some CSOs). Nonetheless, consultation took place with some CSOs and International NGOs, including Save the Children in Kosovo.



SAVE THE CHILDREN IN KOSOVO

Save the Children has worked in Kosovo since 1997. Its programme approach is based on direct interventions and the establishment of good practices, capacity building of civil society and local duty bearers to respond to the needs of children. Save the Children also advocates for legislation and policies that will incorporate inclusive practices and have appropriate financial mechanisms to support systemic responses and therefore achieve long lasting positive changes.

The current ongoing projects of Save the Children in Kosovo are:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

The “Extending Integrated Community Based ECCD in Kosovo”²¹ project builds on and scales up the implementation of best practices established and piloted

during the 2015-2019 period, in improving access and quality of ECEC services for children aged 0-6, including the most marginalised ones, in 8 municipalities. The project focuses mainly on ensuring the sustainability of interventions piloted through the five-year period.

EFFECTIVE AND FREE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The overall objective of the “Promoting Educational and Social Inclusion 2021-2023”²² project is to empower children with disabilities in Kosovo to reach their full potential through promoting better access to quality inclusive education and job opportunities for children and youth with disabilities living in Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica south, Peja, Prishtina, and Prizren.

CHILD PROTECTION

Save the Children offered its expertise and support to Kosovo institutions to find an alternative way of delivering distance early childhood education to children 0-6 years from the most vulnerable communities, as well as distance learning for children with disabilities in Kosovo.

Save the Children was supported by the Swedish International Development Agency’s (SIDA) and Global COVID-19 Fund of Save the Children. As a result of these funds and in close coordination with the Municipal Education Directorates (MED), a total of 400 educational kits (containing educational toys and didactic materials) were distributed to children with disabilities, children from RAE communities and other marginalised communities in eight municipalities of Kosovo²³.

A total of 700 families of children with disabilities, from RAE communities and those living in poverty have been identified, through the support of MEDs, and have received hygienic and personal protective items (such as soap, face masks and hand sanitisers, among other things).

Since the pandemic started, Save the Children in Kosovo has supported 274 families to access the internet. Save the Children has provided tablets to 727 children from vulnerable groups and 750 children have received educational

kits to support distance inclusive education during the pandemic. 300 electronic tablets (214 of them with internet subscription for three months) were distributed to children with disabilities, children from RAE and other marginalised communities, to aid them in accessing education platforms and equally participate in the learning process.

The project has also contributed to empowering parents and families to better support their children through psychosocial support, positive parenting, and COVID-19 information by developing and distributing printed awareness materials, producing and broadcasting three TV programmes and radio messages, each of them in three main languages in Kosovo: Albanian, Serbian and Romani.

Throughout this period, Save the Children in Kosovo also focused on:

- Advocating for children’s needs to be met when managing crises. Identifying key child protection messages and develop a common dissemination strategy, in collaboration with partners, institutional duty-bears and other stakeholders delivering child protection services.
- Continuously promoting good hygiene and prevention tips through social and media channels.
- Conducting a national comprehensive situational analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on children with disabilities and children of parents with disabilities in Kosovo.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SERVICE PROVISION FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS IN KOSOVO, IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The purpose of the proposed action is to support the availability and access to quality social services²⁴ for girls, boys, women and men living in vulnerable situations, especially

those at socioeconomic risk, victims of violence, domestic violence or trafficking, elders, children and adults living with disability, while also correlating to the country strategic objective for decentralisation of social services and strengthening of the network of quality and standardised social service providers (NGOs). The overall objective of this EU-funded project is to increase the availability of high quality and accessible social services through a third-party financing mechanism for NGOs who are providers of social services in Kosovo for the most vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities.

The proposed project will build upon three main components: 1) Provision of financing for third parties in the form of sub-grants for at least 30 local NGO providers of social services, 2) Provision of capacity-building exercises for providers of social services with the overall aim of enhancing the quality of services, and ensuring longer-term sustainability after the end of the project, and 3) An advocacy and awareness-raising campaign to sensitise people, particularly those in rural and remote areas, of the importance of social services and to inform the general public of the availability of services and how to take advantage of them..

ADVOCACY WORK

Save the Children runs various advocacy initiatives and campaigns to support the delivery of rights for children in Kosovo. Save the Children ensures to campaign and lead change with and for children. Below are some of Save the Children's key campaigns:

- Every Last Child (2016)
The campaign targeted children left behind and the goal was to ensure impact for the most deprived and marginalised children.

- “Know me for My Abilities” National Campaign (2018)

A national campaign was led under the slogans ‘Know me for My Abilities’, and ‘Yes, Children Can!’ aimed at raising awareness and improving the public attitudes towards children with disabilities living in Kosovo, calling for social inclusion and for the rights of children with disabilities to be fully recognized and respected in the country.

- Campaign on Breastfeeding (2018)

Save the Children in Kosovo in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and other local NGOs carried out a one-week campaign aiming to promote the importance of breastfeeding.

- Banning corporal punishment campaign (2019-2021)

The goal was to increase capacity and coordination between partners towards a common strategy and action plan for the campaign on the prohibition of corporal punishment in all environments and change of social norms in prohibiting corporal punishment of children.

- Save our Education Campaign (2021)

A global campaign, implemented also in Kosovo, with the goal of protecting the learning and wellbeing of a generation of children impacted by COVID-19.

FUNDING OF SAVE THE CHILDREN IN KOSOVO

Members and donors: Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children Italy, Save the Children Switzerland, Save the Children US, European Union, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Embassy of Sweden, Medicor Foundation, Ferrari Foundation, IKEA Foundation.

Recommendations towards national decision makers to address child poverty and social exclusion in Kosovo

The targeted categories of children in need to be reached

- Children with disabilities.
- Children from minority communities.
- Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Children living in rural areas.

Effective and free access to ECEC

- Strengthen the institutional commitments for increased ECEC and inclusive education services, which particularly affect children from social and ethnic marginalised groups, and rural areas.
- Develop or further expand public, free of charge preschool settings – especially for children aged 0-5 years in rural areas.
- Inform and educate parents and caregivers about the value of ECEC for child development.

Effective and free access to education

- Protect children from COVID-19 in all settings, including schools and ECEC centres.
- Make sure education is made accessible online in a quick and efficient manner for those unable to attend school.
- Develop mechanisms and awareness raising campaigns to support girls' equal access to education (especially to secondary education).
- Ensure a safe, qualitative, and inclusive return of children to schools.
- Develop the infrastructure and/or strengthen the accessibility of children with disabilities to education.

Effective and free access to one healthy meal each school day

Support the provision of healthy meal planning in schools and provide free school meals, especially for children in need.

Effective and free access to quality healthcare

- Provide children and their caregivers with resources, mental-health and psychosocial counselling and social/economic support they need during and after COVID-19 to protect them and mitigate the effects of the pandemic.
- Develop awareness raising campaigns and the needed structures to increase the immunisation coverage – especially among the most vulnerable communities and public servants delivering services to children to close the gap in service provision.
- Strengthen the healthcare provision for mothers and infants, especially in rural areas and among the most disadvantaged communities.
- Strengthen the provision of healthcare services and the training of healthcare professionals to respond to the needs of people living in rural areas and in vulnerable communities.

Effective access to sufficient and healthy nutrition

- Develop a nationwide campaign about the effects of malnutrition on children and the positive outcomes of healthy eating. Use child-friendly language and material to

target children in schools.

- Reach out to RAE families with children and support them with targeted information to understand the benefits of healthy eating habits and to induce the purchase of nutritious food ingredients.

The use of EU funds and national budgets to support children and families in need

EU funds and national budgets need to be utilised in a systematic and prolonged manner to provide children with the necessary tools such as ECEC services, inclusive education, psychosocial support and counselling, quality and accessible education, leisure and sports, and proper training and preparations for when they become youth and are ready to make life-altering decisions. Programmes need to be developed to tackle these issues in a holistic manner, without gaps in support and services, as well as to challenge the generational effects of traditional harmful practices in child-rearing. EU financial resources must also be allocated to services that support parents and family members since they have also tremendously suffered and are under a lot of stress and strain.

Further measures to address social exclusion and break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage

- Establish an integrated (across health, education, and social sectors) data collection mechanism for children, since the absence of data currently impedes any efforts in improving the implementation of policies that guarantee welfare for all children.
- Develop and strengthen the accountability systems between central and local government, as well as advance the public consultation practices, including the participation of children in decision-making
- Ensure needs-informed public investment that takes into account the ever-changing circumstances of children in Kosovo and empowers young people (including those with disabilities) to increase their skills for participation in the labour market.
- Expand access to unemployment benefits or child benefits to parents and caregivers from poor and disadvantaged communities.
- Consider the introduction of a “Child Tax Credit” for poor families as well as for working families struggling to provide adequate nutrition, housing, and care for their children.



Endnotes

- 1 <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9106-2021-INIT/en/pdf>
- 2 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj>
- 3 https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en
- 4 When referring to non-EU Member States, we refer to countries in Europe, but non-members of the European Union.
- 5 Save the Children Europe 2020. The impact of covid-19 on children in Europe. Child poverty in Kosovo is defined using the internationally accepted consumption poverty line of €1.417 per person per day.
- 6 See for example: http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/National_Development_Strategy_2016-2021_ENG.pdf and https://www.institutigap.org/documents/6239_National%20development%20strategy.pdf
- 7 World Bank. 2019. How COVID-19 Can Affect Poverty and Family Welfare in the Western Balkans.
- 8 “Kosovo plans expanded access to early childhood education and care”, European Commission, 2019. Available here: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/attendance-in-early-childhood-education-and-care-programmes-and-academic-proficiencies-at-age-15_f16c7ae5-en
- 9 “Protect a Generation: the impact of COVID-19 on children’s lives”. Survey carried out among 142 Kosovar children (58.5% of which were girls). Full report available here: <https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/emergency-response/protect-a-generation-report.pdf>. 2020.
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- 21 <https://ams.savethechildren.net/awards/details/56743>
- 22 <https://ams.savethechildren.net/awards/details/56743>
- 23 Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica north, Mitrovica south, Peja, Prishtina and Prizren
- 24 For example, psycho-social counselling, physical therapy, home visits by licensed therapists for those immobile, shelter and psychological support for victims of violence, etc. Please refer to the Call for Proposals for a longer list of suggested interventions: <https://kosovo.savethechildren.net/sub-grants>

Save the Children believes that every child deserves a future. In Europe and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and be protected from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

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