

BUDGETING OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF ELBASAN AND KORÇA



Save the Children



AGENZIA ITALIANA
PER LA COOPERAZIONE
ALLO SVILUPPO



BUDGETING OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF ELBASAN AND KORÇA

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This report on budgeting on preschool education was realized in the framework of the project Towards Inclusive Education for all Preschool Age Children in Albania”, financed by the Italian Agency of Cooperation for Development and implemented by Save the Children Albania in partnership with MEDPAK Association.

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Acknowledgments

ALL	Albanian lek
RED	Regional Educational Directorate
KMCAP	Medical Commission for Determining Job Ability
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MES	Ministry of Education Sports and Youth
OKB	United Nations Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
PEI	Individual Educational Plan
SS	Social Service
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers

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1

Introduction

In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Sports approved the Law “On Pre-University Education” which paves the way for the implementation of inclusive education. Even though 6 years have elapsed since the law has been passed, children with disabilities still do not receive support that meets their needs. Many children with disabilities and their families face barriers, inadequate services, discriminatory attitudes and an incomplete legislation. Many children with developmental problems and disabilities have not been timely identified and have not been supported with appropriate interventions. The multitude of barriers and constant difficulties they are facing are leaving a deep mark on them and will have a long impact on their lives, leading to poverty and permanent exclusion.

The implementation of inclusive education policy in numerous cases is faced with unsustainable and unsupportive budgets and financial frameworks. By the experience of many countries, applying inclusive education, the funding is acknowledged as one of the greatest challenges¹ to be faced. Albania, on the road to applying inclusive education, faces the inadequacy of financial resources, coupled with inadequate educational structures to accommodate children with disabilities, lack of qualified staff, and lack of appropriate didactic materials that support the learning process for children with disabilities in inclusive education structures. While compulsory and secondary educations have been attaining an increased interest, the pre-school education has not yet received the proper attention. Early childhood is a critical period in the growth and development of a child, as experiences at this stage of life affect the personal achievements throughout an individual's life. For children with disabilities, early interventions are of special importance as they help them develop and reach their maximal potentials. Pre-school education is an important intervention that enables children with disabilities inadequate environment and special space where they can develop through learning, playing, and interacting with peers.

In Albania, traditionally, education has been the responsibility of central government. With the advancement of decentralization process, local government units have attained more authority in managing and financing pre-school education. Around the world there are many positive examples where the handing over of competencies to local government units have brought positive results in the application of inclusive education. Albania has passed a law that promotes inclusion, but it does not yet have a well-defined budget that supports its implementation.

The study on the budgeting of preschool education for children with disabilities was conducted in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça. It is structured into 5 chapters. Following the introduction (Chapter 1) and the description of the methodology (Chapter 2), the Chapter 3 provides the legal and institutional context of inclusive education as well as the crosscutting with the territorial-administrative reform (of 2014) and decentralization. The study continues with Chapter 4, which argues the need for inclusive pre-school education from child rights approach and of long-term economic benefits. This chapter identifies and describes in detail the educational services, rehabilitation services and support services (functional in the territory of the two municipalities under study) that facilitate the inclusion of children of children with disabilities (0-6 years) in the inclusive preschool education. This chapter provides also information on the number of 0-6 year old children with disabilities (according current certification by KMCAP), public education structures

1. UNICEF, Financing of Inclusive Education, Companion Technical Booklet; 2004

that apply inclusive pre-school education and the number of children with access to these structures. In this chapter, they are analyzed and identified, factors that promote and factors that impede the application of inclusive pre-school education and participation.

Chapter 5 describes and analyzes the funding aspect of inclusive education in the two municipalities under the study. In this chapter it is evidenced that inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities is not yet a priority of MES and of the municipalities in the study. Budget transfers from the central government to the local government are insufficient and during the budgeting planning process (at both levels of government), the needs of disabled children for additional support are not taken into account. In this chapter, costs are calculated in pre-school education for a child with disabilities, based on current spending in public structures. The cost is calculated as a cost for each service and as a total cost. Then, on the basis of the total cost, missing annual budgets for 2018 are calculated if inclusion in pre-school education is to be applied to all preschool age children with disabilities. In Chapter 6, the study outlines conclusions and provides recommendations in terms of (i) information-based and evidence-based financial decision making, (ii) strengthening early identification and periodic evaluation interventions, (iii) strengthening services for pre-school education system with in school and out school holistic approaches, and (iv) recommending the allocation of sufficient budgets for inclusive preschool education and good management of human resources and their professional qualification.

This study addresses the concerns that different groups have in this specific issue. MES, MHSP and municipalities find information, analysis and arguments for the development of national and local policies that improve the inclusive pre-school education scheme for children with disabilities; a methodology for calculating budget needs; and the need to improve the monitoring process. International organizations for the protection of children's rights, like Save the Children, may use the findings of the study in their intervention strategies to advance the right to preschool education for children with disabilities in project areas.

2

The methodology used and study limitations

2.1 Methodology used

In July 2017, organization Save the Children, launched the new project “Towards Inclusive Education for All Preschool Age Children in Albania”. The project is funded by the Italian Agency for Co-operation and Development, and is implemented by Save the Children in partnership with MEDPAK and the Municipalities of Elbasan and Korça. The purpose of the project is to ensure that all children in pre-school age in Albania develop their full potential and improve their learning outcomes. Specifically, the project aims to support the participation of children with disabilities in a qualitative and inclusive education in the two project municipalities of Elbasan and Korça.

Needs assessment conducted in the Municipalities of Elbasan and Korça highlighted gaps in the provision of early childhood services, such as: lack of early identification of children with disabilities; limited availability of social care structures during early childhood, limited availability of inclusive kindergartens, insufficient monitoring services of child health, etc.

In February through May 2018, a local consultant, contracted by Save the Children, conducted **a budget analysis on the availability and allocation of financial resources** that cover inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities. **The study was conducted in Municipalities of Elbasan and Korça.**

The budgeting study is based on the description and analysis of public services that support the inclusive education of children with disabilities and public spending on inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities. The methodology of service and budget analysis evaluate the engagement of MHSP, MES and Elbasan and Korça municipalities, in respecting of the right to inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities.

The study provides answers for the following questions:

1. How is inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities applied in the municipalities under study?
2. What are the budgets allocated for inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities in the municipalities under study?
3. Which services do the budgets allocations from municipalities in the study, cover, and how much is the cost per child with disability, by services received and the overall cost per child?
4. At what degree the allocated budgets meet the needs of children with disabilities in preschool education in the municipalities under study?
5. What is the level of budgeting for inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities in 2016 and 2017?
6. How much should be the budgets for the implementation of the right to inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities?
7. What needs to be improved to achieve inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities?

The budget analysis is based on the **method of actual resources in use**. According to this method, expenditures per child with disabilities in inclusive pre-school educational structures, consist of expenditures for children (without special needs), plus additional costs that /reduce inequality or obstacles/hindrances for equal participation in the general educational system and the educational process.

The study draws on information collected from several sources: (i) review of previous documents and reports (including Save the Children and UNICEF documents); (ii) individual interviews with pre-school education specialists as well as social care services specialists providing services for preschool children in territories of Elbasan and Korçe municipalities; (iii) individual interviews with specialists of the economic centres in the municipalities (finance department); (iv) individual interviews with RED specialists in Elbasan and Korça; (v) individual interviews with managers and specialists of public day care facilities (kindergartens and preparatory classes in mainstream schools); (vi) Interviews with managers and specialists of public and non-public rehabilitation services for children with disabilities; individual and group interviews with mothers of pre-school age children with disability, either included in the public education system or not.

Documentation review: Several documents and reports (which are listed in the bibliography attachment) have been sorted out and reviewed to get a better grasp and understand the inclusive pre-school education and its implementation in the municipalities under study, in particular. The study explored existing policies and strategies for pre-school education for children with disabilities as well as the accomplishments and problems encountered during their implementation at the local level in the last three years. The review of the documentation also included examining the funding of the pre-school education at local unit level. The documents and financial reports of the municipalities under study, statistics and any information issued by the competent institutions have been carefully collected and reviewed.

Individual and group Interviews: During the collection of data, many individual and group interviews were conducted and information retrieval was carried out by semi-structured questionnaires.

25 managers, local specialists and academic staff, directly or indirectly involved in the preschool education and provision of support/rehabilitation services, have been identified, contacted and interviewed. A list of interviewees is found in appendix 1 attached to this document.

By means of individual interviews, information on the characteristics of pre-school education in the two municipalities under study and the access of children with disabilities to public preschool structures was drawn. By interviews with budget and finance experts, information was provided on local budgets for pre-school education in general, and for expenditures relative to children with disabilities, in particular. Subsequently, the planned and factual expenditures were compared against financing needs.

RED experts have been very helpful by providing data concerning the number of children with disabilities attending pre-school education and information on the measures taken to realize their inclusion in mainstream preschool educational structures. Interviews with educators/teachers in kindergarten and preparatory classes, helped to surface information regarding the practical application of inclusion, as well as the positive achievements and challenges, including the need for funding.

Academic staff from Faculty of Education and Philology (at University of Korça) has been consulted to attain information on the involvement of the University in developing human resources and how they are adapting the curricula for the preparation of teachers and educators for the inclusive education. Rehabilitation service providers for children with disabilities were contacted and interviewed too.

The information received from them was useful in understanding the supportive and complementary role they play in child rehabilitation.

An important part of the data collection process was interviewing 12 mothers of children with disabilities. The information received provided an insight into the functioning of early prevention services, the daily challenges they face starting from access to rehabilitation services, access to pre-school education, and access to free transportation.

The collection of data was carried out during the February – March 2018.

2.2 Study limitations

The study was faced with **insufficient information on budgets**. Data on the budgets for pre-school education for 2015 (for Elbasan and Korca) and 2016 (for Elbasan) could not be acquired, preventing the cost estimation and budget analysis for these years. Absence of information on budgets for 2015 and 2016 did not make possible to present and analyse the costs and *trends* for the 2015 to 2018 time period.

3

Legal, institutional and territorial administrative context

3.1 Legal context of inclusive education

There are many legal (national and international) provisions that support inclusive education in Albania.

“Agenda 2030 - Sustainable Development Goals” Goal 4, paragraphs 4 and 5, states that, up to the year 2030, to eradicate gender inequalities in education to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training, including people with disabilities, stigmatized populations and children in need.

3.1.1 International Conventions

Internationally speaking, the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education structures (inclusive education) begins with the World Conference on “Education for All” in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. In this conference, international consensus was reached that “education is essential in the fight against poverty, child protection, promotion of human rights” This conference highlighted the need for a more inclusive approach to education for children suffering from exclusion.

In 1993, the UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities requested that party States (including Albania) accept the principle of equal educational opportunities for children and adults in integrated environments.

In 1994, the European countries signed the UNESCO Declaration and Framework for Action Salamanca. By signing the declaration, states acknowledge the need to work towards achieving “schools for all”, to the educational institutions that include all, look positively to differences among people, support learning, and respond to individual needs. In the Salamanca Declaration, education is offered to everyone within the general education system. In the MDG report in 2010, the limited opportunities inflicting children with disabilities and the link between disability and exclusion in education were made evident.

In 1998, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2006, laid out the right to education for all children.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities re-affirms the rights that the persons with disabilities should enjoy and introduces additional obligations for governments on the realization of their rights. Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes the right to education. This article requires a comprehensive all inclusive education system at all levels and supports lifelong learning. This article requires that reasonable measures are taken to provide adequate support and provide individual programs for all the children with disabilities. Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires all schools to promote “at all

levels of the education system, including children at an early age, a respectful attitude towards the rights of persons with disabilities”.

Box 1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

- Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability.
- Persons with disabilities have access to inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.
- Space and appropriate facilities, in accordance with the requirements and needs, are provided.
- Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education.
- Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

3.1.2 Domestic legislation

In Albania, the legislation on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities has been constantly improved as a result of efforts to adapt to the obligations deriving from the international acts that Albania has signed. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (in 2012) raises to a higher level the protection and provision of the rights of persons with disabilities in Albania. In support of this, the internal legal framework has undergone positive developments in line with the standards set out in this convention, reflecting the legal guarantee of the right to education of children with disabilities and constituting it as their fundamental right.

In response to the improvement of the legal framework is the amendment to Law no. 69/2012 dt. 21.06.2012 “On the Pre-University Educational System in the Republic of Albania”. In Chapter XI of this law, “Education of children with disabilities” (Article 63) lays down the legal basis for the full development of the intellectual and physical potential of children with disability, and the improvement of the quality of their lives through their preparation for the complete integration in society and in the labour market. In this same article, it is stated that the inclusion of children with disabilities in specialized education institutions is generally temporary. Inclusion and integration of children with disabilities into mainstream kindergartens and schools is paramount. Article 64 of the law on “Attendance of educational institutions from children with disabilities” describes the criteria and structures responsible for ensuring the education of children with disabilities in special education and/or in mainstream education. The criteria and standards should be regulated by drafting normative provisions and relevant guidelines. Article 65, “Organization of the education for children with disabilities”, states that pupils with disabilities with attend the curriculum of mainstream subject programs tailored to match their needs or in accordance with the curriculum and specialized subject programs. The personalized program for students with disabilities is drafted by a committee composed of teachers of the institution that come from different fields (areas) of learning topics as well as psychologists.

Another document, compiled in full compliance with the fundamental principles of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Union Strategy for People with Disabilities, is the “National Action Plan for People with Disabilities 2016 -2020 “, Approved by the Council of Ministers Decision no. 483, dated 29 June 2016, in heading 1.4, “Education”, states that the right to education for all children in Albania, including children with disabilities, is guaranteed by a variety of laws and regulations as well as social goals defined in the constitution.

Box 2 National Legal Framework for Inclusive Education in Albania:

- Constitution of Albania:Article 18.
- Law no. 10 221, 2010, On Protection from Discrimination:Article 1.
- Civil Code,Article 9.
- Law no. 9062, dated 8.5.2003. Family Code:Article 267.
- Law no. 69/2012, On Pre-university Education:Article 2,Article 5,Article 19,Article 20, Article 44,Article 63.Amended by Law no. 56/2015, dated 28.5.2015
- Law no.9355,dated 10.03.2005,as amended in 2011,on Social Assistance and Services: Articles 4 and 15.
- Education of Pupils with Special Needs, Normative Provisions for Pre-university Education - 2002:Article 57, point 1, point 2; In point 17, Count 18.
- National Strategy for People with Disabilities, 2005-2015.
- National Strategy for Development and Integration, 2007.
- Cross-cutting Social Inclusion Strategy, 2007-2013.
- National Pre-university Education Strategy, 2009-2013.
- Integrated Plan of the Ministry of Education, 2010.
- Action Plan for Children 2012-2015, MoLSAEO.
- National Social Protection Strategy, 2015-2020.
- National Action Plan for People with Disabilities, 2016-2020.
- United Nations Sustainable Development Framework, 2017-2021 between the Council of Europe
- The Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the United Nations, Resolute II.
- Law No.10 221,dated 4.2.2010,“On the Protection from Discrimination”

3.1.3 Institutional Framework

The implementation of the legal framework for inclusive education involves many public institutions at the central and local level. The Ministry of Education Sports and Youth is the main institution for policy development and monitoring of pre-university education, including inclusive education. For implementation of the policy it cooperates with local government units and Directorates/ Educational Offices, each of which has its own functions defined by Law no. 69/2012, “On Pre-University Education” and in concrete terms:

❖ Ministry of Education Sports and Youth

The main functions of the ministry in terms of the pre-university education system are the preparation of the legal and subordinate legal acts of the education system, implementation of the National Strategy of Pre-University Education, monitoring and control in the implementation of legislation and use of funds in educational institutions as well as cooperation in the field of education with line ministries, local government units and other governmental, non-governmental, domestic or foreign organizations.

❖ Institute for the Development of Education (IDE)

IDE (IZhA-al) is the Institution in charge by the Ministry for the organization of the qualification of teachers and the heads of educational institutions in pre-university education at all levels. The qualification process is based on teacher qualification programs. IDE (IZhA) offers teacher training programs for all REDs/EAs, compiling professional standards in accordance with teacher profiles.

❖ Regional Educational Units (RED/ED)

The local education units are representatives of the ministry at the local level and are established by a decision of the Council of Ministers. The local educational units are the educational directorates at the regional level, and the education offices at the district level. The regional education unit is responsible for the functioning of educational institutions within its area of jurisdiction. The local education unit cooperates with the local government unit for: i) planning, realization of investments and maintenance of educational facilities/institutions; ii) identifies and addresses cases of abandonment of the school, drop outs; iii) provision of teaching aids, materials for public education institutions, according to the “by student” formula.

❖ Educational institution (kindergarten, school)

The educational institution has the task of creating a friendly environment for the students and provision of opportunities for each student so that he/she could express, develop individuality and realize his potential in accordance with the opportunities ensured by this law. The educational institution operates according to its internal regulations, which is in accordance with this law and other legal acts in force and is approved by the head of the respective regional education unit. The educational institution provides to the students facilities and equipment for sports activities, cultural and entertaining activities, taking place after class and/or on holiday days.

❖ The basic Unit of Local Government (Municipality)

The basic local government unit, in cooperation with the respective local education unit and public education institutions, is responsible for: i) enrolment of students in public schools of compulsory full-time education; ii) continuous improvement of the quality of provision of education for all students in pre-university public education institutions, by means of state budget funds or funds from unconditional transfers or own revenues.

The basic unit of local government, based on the proposals of the local educational units and of councils of teachers, in accordance with the criteria adopted by the councils of local government units, supports the employees of educational institutions with respect to their professional development and the development of curricula and by providing educational institutions with adequate teaching materials and equipment.

❖ Ministry of Health and Social Protection

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection plays a main role in the implementation of the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities. Within this ministry, the National Council

for Disability is a structure responsible for monitoring the National Action Plan, while the Department of Social Inclusion and Gender Equality carries out the coordinating role with the officials of line ministries (including the Ministry of Education and Sports).

3.1.4 Administrative and territorial reform and decentralization

In September 2014, the Albanian parliament approved the law “On administrative and territorial division of local units in the Republic of Albania”. By this new administrative division Albania is divided into 12 Qarqe (Regional Units) comprising altogether 61 lower level units named Municipalities. Municipalities constitute the first level of local government. Qarku (Regional Unit) is the second (highest) level and consists of several municipalities, bound by historic, territorial, economic and social commonalities/ties. The Qark from a territorial point of view operates in a region. Qark serves as a “bridge” between the local government of the first level (municipalities), and the central government. The Council of Ministers appoints 12 prefects that ensure and provide at regional level better coordination between higher and lower levels of government, better coordination among municipalities in a Qark and between the Qark and central government.

In the previous administrative and territorial division, Law No. 7572, dated 10.06.1992 “On the Organization and Functioning of Local Government”, the first-level local units were the municipalities and communes. Up to 2014, Albania had 65 municipalities and 309 municipalities (altogether 374 local units), of which municipalities were set up in urban areas, while communes in rural areas. This considerable fragmenting of local government into small units created problems in the decentralization process due to the lack of professional capacities and the inability to deliver public services efficiently. The high number of local government units produced marked inequality in the delivery of public services to citizens. Many small units had only sufficient budgets for primarily covering just the operational and staff expenditures, while financing of the services for citizens were almost entirely lacking.

The new territorial division was a necessity that made possible for the local units, now having access and operating in larger territories, to be in charge of a wider pool of capacities and better utilize opportunities to assume more delegated functions, possess more potential to create economic equality and to be more efficient in drafting and implementing economic and social development policies from a local point of view. Reform in the administrative and territorial division in 2014 is accompanied by a deepening of the decentralization process. One of the functions transferred from the central government to the municipalities (local government units) is pre-school education and partly basic elements of administration in pre-university education. Increasing decentralization is expected to bring advantages in the pre-school education system as local government units have the advantage of access to first hand information and the advantage of easier and greater adaptability to local needs.

4

Disability in children 0 – 6 years

In Albania there are about 4025² children of 0-6 years old defined as disabled children by KMCAP. This group of children accounts for 1.7 percent of children in this age group, of which about 60 per cent live in rural areas. The above data on the number of children with disabilities is procured from the State Social Service reports. According the same source of information, during last three years (2015, 2016 and 2017), the number of children with disabilities in the 0-6 years age group has decreased, which reflects a decrease in the number of identified cases, recorded and supported with funds.

Table1. Number of 0-6 year old disabled children, by age (as defined by KMCAP)

Years	2015	2016	2017
Number of 0-6 years old disabled children	4,880	4,148	4,025

Source of Information: State Social Service, 2018

Notwithstanding the current official figures delivered by the State Social Service, teachers and psychologists sustain that there are a large number of “hidden” disabled children, uncounted as such and un-reported formally by the competent structures. Out of the “official identification” remains many children. Thus, categorisation by two extremes only (“able” or “disable”) that excludes children with mild or medium levels of disability, as well as the assessment conducted by involving only mere medical criteria, have left many children out of the statistics and consequently out of attention and assistance. On the other hand, there is the phenomenon of parents’ reluctance to declare the child’s disability due to fear of stigmatization and exclusion.

A recent study (April 2018) conducted by Save the Children on “Children’s Disability in Albania” shows that the prevalence of disability in the age group 2-17 years old, is 10.4 per cent, while 45.4 per cent demonstrate mild difficulty levels in one of functions areas. This study does not cover the age group from 0 to 2 year olds, so accurate estimation of the number of children (0-6 years) with disabilities in the two municipalities under study remains difficult. Approximate estimates lead to the conclusion that disability (0-6 years) ranges from 2 to 2.5 times higher than what is diagnosed and certified by KMCAP. Save the Children’s study showed that disability prevalence was lower in the age group of 2-4 year olds (by 8.4%), indicating the need for increased attention right at the early stages of a child’s life.

Certifying disability is the real challenge of the disability assistance scheme that is currently under the management of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Presently there exist a number of models of disability certification, but two are the main models in use: the medical model, that is also the dominant model, and the social model, which is a new model of approaching disability. In Albania it is still operative the medical model, consisting in a medical commission (KMCAP) that determines the health condition or diseases by which the person is rendered disabled, including children. The “Modernization of Social Assistance” (SAMP) project, which is actually in progress, aims to reform the current “inclusion” process in the scheme, through the application of the bio psychosocial model

2. SSS, data on disability, year 2017

of disability. A pilot phase is pre-running the application at national level. The application of the bio psychosocial model aims to implement social justice by focusing on the role of society to increase equality for all citizens, including people with disabilities. The bio psychosocial model identifies system's barriers, negative attitudes, and exclusions that occur intentionally or unintentionally. According to this model, physical, sensory, various forms of intellectual or psychological disability can cause inability, but these would not necessarily have to lead to disability, unless society fails to show consideration and involve this category of people, regardless of their differences. The application of this model will introduce in the disability support scheme new diagnoses that may result in the condition of disability, and possibly leave out some others.

Children with disabilities experience stigmatization from birth and are more vulnerable to exclusion, segregation, abandonment, neglect, abuse and, in some cases, institutionalization. Despite positive developments in terms of inclusive education and incentive policies for the education of children with disabilities, figures on the number of children with disabilities that are attending education are still low. While at the national level, attendance of pre-school education by other children (without special needs) is about 60-62 percent, for children with disabilities the attendance is at 22 percent³ in 2015-2016. Data for 2016-2017 need yet to be processed.

Table 2 provides information on preschool attendance by general children and children with disabilities by school years. Within the children with disabilities group, preschool education attendance increases from 14 per cent in 2013-2014, to 22 per cent in 2015-2016. This also points out an increased attention in inclusive pre-school education enrolment at national-level.

Education experts admit that the application of inclusive education would be a long process, and it is important that a positive experience in provision of support is being ingrained, though still in its first roots, such as are the work and the activities in this respect of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and a number of units of local government.

Table 2. The number of 3-6 years old children, normal (without special needs) and children with disabilities, enrolled in preschool education, by respective years 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Number of 3-6 years old children enrolled in pre-school education	81,448	82,623	84,096
Percentage of 3-6 year old children enrolled in pre-school education	60%	61%	62%
Number of 3-6 year old children with disabilities enrolled in pre-school education	302	421	403
Percentage of 3-6 year old children with disabilities enrolled in pre-school education	14%	22%	22%

Source of information: Transmonee date 1989-2015; Ministry of Education and Sports 2015, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2015

Data from the Social Service (SS) show another reality regarding the enrolment of pre-school education by children with disabilities. According to the SS, the attendance of pre-school education by 0-6 year old disabled children in 2014 is 50 percent, in 2015 it is 64 percent, and in 2016, 48 percent. SS does not report separately the age group of children 3-6 year olds. Consequently, the figures above should include children attending kindergartens. However, the high level of discrepancies displayed in the reports from the Ministry of Education and Sports and SS, suggests that SS figures on the number of children with disabilities that are attending education should be taken with reserve, as there are no indications on how the data is generated.

3. This level is based on the calculations relying on criteria defined by and list of individuals formally acknowledged by KMCAP-it.

4.1 Why Inclusive Preschool Education for Disabled Children?

The experience of many countries shows that the development of inclusive education in early childhood is closely related to: i) respecting of the children's rights, ii) economic benefits, iii) the efficiency of early intervention, and iv) the need for community programs. From the rights point of view, early childhood interventions, including pre-school education, make possible the implementation of the right of children with disabilities to "achieve the maximum possible development". Inclusive education in the early childhood impacts not only the reduction of disabilities, but also affects the external factors that caused the exclusion.

It is a well-known fact already that in the first 0-3 years of the human life, takes place 80 per cent of the humans' brain development. Any negligence in this age group has adverse negative effects. Just as poor food has negative consequences and causes poor or physical underdevelopment, similarly social exclusion, segregation and inadequate stimulation leads to low performance in education and low cognitive levels. Many children with disabilities without the sufficient intervention during early childhood are missing their lifetime opportunity to reach their potential development. Care and early childhood education are powerful tools for developing useful skills and reducing disadvantages and inequalities. Children with disabilities who benefit from pre-school education are more likely to be more productive and self sufficient when they grow up, leading to reduced spending on education and social protection later.

Early development programs have shown that they improve survival, growth and development indicators in people with disabilities. Combined approaches with community-based services and increased involvement of parents, improve early identification and implementation of adequate interventions for the development of children with disabilities.

4.2 Applying inclusive pre-school education in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça

Inclusion of children with disabilities in kindergartens and normal schools is closely related to the reduction/elimination of physical, social and financial barriers. UNICEF's and other organizations' reports on the protection of the rights of children with disabilities show that inclusion is achieved by building adequate education policies and systems, reducing social stigma, modifying parents' behaviour, building a favourable climate at kindergarten/school level. At the school level, inclusiveness is linked to the access, the teaching process, the qualification of the staff, individual educational plans, involvement and synergy between the pedagogical staff and the parents.

At the local level (municipality), inclusive pre-school education is provided by the educational structures (crèches, kindergartens and schools) set up in communities where children with disabilities live. The access to these structures is related to: (i) the reduction of construction barriers (the presence of rails and passage routes for visually impaired children, presence of ramps and reduction of entry barriers for children with mobility problems, (ii) provision of a teaching process responsive to the children with disability needs; (iii) teachers who are trained to work with children with disabilities in inclusive groups/classes, (iv) availability of a specialized staff, and the ability to work with children with disabilities, which not only improves the student-teacher communication and relationship, but also provides better support for students and teachers alike (such as might be: specialised support teacher, speech therapist, psychologist, social worker, etc.). In all inclusive education structures, every child with disabilities has an individual educational plan (PEI) that adapts the curriculum to the special needs of the child, and provides a normal climate for all the children, with or without special needs. The educational structures that apply inclusive education

would have to do special additional work to inform the staff, parents and children about the new conditions and possible changes that this new approach would bring about.

Interviews with RED specialists and managers of preschool structures indicate that in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça there exists good predisposition towards the education of children with disabilities. They admit that the current law on inclusive education in mainstream schools for children with disabilities is a good law, but is facing important problems during its implementation.

Box 3 Problems to be tackled by the implementation of inclusive education in the pre-school system

- insufficient budget;
- limited number of teachers trained to work with children with disabilities;
- large number of children in a group/class (including groups/preparatory classes);
- Inadequacy of early identification services and periodic assessments at community level;
- Limited supportive and rehabilitative services (speech therapies, physical therapy, physiotherapy, ABA therapy, transportation, etc.);
- Resistance/mistrust of parents on the importance of inclusive pre-school education of children with disabilities.

Source of Information: Preschool Education Specialists in the Municipalities of Elbasan and Korça, 2018

After the year 2012, when the Ministry of Education and Sports drafted the legal framework for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream education system, slow steps have been taken in the application of the concept of inclusion of children with disabilities in kindergartens, mainstream schools. **For the school year 2017-2018, in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça, 37 children with disabilities of 3-6 years of age attend pre-school education.**

4.2.1 Public pre-school education structures in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça

Public pre-school education consists of crèches and kindergartens. While crèches are pre-school structures subordinate to municipalities and provide services for children of 0-3 years of age, kindergartens are dually-dependent institutions, from MES and the municipalities, and are attended by children of 3-6 years of age. In the structure of pre-school education, there are also preparatory classes, which are set up within obligatory Scholl premises and are frequented by children of 5-6 years of age. In rural areas, mixed-group kindergartens are part of the structure of obligatory or subordinate schools.

Public pre-school education system in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça consists of 4 crèches, 152 kindergartens and 25 preparatory classes within the schools. Public preschool education in both municipalities, not including the crèches, is attended by 8,919 children of the age group of 3-6 year olds.

In the two municipalities there are 4 public crèches, of which 3 in Elbasan (with 210 children) and 1 in Korça providing services for about 100 children.

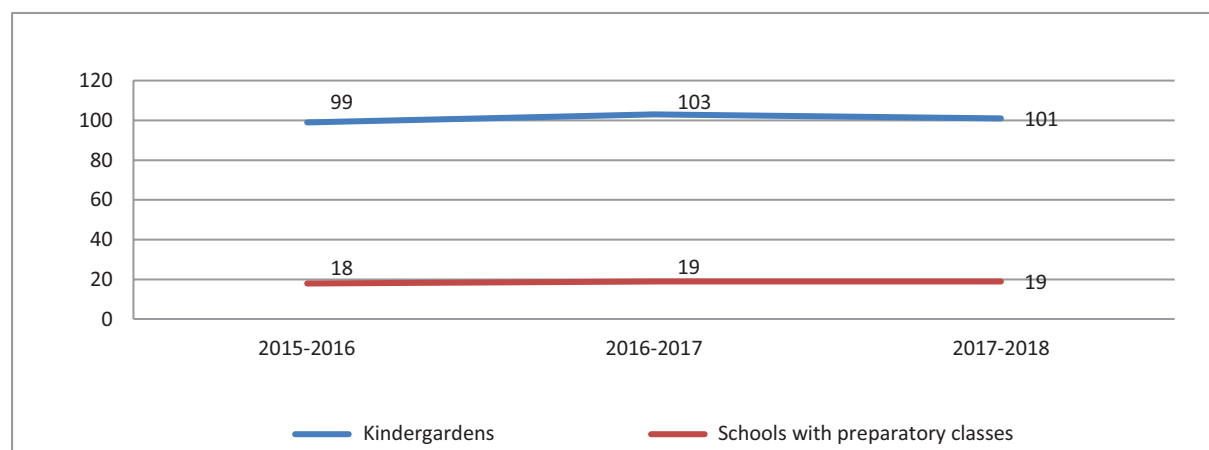
Table 3. Number of kindergartens and preparatory classes and number of 3-6 year olds children attending pre-school education, by municipalities in the last three years (2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018)

	Municipality of Elbasan			Municipality of Korça		
	Kindergarten	Preparatory classes	3-6 years old children in pre-school education	Kindergarten	Preparatory classes	3-6 years old children in pre-school education
2015-2016	99	18	6,432	53	5	2,305
2016-2017	103	19	6,895	50	6	2,203
2017-2018	101	19	6,900	51	6	2,019

Source of information: RED Elbasan; RED Korçë, 2018

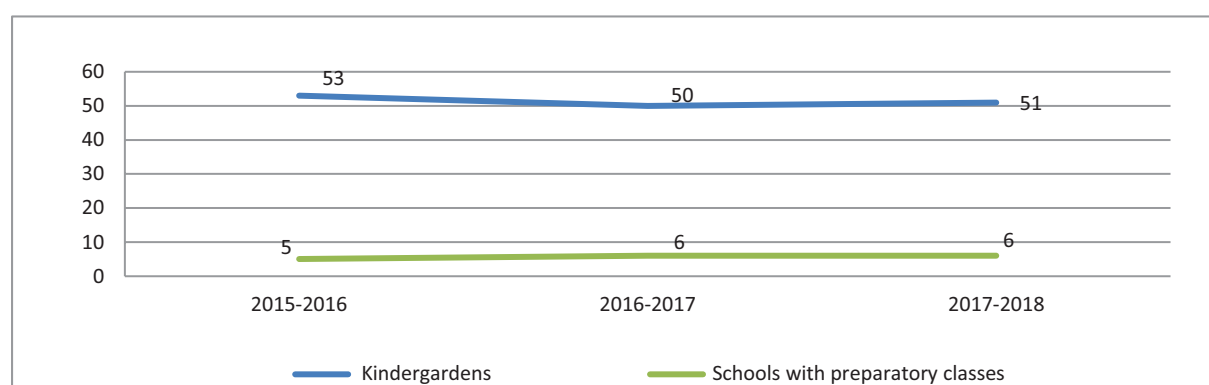
Over the last three years, in the municipality of Elbasan there is an increasing trend in pre-school structures, coupled by an increase in the number of children attending pre-school education. In the Korça Municipality, the opposite is true. The number of pre-school structures has decreased decreasing, as is the number of children enrolled in pre-school education. The specialists of education in Korça explain this trend by the decreasing number of pre-school age children.

Graph1. The number of public structures that provide preschool education, in Municipality of Elbasan



Source of information: RED Elbasan, 2018

Graph 2. The number of public structures that provide pre-school education, in Municipality of Korça



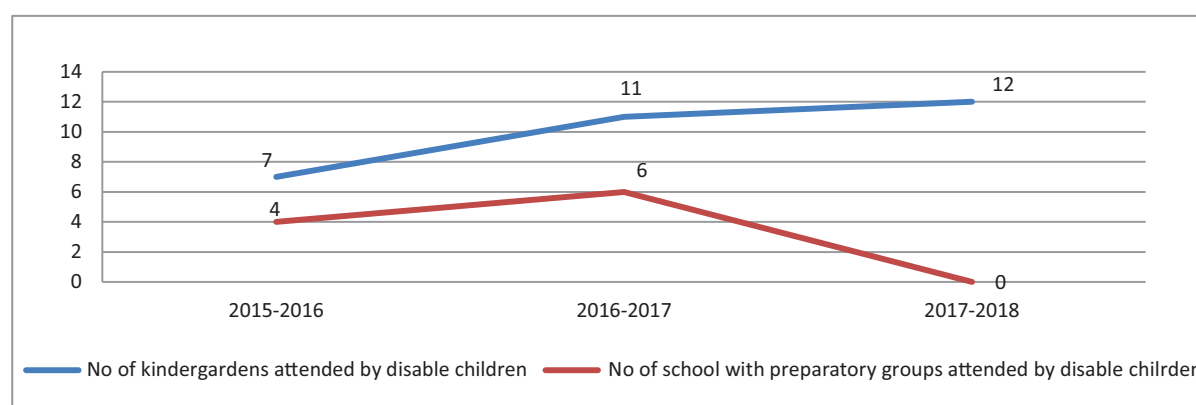
Source of information: RED Korçë, 2018

4.2.2 Public preschool structures, providing inclusive education

In the school year 2017-2018, in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korca, the number of kindergartens and schools (with preparatory classes), that are also frequented by children with disabilities, is respectively 12 for Elbasan and 6 for Korca.

In the municipality of Elbasan, in the current school year (2017-2018), compared to two previous years, there is an increase in the number of kindergartens attended by children with disabilities, from 7 to 12 (with 5 more kindergartens) and a reduction in the number of preparatory classes frequented by children with disabilities (5-6 years). In the last school year, in some 19 schools with preparatory groups, there are no classes to be frequented by children with disabilities. Education managers report that children with disabilities are increasingly enrolled in pre-school education at an earlier age, through the kindergarten system.

Graph 3. The number of pre-school structures that apply inclusive education, Municipality of Elbasan



Source of information: RED Elbasan, 2018

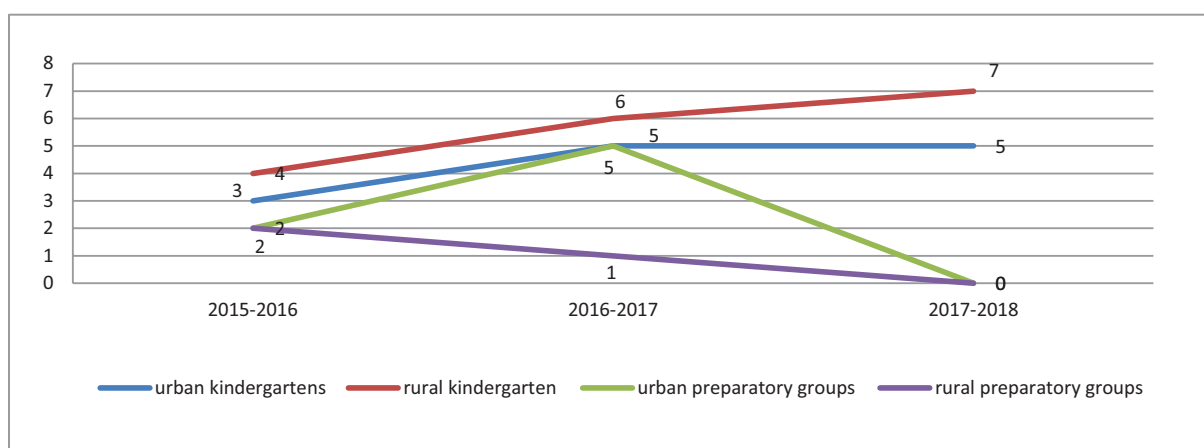
For the municipality of Elbasan, an observation over urban or rural settlements over the last three years, shows an increase in the number kindergartens applying inclusive education in rural areas, but a reduction down to total absence in the number of schools applying inclusive education in preparatory classes, both in urban and rural areas. (table 4 and graph 4).

Table 4. Data on public structures providing pre-school education for children with disabilities of 3-6 age group, in the Municipality of Elbasan

School year	Number of inclusive kindergartens (including kindergartens in schools)		Number of schools with inclusive preparatory classes		Total
	urban	rural	urban	rural	
2015-2016	3	4	2	2	11
2016-2017	5	6	5	1	17
2017-2018	5	7	0	0	12

Source of information: RED Elbasan, 2018

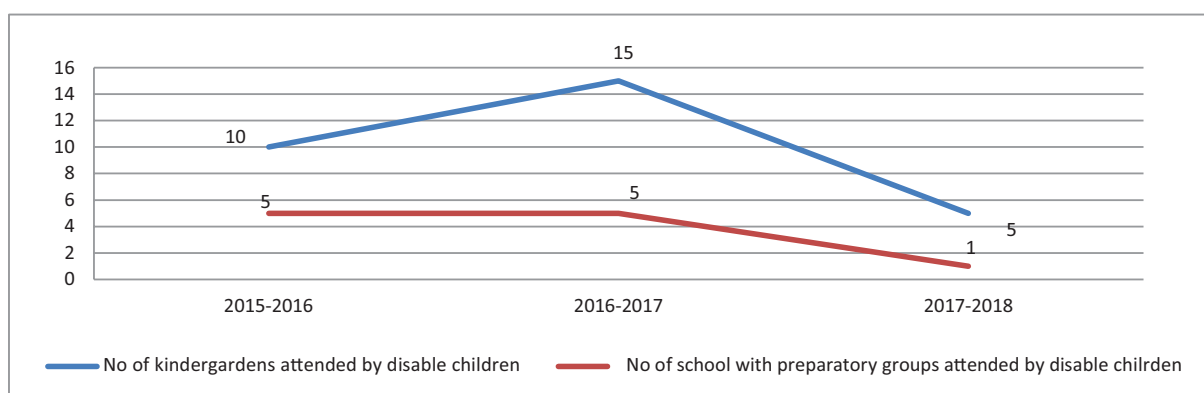
Graph 4 The number of public pre-school facilities attended by children with disabilities, the Municipality of Elbasan



Source of information: RED Elbasan 2018

In the Korça municipality, we are faced with another situation. In the current school year (2017-2018), compared to previous years (2015-2016 and 2016-2017), there is a significant reduction in the number of kindergartens for children with disabilities. While in this same school year, the number of schools with preparatory classes is reduced to only one school.

Graph 5. The number of pre-school structures that apply inclusive education, in the Municipality of Korça



Source of information: RED Korçë, 2018

In the municipality of Korca, data by locations (urban and rural) show a significant decrease in kindergartens attended by children with disabilities, both in urban and rural areas (Table 5 and Graph 6).

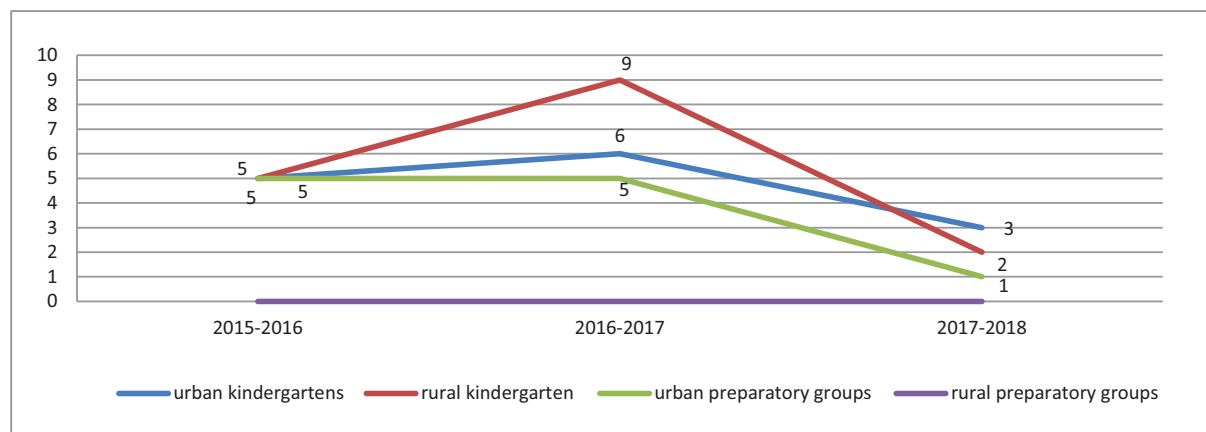
Table 5. Data on public structures providing pre-school education for 3 to 6 years old children with disabilities, in Korça Municipality

School years	Number of inclusive kindergartens		Number of schools with inclusive preparatory classes		Total
	urban	rural	urban	rural	
2015-2016	5	5	5	0	15
2016-2017	6	9	5	0	20
2017-2018	3	2	1	0	6

Source of information: RED Korçë, 2018

In preparatory groups within obligatory schools in rural areas, there are no reports of children with disabilities been attending these facilities in the last three school years.

Graph 6. The number of public pre-school structures attended by children with disabilities, Korça Municipality



Source of information: RED Korçë, 2018

Reduced attendance is related to the inappropriate conditions and unwillingness to include them in general classes. In rural areas, pre-school structures have a high number of children per class⁴ and there is a lack of support teachers. During the interviews with parents, were mentioned cases when some kindergartens have rejected children with disabilities, although not openly.

I know parents who have sent their children to the preparatory classes in the area where I live, but have kept their children from going within a short period time, as the educator/teacher did not do any work with the child. This also happened with my child, but I did not give up. With much sacrifice I send my son to kindergarten 8 and physiotherapy session, here in Korça - a mother from rural areas of Korça.

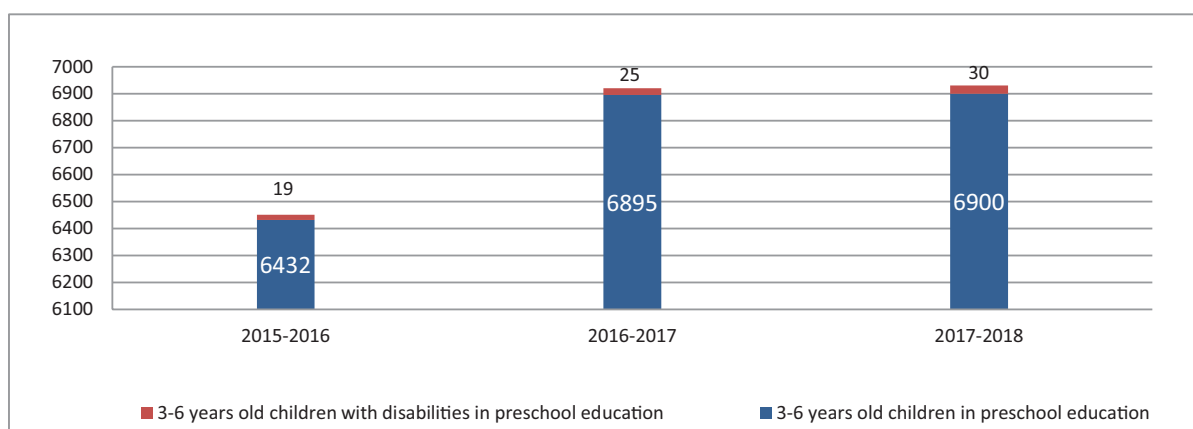
Inclusion of children with disabilities in crèches. Problematic is the treatment of disability in structures prior to kindergarten – the crèches. There is only one crèche in Korea, while in Elbasan there are only three. All these structures operate in the urban areas of the municipalities and there are no reports of children with disabilities currently attending them.

4.2.3 Inclusion of children with disabilities in preschool education

The number of children with disabilities in preschool education is one of the indicators of inclusive education. During the last three years, in the Municipality of Elbasan, there is an improvement of children of 3-6 years of age with disabilities attending preschool education in mainstream education settings from 19 children in 2015-2016, to 30 children in the current academic year 2017-2018.

4. in rural areas, kindergartens are organized in mixed groups and quite often consisting of a large number of children.

Graph 7. Number of 3-6 years old children in pre-school education, Municipality of Elbasan

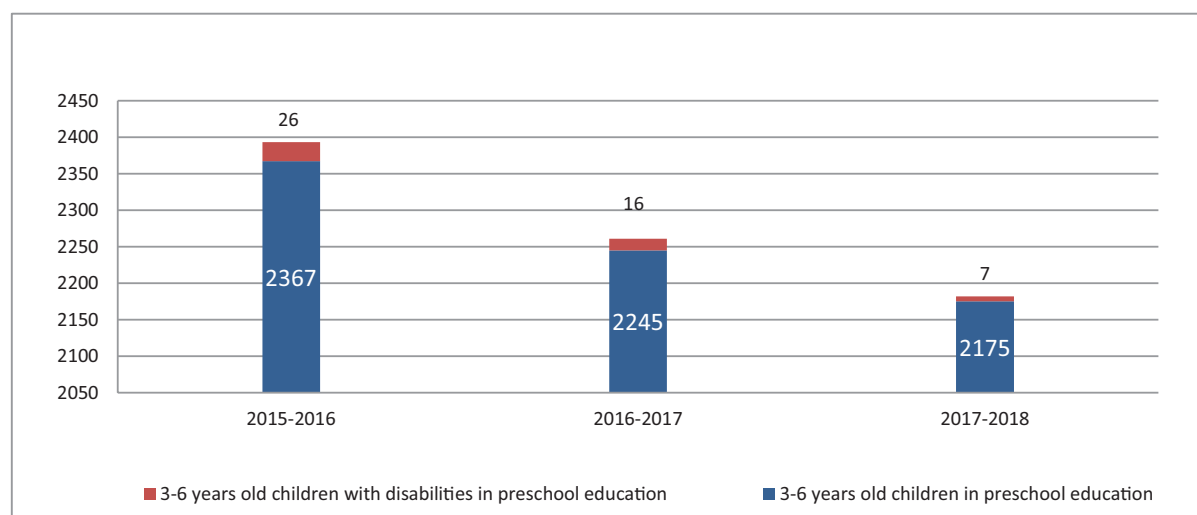


Source of information: RED Elbasan, 2018

In the Municipality of Elbasan, the number of children with disabilities attending preschool education in public structures, is reported differently by different institutions. Data from the Social Service for the Municipality of Elbasan shows that at the end of 2017 were **394 children of the age 0-6 years old certified (by KMCAP) as disable and 106 of them were in pre-school education** (in kindergartens and preparatory groups). This figure is 3,5 times higher that number reported by RED Elbasan.

For the Korça Municipality, in the school year 2017-2018, the number of 3-6 year-olds children with disabilities is 7. Compare to 2015-2016 school year, the number of preschool children with disabilities has reduced by 19 children (or 73%). (Graph 8).

Graph 8. Number of 3-6 years old children in preschool education, Municipality of Korça



Source of information: RED Korçë, 2018

Also for the Municipality of Korça there is a discrepancy in information received between the figures provided by Social Service and RED Korça, regarding the number of 3-6 years-old children with disabilities who attend preschool education. According to the Social Service for the Municipality of Korça, the number of disable children of 3-6 years age group attending pre-school education for 2016-2017, is 29, while according RED Korça, the number is only 7 children.

4.2.4 Accessibility in Pre-School facilities for Children with Disabilities

Inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education is conditioned by the physical accessibility of the education premises. There is no information on the number of kindergartens and public schools that present obstacles in physical accessibility related to the lack of ramps, the adequate width of the corridors to enable the mobility of children using a wheelchair, rest rooms suitable for children with mobility problems. However, during field visits in some kindergartens and schools, there were interventions, mainly in ramps and baths. Obviously, physical obstacles for the access to school premises would take longer to be fixed, nevertheless lack of information indicates that the matter is not yet receiving the due attention of the RED and the municipalities. The number of children with physical disabilities is still small and the solution provided by kindergarten or school is the use of the ground floor classrooms for children with disabilities. In Korça Municipality, a kindergarten is set in a two-floors building and is currently frequented by 3 disabled children. One of children has mobility problems. Transportation from the first floor to the kindergarten (second floor) or to the bathroom (on the first floor) is done by carrying the child in the arms, by mother or educators.

In April 2017, the Albanian government has introduced new standards for school designing that would be used as a reference for newly built public and private schools or those under reconstruction after the entry into force of the decision no. 319, dated 12.4.2017 “On the Approval of School Design Standards.” In this DCM there is a special section on “Special Requirements”, which provides guidelines on the construction or rehabilitation of school facilities for children with special mobility needs that make use of wheelchairs, or supports. This section provides solutions that enable free mobility, unimpeded access to different areas of the school premises, participation and integration in the learning process for children with disabilities. A 2008 DCM⁵ sets out the rules on the implementation of requirements for the removal of architectonic obstacles in dwellings and public service environments.

Irrespective of the efforts to improve the accessibility of people with disabilities by the provision of legal acts, rigorous implementation of standards related to mobility, leaves much to be desired and mainly due to insufficient financial resources available by the two municipalities.

4.2.5 Support in the Classroom -The availability of assistant teachers in kindergartens and preparatory classes

Classroom support is the most common measure of inclusive education and is a remedy addressing the special educational needs of children with disabilities. Children with disabilities require the use of different and special approaches to the learning process, which are individually tailored, but also require additional work from that of children (without special needs), within a group or class. One of the supporting elements designed to respond to the needs of children with disabilities, is the assistant teacher.

At the kindergarten or school level, educators and managers point out the insufficient number of assistive teachers as compared to the needs. According to RED Elbasan, **in the pre-school cycle 23 support teachers that serve in the compulsory education system also are engaged at reduced time in the kindergartens. In preschool education, these assistant teachers are engaged about 1 or two 2 hours per day with children with disabilities.** According to educators/teachers, some children need the day-to-day engagement of support teachers for a longer period of time, especially in the first months or the first year of the kindergarten/ preparatory

5. DCM Nr. 1503, dated 19.11.2008, on the adoption of the regulation “On the use of environments by persons with disabilities”.

class attendance. This has hampered the work of the main educators/teachers, who in many cases work with overcrowded groups/classes. The educator/class teacher's difficulty is also increased due to the fact that not all educators/teachers have the adequate preparation or training for working with children with disabilities alongside other children in inclusive groups/classes.

In the Korça Municipality, the situation in kindergartens is difficult, as there is a marked scarcity of assistant teachers. In the Korça Municipality, only one 6 year old child with disabilities is attending a preparatory class and this preparatory class is supported by an assistant teacher.

If we could at least have a supportive teacher available for both kindergartens as well as specialized support staff such as psychologist, speech therapist - said the headmaster of kindergarten 7 and 8, Korça Municipality.

4.2.6 Support in and outside kindergarten/school premises - the availability of other professionals

A small percentage of children with disabilities needs complex individual support from the main teacher, assistant teacher, and external professionals. In inclusive education, support from a large team of professionals is needed, both in kindergartens and schools. It would be best that this support starts at the crèches. Currently in most schools where there is a preparatory group there are social workers and psychologists who participate in the design of the PEI according to the recommendations of the RED Multidisciplinary Commission. In the kindergartens (in Elbasan) main educator/teacher, the assistant teacher (who works in the obligatory system too) and the psychologist of the RED, cooperate together for the preparation of the PEI plan.

For children in need of complex support, the success in all-inclusive education is linked to multidisciplinary staff that provide services according needs at the kindergarten, school or community where the child resides. **In the absence of the availability of the services provided by these staffs, in any pre-school structure, especially considering that the number of children with special needs is still affordable, RED experts evidence the need for creating multidisciplinary mobility groups (speech therapists, occupational therapists, orthopaedists, psychotherapists, etc.) that provide services in pre-school facilities attended by children with disabilities. They also suggest the introduction of public community-based rehabilitation structures that would enable rehabilitation and the necessary therapies.**

4.2.7 Professional preparation of educators/teachers, including assistant teachers

Training of educators/teachers and enhancing their knowledge on disability and inclusive education are very important for the advancement of the educational process. A well informed and well prepared educator/teacher is also capable of managing better the teaching/learning process of a disabled child. These educators/teachers know how to overcome difficult situations arising in their inclusive classroom and uses working group techniques to attain the integration and inclusion of a child with disabilities with competence and without delay.

Over the last three years, several non-governmental organizations active in the protection of children's rights have contributed significantly to the qualification of teachers, including educators/preschool teachers. Save the Children, MEDPAK, World Vision in co-operation with Cooperazione

Italiana allo Sviluppo, and FEF Centre for Excellence at the Faculty of Education and Philology of Fan S. Noli university in Korça, have trained 420 pre-university teachers in the field of inclusive education and learning, in 7 albanian regions. From the regions of Korça and Elbasan there have been receiving training respectively 82 and 160 teachers and social workers, mainly from the primary schools. The Korça Region has also been part of the MEDPAK and World Vision trainings in 2016. Also Aleksander Xhuvani University in Elbasan has provided training during 2016, for 110 main and assistant teachers on the management of inclusive classes in mainstream schools.

During interviews with preschool managers and preschool educators, they indicated that the training received was very important but insufficient to cope with all the issues they face in their daily work. They affirmed the need for more knowledge on autism, as requests for assistance from parents of autistic children are ever increasing and suggested that during the training there should be a greater focus on practical cases. Exchange visits to get experience in the municipalities and structures with quality services in inclusive education would be valuable to “get in touch” with a wide spectrum of reality and solutions as well as to establish a future network for cooperation.

At the University of Korça, this year the first graduates (BA level) prepared in inclusive education, with a particular focus on the pre-school system (30 students), are going to complete their studies and be available for the labour market. However, even the pedagogues of the University of Korça admitted the problem of **insufficiency of practical training received by the students**.

Inclusive education curricula at the University of Korça (BA level)

The University of Korça, Faculty of Education and Philology has incorporated the curriculum of Inclusive Education of the Faculty of Education:

- 1) Inclusive education, legal and institutional framework;
- 2) Special pedagogy: clinical and pedagogical aspects for children with special needs in school environment;
- 3) Psychology of education: inclusive methodology and didactics, classroom management and inclusion of children with disabilities;
- 4) Teaching strategy and techniques (including children with special needs).

Source of Information: Interview with Pedagogues at the Faculty of Education and Philology, Korça University, February 2018.

Education experts explain that interventions in teacher’s training are mainly targeting the 9-year compulsory education. Pre-school education, although included, still does not get proper attention. Within pre-school education, capacity building is mainly directed at kindergarten staffs and on the staffs of preparatory classes operating in the urban areas of the Municipalities of Elbasan and Korça.

Problematic is the treatment of inclusive education by qualified personnel in structures prior to kindergartens – the crèches. In the crèches, the adequate early intervention in relation to early development and education is lacking for the most part. This is because still crèches are considered as a physical care structure, not specialised in providing early childhood development and educational services. In crèches, the main job-figure is the caretaker (not the educator) and who moreover in most cases has no higher education/qualification (high school education in nursing or obligatory school) or and confines the service provided during the daily activity in mere feeding, hygiene service (change, cleaning of children) and putting them to sleep. Interventions in early development (cognitive, language and communication, motor and social emotional development) are left in the hands of spontaneity and causality and are not carried out by authentic specialists of early childhood development.

4.2.8 Working loads for educators/teachers, within all-inclusive groups/classes

Ensuring equal opportunities in pre-school education for all the children of 3-6 years of age, regardless the level of learning capacities, development, or possibility of participation, should be at the core of inclusive education. The principle of equality implies that the individual needs of a child with disabilities are deemed as of equal importance independently from individual circumstances, as is in reality being considered the education of other children (without special needs). The work of educators/teachers of children with disabilities, is determined by the size of group/class. The higher is the number of children, the more difficult the effective participation of children with disabilities, and the normality of education process, as the support given is not in accordance with the needs of the child. RED experts affirm that there are still no standards in place for inclusive education and that for the child-educators/teachers ratio for the inclusive classes/groups it is adopted the pre-school education standard. According to this standard in pre-school education, number of children per teacher, should not be more than 20 children per age group from 3 to 4 year olds. As the age increases, this ratio decreases. The participation of a child with disabilities within the inclusive group/class, requires that this ratio should be lower, but without any precise specification.

Hypothetically, the number of days and the time (hours per day) to be dedicated to a child with disabilities from the assistant teacher must be determined, in relation to the individual need. However, from the information received, the impression is that the timeframe (in day and hours) as well as the and the number of children assigned to an assistant teacher do not always follow the rule of necessity, but that of capability. In Elbasan, an assistant teacher offers support for about 1-2 hours a day for each of the children he/she is in charge of, who are prescribed different diagnoses of disability and attend various classes (i.e. in kindergartens and school classes from the 1st to the 6th grade).

No data was provided from the RED on the ratio educator/number of children in kindergartens or preparatory classes for children with disabilities. During interviews with pre-school education staff, it was argued that there is a higher ratio of children per educator, especially in mixed groups in rural areas, which makes it very difficult to provide services in accordance with the needs of children with disabilities.

A mother from Korça travel every day from the rural area where she lives to the city to bring her child to kindergarten no. 7, in the city of Korca. The child was previously enrolled in the kindergarten near the school, in the area where he lived, but instead of making progress, the child had gotten worse. One of the reasons that the mother attributed to the deterioration of the child's condition was the high number of children in kindergarten with as result the lack of attention and care. The educator had little or no time to engage with her child, as a result most of the time he was neglected and unattended.

4.2.9 Raising the awareness of the parents' community

RED specialists and pre-school teacher/educators claim that there is a progress in parents' attitude as regards sending children with disabilities to kindergartens and mainstream schools. From year to year, there is an increase in the number of parents seeking regular enrolment/mainstream schooling for children with disabilities, but there is still much to be done to raise awareness among parents who are reluctant to send their children to preschool education. Parents with children in inclusive structures are satisfied with improvement in the child's condition and feel "rewarded" for

the sacrifice they make, and are “motivated” to keep going until the child reaches a satisfactory level of autonomy.⁶

The family is an important factor in the process of inclusive education when it is maintained informed, stimulated and involved. The family is very important in discussing child’s achievements and difficulties. Regardless of the level of learning that children have achieved in inclusive groups/classes, still there is much room for parents’ engagement to reinforce the positive impact achieved in the classroom.

In the kindergartens or schools (with preparatory classes) visited, educators/teachers declare that they work hard with parents of disabled children, to inform and guide them about home work and the importance of continuing support after school. Many of the mothers contacted showed that they try to make their best in fulfilling the teachers’ instructions, but there are also interventions that are outside their range of capacities due to lack of or inability of the parents to access multidisciplinary auxiliary services (such as logo therapy, physiotherapy, physical therapy, etc.). An expert in rehabilitation of children with disabilities in a private facility in Korça, suggested the need for more action in order to raise awareness and educate parents on how to work with children with disabilities. In Korça there is an association of mothers (mostly of autistic children) who gather regularly to discuss and share experiences and information. Thanks to the collaboration of the Association with the Special School, a group of teachers organize free of charge special games and activities for pre-school children with disabilities during the afternoon hours (from 3 pm to 5 pm) in the school premises. This parent association still does not have the right power to influence decision-making in the Municipality of Korca.

The number of children with disabilities who rely on inclusive education and rehabilitation services is small. Disability experts show that a large part of children are out of focus for rehabilitation and involvement by both the family and the local government. In quite a large number of very poor families, the child’s rehabilitation and self-sufficiency is not paid due attention, as by the income received from the disability benefit is depending the livelihood of the entire family. In the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça, multidisciplinary rehabilitation interventions are limited, both by public and private structures. This situation not only compromises holistic interventions, but also discourages parents.

4.2.10 The reception of children with disabilities from the mainstream group/class

The set up of a civil society is not taking place instinctively, but it is something that people learn and put into practice out of need. In the Individual Education Plan (PEI), the establishing of relationships with the peer group/classmates, and extending it beyond it, is a primary objective. The educators/teachers indicate that the participation in inclusive groups/classes has given children with disabilities the opportunity to know and become friends with other children. On the other hand, children become more opened and willing to create friendly experiences with children with disabilities. The educators/teachers inform that group peers/classmates are supportive and friendly during class or game hours with children with disabilities. They show that as earlier children are exposed to the disability of their group peer, the more co-operative and supportive they will be in the future.

6.A mother from Korca

An autistic child at the beginning of the attendance of kindergarten, was characterized by an alternate behaviour swaying between aggressive and isolated behaviour. After a year of attending the inclusive kindergarten in Elbasan, the relationship with friends and the ability to communicate with them has changed for the best. His interactions with classmates have increased and aggressive behaviour or stand-alone attitude are rare episodes. The educator shows that interaction with peers and adolescents from the group of children has enabled the child with autism, to improve social behaviour, communication, speech, and an increased his interest for everything around. .

4.2.11 Access of 0-6 year-old children with disabilities in community support and rehabilitation services

The provision of favourable conditions for rehabilitation and inclusion in the education of children with disabilities is closely linked with the specialized pedagogical support in school, family support, the existence of community-based multidisciplinary rehabilitation services from the structures that are legally qualified and licensed.

4.2.11.1 Early detection of disability. Assessment for early intervention

The importance of early detection of disability has shifted from 0 to 2 years old age. This because the healthcare staff has a more frequent contact with the child and also has the competence to intervene (take action) in the course of the child's development. Early detection of disabilities is performed by health personnel specialised in the upbringing and development of the child. The paediatrician, the nurse in the counselling centre for children, the general practitioner of primary health care, operating at the community level, has the responsibility of identifying the condition of disability during pregnancy and after delivery. Anamnesis, development monitoring, physical examination and screening are methods that health specialists apply for identifying problems related to mental health, visual and hearing impairments, neurological disorders, child development, autism, and so on. Early detection has improved with the introduction of biochemical and genetic laboratories in hospitals. However, the problems relative to the financing of regular operation of these services, associated with an inadequate level of awareness of categories highly at risk, have a negative impact on the reduction or early detection of disabilities in children.

The impact of disability on day-to-day behaviour can become more and more evident in the early years, but clarity over the diagnosis may take longer to be determined by a specialized team. This phenomenon has prevented families and professionals from providing timely assistance. Early detection programs are the cornerstone of building rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. In Albania, early detection is a challenge not only due to the fact of limited financial resources, but also related to the inadequacy of professional preparation of the personnel who are responsible for early detection. In the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça, the interviewed parents indicate that the detection of disability in children was not timely and in all the cases involved a high cost for them. In many cases paediatric doctors have not been the first "alarm bell" for child development problems, and in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça there are no structures for early detection of disabilities and for drafting plans on early intervention.

Mothers of disabled children have shown that although they have signalled the medical staff relating the problems with the development of the child, they have not received the necessary attention for their concern, and in many cases diagnosis and rehabilitation interventions have been delayed. Most of the interviewed mothers had their children diagnosed in specialized structures in Tirana (such as the National Centre for Child Care, Development and Rehabilitation) or in other countries such as Greece and Italy, against high costs. Experts in rehabilitation structures show many cases

when the diagnosis and/or the request of the parents for intervention is done with a lot of delay and consequently leading to permanent disability for some of the diagnosis.

The boy was diagnosed with hydrocephalus when he was 1 years old, not in Albania, but in Greece, by a neuropsychiatrist. I sent it to some doctors in Albania, but no one gave me a diagnosis, and they calmed me by telling me that the boy was normal. I had raised three children earlier and realized there was something wrong with my child. The boy has displayed severe underdevelopment condition. He is 6 years old and walks and acts as a 1 year old child. Had it been diagnosed earlier, many things would have been different for him, and me and my family. - a mother from Korça

The paediatrician is an integral part of health and diagnostic services provision for children with disabilities. It is necessary to strengthen health services with multidisciplinary teams of early diagnosis and multidisciplinary assessment in each municipality. **The early multidisciplinary assessment team should be part of the primary public health service and cannot be replaced by the current structure of the KMCAP.** The establishment of this multidisciplinary team becomes more important due to the fact that the new biopsychosocial model of disability assessment, a model that is still in the process of piloting, by its established eligibility criteria for receiving disability benefit, requires that the person/child be over 2 years of age in order to qualify. When the bio psychosocial assessment will be introduced as a normative procedure in the whole country, many children would be at risk of not receiving the required attention and monitoring before they reach the age of two, by the multidisciplinary commission that will function at the State Social Service.

In the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça there exist multidisciplinary assessment groups within RED, consisting of a neuropsychiatrist, paediatrician, educator, speech therapist and psychologist. This committee evaluates the academic, psycho-emotional and social-integration needs, and based on this assessment recommends educational interventions. The work of the multidisciplinary team at RED constitutes the basis of the PEI plan. The assessment of children by this commission should take place 3 times a year. However, due to the high workload of commission members, this rule applies only for the most problematic cases.

The multi-disciplinary commission at RED makes the assessment after the child has been designated by the MCWCA as an individual/person with disabilities. The current commissions and commissions that will function after the application of the bio psychosocial assessment model do not cover the 0-2 year period, which is of extreme importance and critical period for identifying disability, but also to optimize the outcome of intervention and successfully addressing it.

4.2.12 Rehabilitation community services

In both municipalities efforts are being made to build and coordinate services at the local level, but likewise the number of services and the number of benefiting children is limited. Many children with disabilities identified/diagnosed or not, are exposed to the risks and the negative consequences their condition imposes on their health and well-being. This holds more veritable for children in rural areas and children of poor families.

In the municipality of Elbasan great efforts are being made to improve the rehabilitation services available for children with disabilities. Within the territory of the municipality, for the rehabilitation of children 0-6 year olds age group with disabilities there are, 4 daily structures of which 2 are public and two are run by NGOs. Among the public services, the Centre for Autistic children operates and offers services for the entire Elbasan Qark and is under the administrative

and financial management of Elbasan Qark. Table 6 provides information on operational structures and as regards the total number of children and 0-6 year olds in particular that have been receiving services by respective centres. As indicated by Table 6, the number of children receiving rehabilitation services at community-based centres is low - only 7%.

Balashe Centre is a multidisciplinary centre that has experience and expertise in providing rehabilitation services (physiotherapy) for children with disabilities. At the moment of the study, this centre was not offering services for the age group of 0-6 year olds.

The Centre for Autism is currently working over capacity and is located in premises that is facing problems related to the physical inadequacy of the facilities, proper spaces (1 therapist in one room), and inadequacy in didactic tools, rehabilitation tools (such as sports mattresses, personal rehabilitation materials, other gymnastic equipment, etc.) and hygienic products. The centre is engaged and applies a support policy for children coming from poor families, offering free services, while other children pay a reduced fee of 2,000 ALL per month.

The “Future for you” centre is a non-public rehabilitation centre that is financially supported by a social business. The centre offers therapeutic services for children with Down syndrome and autism, aged from 0 to 15 years. Currently, due to the lack of funds it has stopped offering some of its services, such as speech therapy and physiotherapy, which are performed in private facilities outside its premises. Payments of parents per child per month vary from 1,000 to 15,000 ALL per month (not including logaoedics and physiotherapy services).

The Albanian Centre for the Integration of People with Special Needs (ACIPSN) is a non-governmental organization that operates in the field of rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. Currently some 30 children receive rehabilitation services such as development therapy, speech therapies, psychomotricity and education, of which 10 are children from 0 to 6 years of age. Five children receiving rehabilitation services in the centre come from rural areas and also five 3-6 year old children attend kindergarten inclusive groups. In this centre the fee the parents have to pay for the services range from 5,000 to 10,000 ALL per month, depending on the type and kind of service required. The centre operates by subsidized project funds, and this enables that parents pay less than the real costs for the services they receive.

Table 6. Daily rehabilitation facilities that provide service for children with disabilities in the Municipality of Elbasan

Daily rehabilitation facilities for children with disabilities	Total number of 0-18 years old from the Elbasan Municipality	Out of the total, number of 0-6 years old from the Municipality of Elbasan	Total number of 0-18 years old from the Elbasan Municipality	
			Public facilities	Private facilities
Balashe Centre	12	0	-	-
Centre for Autistic	20	7	-	-
Future for you			18	9
Albanian Centre for Integration of people with special needs	-	-	30	10
TOTAL	32	7	48	19
TOTAL children 0-6 years old ELBASAN	Public Facility: 7 children		Private facility /NGO: 19 children	
TOTALI children 0-6 years old ELBASAN			26	

Source of information: Interviews with community service providers, Elbasan 2018

In Korça Municipality, non-public structures are predominantly significant in the provision of services, compared to public structures. In the Korça municipality territory operate 4 private centres, such as KIDC (the rehabilitation centre for autistic children), MED ONE, the Kennedy Foundation's, the Association for Physical Benefit, which provide services for children under the 6 years of age. With 2 of them it was impossible to conduct an individual interview.

KIDC Centre is a structure that provides identification, assessment and diagnosis for children with autistic disorders and direct intervention with ABA therapy. The KIDC Centre currently offers its services for 8 children of 0-6 year's age group and most of them come from rural areas. The cost of ABA therapy per child goes up to 26,000 ALL per month, however in some special cases the treatment is offered for free or at a lower cost.

The Association of Physical Benefit provides rehabilitation services for children with autism and children with cerebral paralysis, pleksis, hydrocephaly, trauma, tumour and dystrophy. For autistic children it applies ABA therapy for the 2-4 year olds age group. Therapy is individual (1 on 1) and at the time when the interview for this study was conducted with its staff, the centre offered services for only 3 children. ABA Therapy normally would costs families 25,000 ALL a month and every 3 months an assessment of the case is conducted in Tirana that would add up to 5,000 to 7,000 ALL extra costs for every assessment. The association affirms that there are a large number of rehabilitation requests, but over the age the ABA therapy could be applied. This indicates that there is a need for raising general awareness towards the early identification of autism. The association also offers physical therapy and physiotherapy for people with disabilities and holds enough capacity for offering services for about 80 people per day. The Association for Physical Benefit supports with rehabilitation services only 8 children under the age of 6. In the provision of its services it cooperates with World Vision and this enables to reduce the amount of the monthly fee the parent should be paying to 1,500 - 2,000 ALL per person. The Association for Physical Benefit does an intensive work with parents by training them on how to work with a child during physiotherapy carried out in the centre and home. Association managers claim that there is an increase in demand, which they have to turn down due to capacity constraints.

Kennedy Foundation is currently implementing the autism project. In this centre 12 children of 4 to 15 years of age are being treated with ABA therapy for children.

Table 7. Daily rehabilitation facilities that provide service for children with disabilities in the Municipality of Korca

Daily rehabilitation facilities for children with disabilities	Total number of 0-18 years old from the Korça Municipality	Out of the total, number of 0-6 years old from the Municipality of Korca	Total number of 0-18 years old from the Korça Municipality	Out of the total, number of 0-6 years old from the Municipality of Korca
	Public facilities		Private facilities	
KIDC	-	-	8	8
MED ONE	-	-	No inf.	No inf.
Association of physical benefit	-	-	25	11
Kennedy Foundation, Project on autism	-	-	12	4
	0	0	27	15
TOTAL	0	0	45	23
TOTAL children 0-6 years old KORCA	Public facility:	0 children	Private facility/NGO	23 children
TOTAL children 0-6 years old KORCA	23			

As it becomes evident from the tables above, the costly rehabilitation of children is largely developed by for-profit private structures, and is unattainable for many families of children with disabilities.

4.2.13 Support services that promote participation in pre-school education

Transport. Access to kindergartens and inclusive schools is influenced by the existence of support services, of which transportation is one of them. **The municipality of Elbasan has local supportive policies regarding the transport of children with disabilities who attend rehabilitation services. The Municipality of Elbasan provide transportation to 70 children attending social service centres.** Meanwhile, daily transportation from home to kindergarten or school and back is carried out by parents. **In the municipality of Korça, daily transportation is taken care of by the parents themselves, and in a few cases it is a serious obstacle for the children of poor families not only for attending pre-school education, but also for rehabilitation services.**

I take my son to the kindergarten every day, as I live in the outskirts of Korça and the kindergarten is located in the centre of the city. Each day I spend 60 ALL, which at the end of the month becomes 1,320-1,440 ALL. I do not work, as I take care of the baby and this expenditure exacerbates the fragile family budget. If the municipality covers this expense it would be of great help to me - a mother from Korça.

Reimbursement of books and didactic tools. Reimbursement of textbooks does not apply to pre-school education. Mothers of children with disabilities attending kindergartens or services (Autistic Centre) showed that every month they need to buy different didactic equipment entirely out of their own pocket.

Use disability payment for promoting change in attitude. In Albania, incentive policies are being implemented that encourage the participation of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. **In the current Disability Act, any child qualified as such benefits a disability allowance that equals 1.5 or 2 of disability payment defined for his/her category of disability if he/she attends compulsory education or secondary education. This policy is not applied in pre-school education.**

5

Financing of pre-school education

Pre-school education

From studies based on experimental programs involving children over a long period of time, stretching from childhood to adulthood, it is concluded that if invested in the first years of a human life, the social return rate is over 20% and the cost-benefit ratio up to 1:7.

Author: George Psacharopoulos, Low investment costs in education and how these costs are reduced, UNICEF, 2015

Funding of inclusive education requires interventions and funding from the central level (some ministries) and by the local level. Different inclusive education policies use different fundraising methods. Funding models aim at different targets, such might be children with disabilities, or mainstream schools or special schools. In some countries, additional financial resources addressing inclusive education are allocated to children with disabilities, based on type and degree of impairment, or for supporting the school by taking into account the special needs of children with disabilities. In some others, social welfare ministries or health ministry's individually support disabled students, while education ministries support general schools applying inclusive education. Albania falls in this later model.

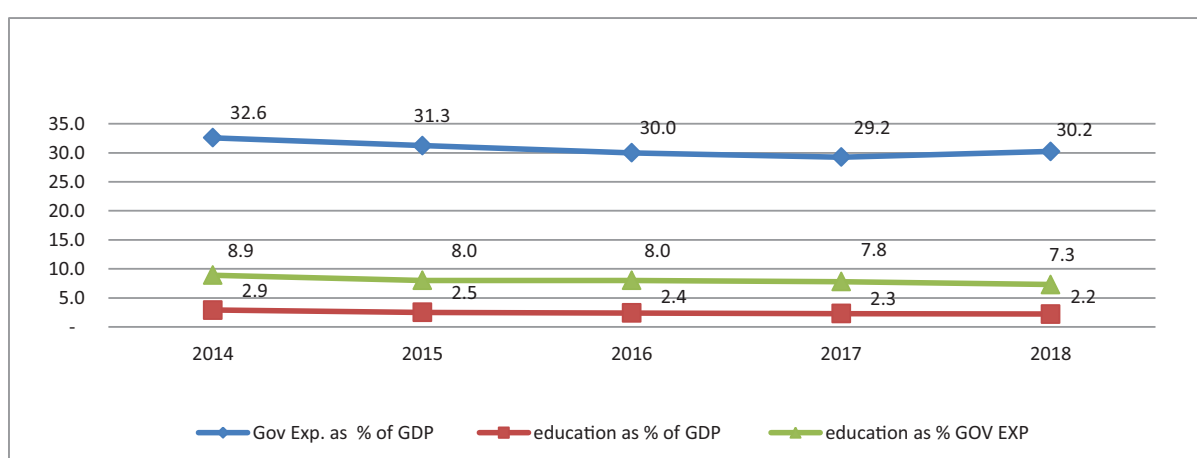
Inclusive education requires additional funding in order to enable the education system to provide equal opportunities for all children, both for those with disabilities and children (without special needs). There are several applicable methods for the inclusion of children with disabilities in education: from separate education systems (special school cases) or special classes within ordinary schools (integrated systems), to inclusive school structures, which naturally require that other mechanisms or different funding methods are applied. In Albania, the education of children with disabilities is of a mixed nature, with a system of special schools in place, and the introduction of inclusive schools, which is still in its infancy.

Financing of education in Albania, from the funding sources point of view, is a mix between the central government allocations (by the Ministry of Education and Sports) and the local level budget allocations, the Municipalities and the Regions. The process of decentralization is under way and at this stage the Ministry of Education and Science holds the major weight in education budgets, including pre-school education. In 2014, administrative reform extends the level of decentralization and transfers more authority and responsibilities to the local administration on financing preschool education. **There is an advancement in decentralization of competences, but a slower move towards decentralization of independent finances. Most of the funds spent on preschool education are grants that the central government allocates to local government units in the form of non-conditional grants and conditional grants.** The experience of many countries shows that decentralization and inclusive education work better than in centralized funding model.

5.1 What weight does the public education occupy in budget spending?

Albania's **budget spending for education reaches up to 2.2% of GDP**, which is considerably low compared to EU countries with an average level of 4.1% of GDP. The current level is less than 1/2 of the target spending level (of 5%) set out in the government program 2013-2017. Also, if we compare education costs in 2018, as part of budget spending in this same year, the level of **7.3% is lower compared to previous years**. In the government program, the average expenses per child at all levels of education should reach an average of up to 92,000 ALL. In the 2018 budget, expenditures per child are projected to be 68,500 for compulsory education and 74,200 for secondary education. Whereas in inclusive education, that additional funding is required in order to enable the education system to respond to the needs of children with disabilities, there is a reduction in education budgets after 2014. The levels foreseen for 2018 are respectively **28% lower in compulsory education and 20% lower in secondary education (Graph 9)**.

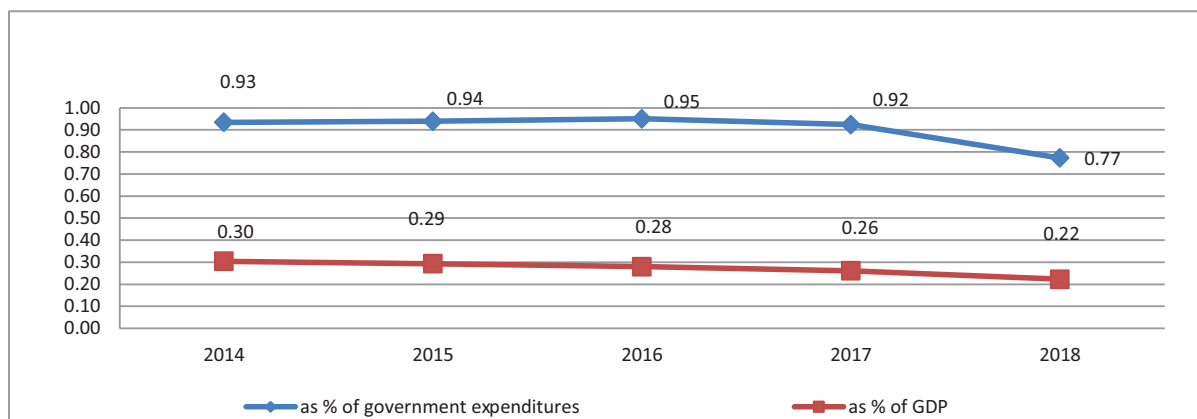
Graph 9. Total budget spending and education spending (2014-2018)



Source of information: Ministry of Finance

Budget expenditures for preschool education have also been reduced in comparison to total budget spending and the GDP. The establishing and operation of an inclusive education requires increased funding especially in pre-school education. The earliest the interventions on the education of children with disabilities, the less spending on education will be needed in the future.

Graph 10. Budget for preschool education



Source of information: Ministry of Finance

5.2 Budget transfers to local government units for pre-university education

Following the territorial reform in 2014, local unit budgets use as sources of income: (i) unconditional transfer (from central level), (ii) specific transfers, (iii) other revenues (mainly from local taxes).

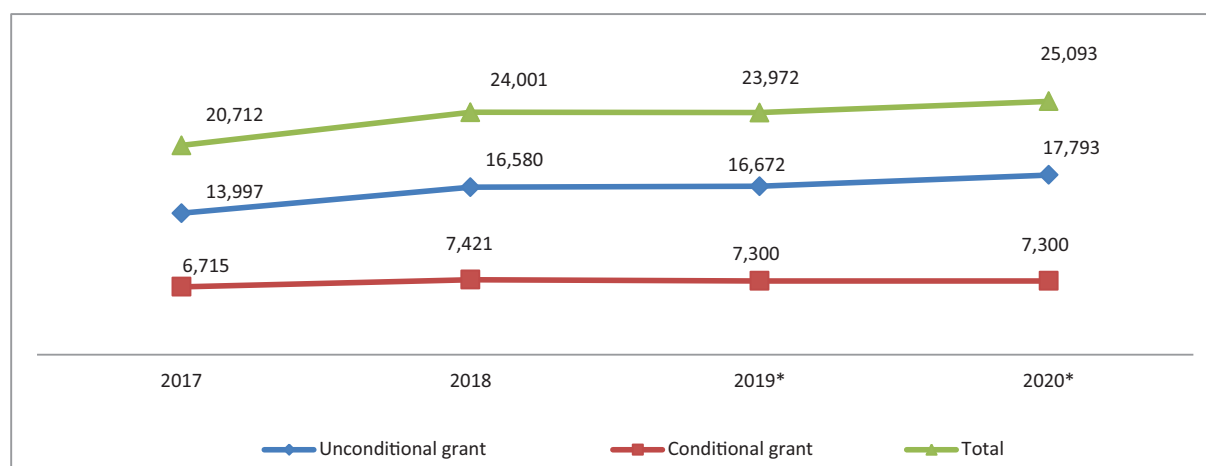
Unconditional Transfer is a fund allocated to municipalities by the central government in order to cover activities and functions set by legal and sub legal acts in force. Unconditional transfer per year should not be less than 1% of GDP of that year and also may not be smaller than the unconditional transfer of the previous year. Unconditional transfers are allocated to dormitories and centres for social services. Unconditional transfers are allocated to local government units according to a formula that takes into account three criteria: (i) expenditure needs in relation to the size of the resident population (80% weight), density criterion (15% weight) and number of pupils in pre-university education (5% weight). In 2018 as regards the first criterion, the municipalities receive an unconditional transfer of 3,607 ALL per inhabitant, by the second criterion, the amount is 1,906 ALL per inhabitant, and as concerns the third criterion, it makes up to 1,787 ALL per student in pre-university education.

Specific transfer is a fund allocated to municipalities to finance: (i) staff salaries and social and health insurance payments, (ii) operative expenses, (iii) investments. Through the specific fund, the Ministry of Education and Sports finances the educational and non-educational staff of pre-school education and non-educational staff (aide) for pre-university education.

In 2018, the unconditional transfer to the first level local units (municipalities) is 16.5 billion ALL. As it shows in graph 11, from 2017 to 2020, the funding for municipalities will take an upward trend, but it is not clear what percentage of the transfer will go to education, especially for pre-school education.

In the unconditional transfer it is necessary to include data and documentation on what fraction of the financing for pre-university education (5%) is planned for pre-school education. Decentralization also increases the need for monitoring and control in order to assist the local government involvement in the management of education funding.

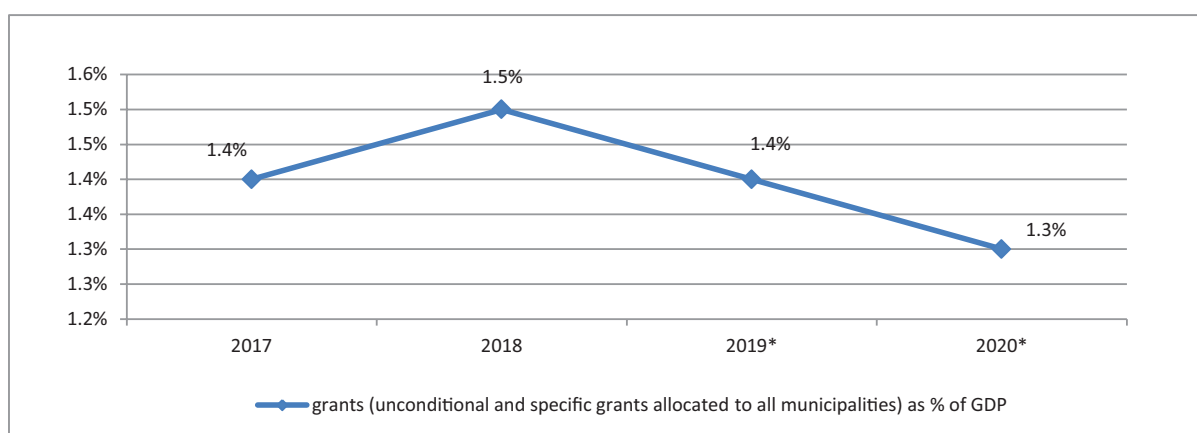
Graph 11. Unconditional Grant and Specific Grant by year (in million ALL)



Source of information : Ministry of Finance, State Budget for 2017, 2018; Midterm Budget prediction for 2019 and 2020.

Expressed in percentage of GDP, the unconditional grant and the specific grant have increased in 2018 (to 1.5%) and later on it would take a downward trend (to 1.3%) by 2020. In the next three years the transfers (unconditional and specific) will be above the 1 per cent level and it is planned to have a growing trend in nominal value. Depending on the fluctuation in the inflation rate, the real value of the transfers would mimic the same variations.

Graph 12. Unconditional Grant and Specific Grant allocated for all Municipalities, as % of GDP



Source of information : Ministry of Finance, State Budget for 2017, 2018; Midterm Budget prediction for 2019 and 2020.

5.3 Financing of preschool education

Pre-school education does not constitute a special budget item and is reported as integral part of basic education. Assessments by the Ministry of Education and Sports show that pre-school education accounts for around **11-12 percent of pre-university education spending and about 16 percent of basic education spending**. Pre-school education is not compulsory, although the pre-university education strategy in Albania provides for total coverage of pre-school age children by the 2020.

Table 8. The budget of the Ministry of Education and Sports, for basic education and preschool (in thousand ALL)

	2016	2017	2018
State budget spending on basic education including pre-school	21,126,400	20,477,305	22,174,527
Pre-school budget estimates (16% of basic education)	3,380,224	3,276,369	3,769,670

Source of information: Ministry of Finance, Law on Budget of the Year, 2016, 2017, 2018.

By the table above it is evident there are fluctuations in the expenditures of basic education (including pre-school). While in 2017 there is a budget reduction for “basic education” amounting to 649 million ALL or 3% reduction compared to 2016, in 2018 there is an increase in the budget for “basic education” of 1,696 million ALL compared to 2017, accounting for 8.2 percent.

5.4 The budgeting of Inclusive Education

The new territorial and administrative division of Albania has advanced the process of decentralization. Competences related to the financing of preschool education have passed to the local government units. There is a natural link between decentralization, pre-school education management and in particular with the inclusive model. Decentralization enables the adjustment of the pre-school education structures to respond to the local needs and the development of supporting services accordingly. It also enables local government units to support local initiatives to respond to the needs of the local communities they are in charge. **Today in the region there are examples that demonstrate that inclusive education funding (even at pre-school level) is linked to local funding mechanisms (Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYROM⁷) but that on the other hand requires capacity building at the local level, both of decision-makers and technical and professional staff.**

7. UNICEF, Financing Inclusive education, Companion of technical booklet

In Albania, public pre-university education (including pre-school) is funded by several sources such as: (i) the state budget; (ii) revenues of local government units; (iii) donations and sponsorships, (iv) income raised by educational institutions, and (v) other valid income⁸. **Funding from the State Budget is planned by the “per student” formula, involving specific indicators relative to educational levels and conditions of public education institutions.**

During the meetings and interviews with finance specialists, as well as with the Heads of RED and Municipal Education Specialists, it was revealed that the formula used to calculate the budgets transferred to the local government units (Municipalities) **does not consider the criterion of “pupils/students with disabilities”**. In inclusive education, the needs of pupils with disabilities are greater than those of other children. Even within the categories of children with disabilities there are variations, which in practice are “translated” into alternative needs for support. In the application of “for pupils with disabilities” calculation, the age must be a variable too, as well as educational curriculum that will be adopted for them, location, type of disability, and other social disadvantages to be taken into account. Budget calculation in all inclusive education should be based on the “specific weight per pupil” method, in which a disabled student (or even other categories with special needs) for the purpose of calculating inclusive budgets it is placed a greater value than 1, (e.g. 1.1, 1.3, 2.5, etc.).

Since 2012, when the Law on Inclusive Education has come into force, the Ministry of Education has no clear policy and a model of allocating funds to cope with the effects of inclusive education on all levels of the education system. **Lack and confusion in information is a sign of incapacity for providing evidences and data based on which the compilation and monitoring of budgets in inclusive education is going to take place.**

5.5 Budgets for Preschool Education in the Municipalities of Elbasan and Korça

In Elbasan municipality, information on the budget for pre-school education made available to the study, covers the years 2017 and 2018. Data on expenditures by items for 2015 and 2016 were not available and therefore the analysis of budget expenditures will not include years 2015 and 2016 .

In 2017 and 2018, the budget for pre-school education in Elbasan Municipality is respectively 371,350 thousand ALL and 353,428 thousand ALL. Expenditures for pre-school education in 2018 account for 13 per cent of the budget of the municipality of Elbasan.

In 2018, budget is planned to be lower than in 2017, by 4.8 per cent. This reduction will translate into lower spending per child for pre-school education, to a minimum of 4.8 per cent, if the number of children in pre-school education in 2018 remains the same as in 2017.

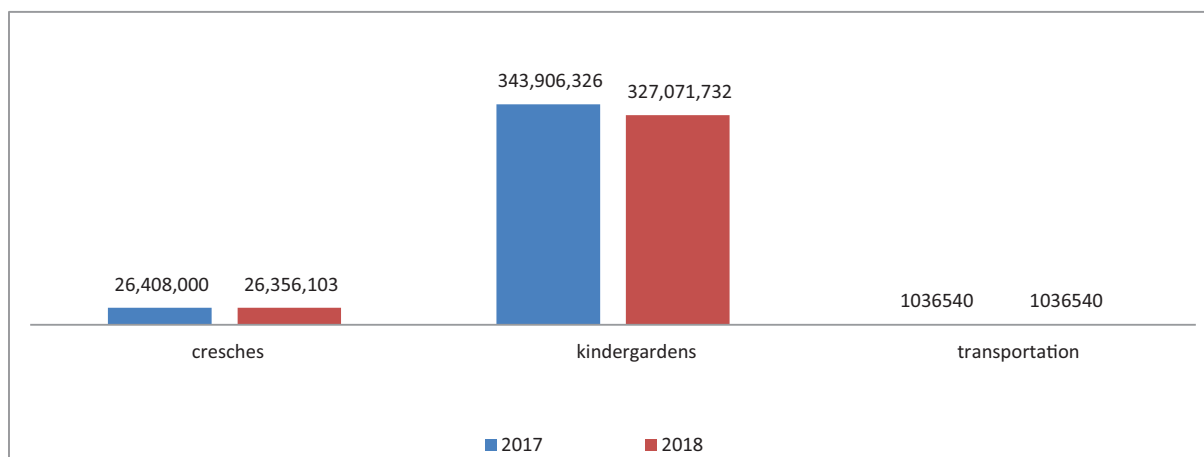
In crèches there is an increase in the expenditures per child, which does not come from growth in budgeting (since in 2018 there is a slight decrease), but by the decrease in the number of children in the such structures. For the 2018, in budgeting plan, the expenditures calculated for 170 children, of 201 that there were in 2017.

In 2018, for the Municipality of Elbasan, the reduction in planned spending would result in negative impact on spending per child. Elbasan in recent years has experienced an increasing trend in the number of children attending pre-school education. Reducing spending will affect the quality of pre-school education and will place a greater pressure on parents to fund the shortage in expenditures, mainly on didactic materials and equipment. Lower budget will also affect access to and inclusion

8. Law no. 69/2012 dt. 21.06.2012 “On the Pre-University Educational System in the Republic of Albania, Article 37.

of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Inflation growth from 1.7% in December 2017 to 2.1% currently will also lower the nominal budget value by 0.4%.

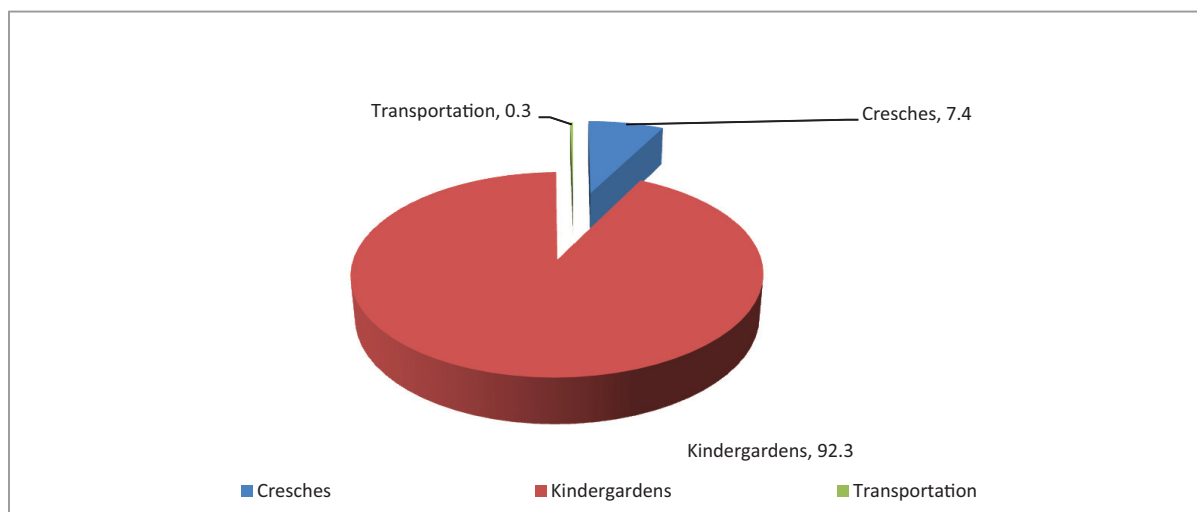
Graph 13. Expenditures planned for preschool education, Elbasan Municipality Budget



Source of information: Economic Directorate Elbasan, 2018

In the last two years there has been no significant change in the structure of expenditures between kindergartens, crèches and children's transport. Even in 2018, kindergartens continue to be dominant with 92.3% of total spending of pre-school education funds in the Municipality of Elbasan.

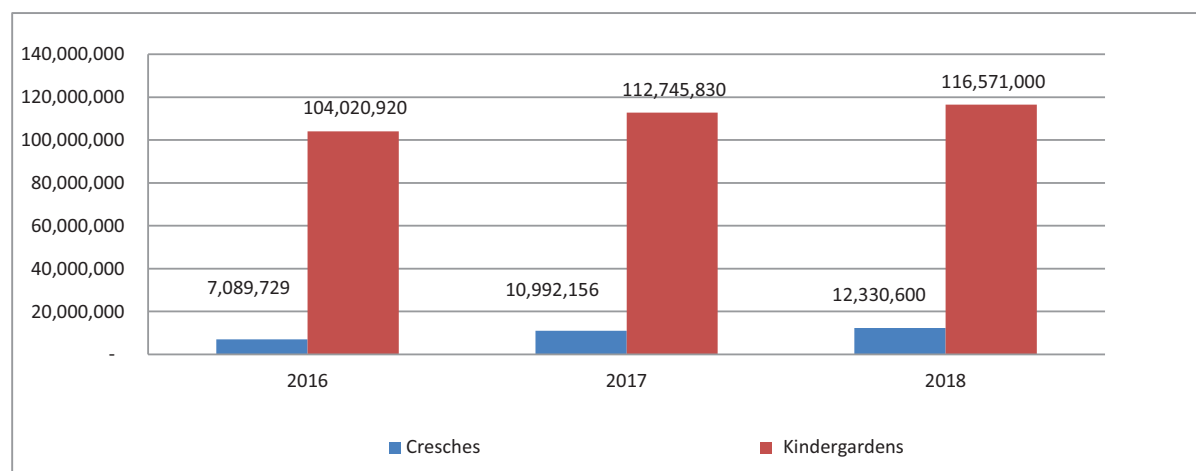
Graph 14. Expenditures for preschool education by destination in 2017, Municipality of Elbasan



Source of information: Economic Directorate Elbasan, 2018

Unlike Elbasan, Korça Municipality during the last 3 years (2016, 2017 and 2018) has a small but steady increase in pre-school spending. Compared to 2016, in 2018 expenditures are planned to be 16 per cent higher. Mainly, the increase targets the wages, social security and food. According to RED, for the period 2016-2018, the number of children in pre-school education is decreasing, so the growing budget has gone to salaries for educational staff and food improvement in kindergartens.

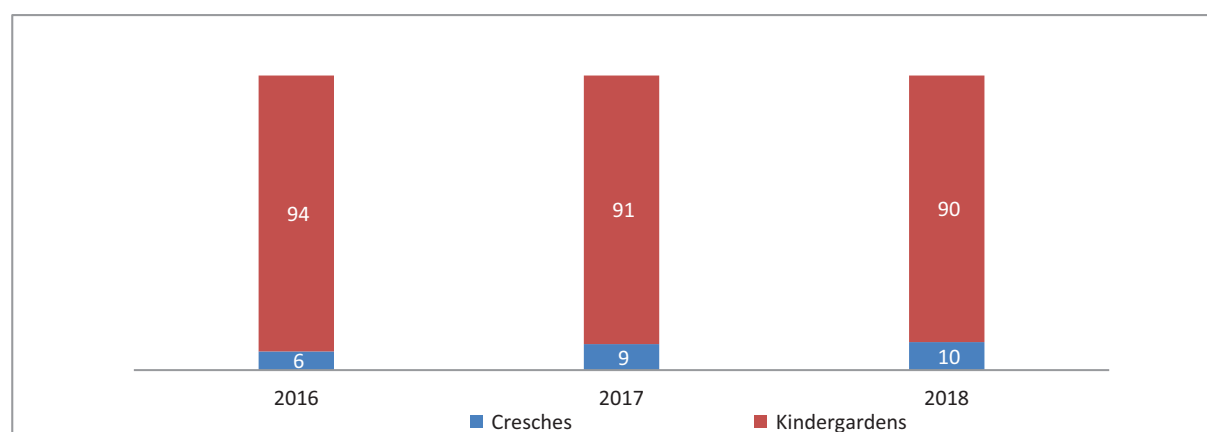
Graf 15. Expenditures planned for preschool education, Budget of Korçe Municipality (in ALL)



Source of information: Economic Centre, Korça Municipality 2018

During 2017, the activity of the single crèches has increased and the number of children is estimated to still increase in 2018.

Graf 16. Distribution (in %) of spending between kindergartens and crèches for Korça Municipality



Source of information: Economic Centre, Korçe Municipality 2018

In both Elbasan and Korça Municipality, no significant differences have been reported between planned and utilized expenditures. The amount of unutilized funds for 2017 in the Municipality of Elbasan is 1.7 percent. In the Municipality of Korça, the unutilized funds in 2016 were 1.2 percent while in 2017 some 0.9 percent. In both municipalities, the unutilized planned budget is mainly in wages and salaries item, the calculation of which contains elements that are difficult to be predicted with 100% accuracy.

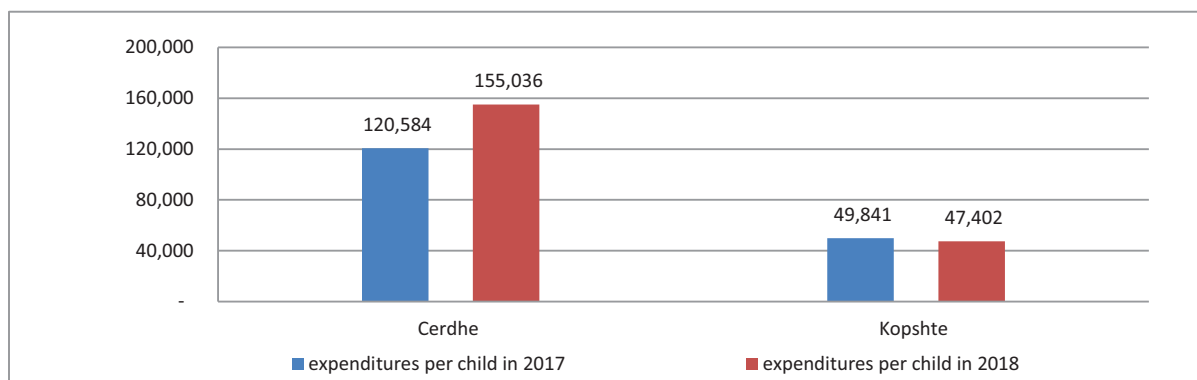
5.6 Planned cost for children (without special needs) in pre-school education

Graphs 17 and 18 show the annual expenses for children attending the nursing home or kindergarten. Figures refer to all children attending a crèche or kindergarten, and do not reflect the special expenses they need for a child with disabilities. For 5-6 year olds who attend pre-school education in preparatory classes, there is no evidence of budgets and therefore it is not possible to estimate unit cost for this category.

Since the difference between planned and utilized expenditures varies from 0.9 to 1.7%, for calculating the expenditures for children, the planned cost is going to be used.

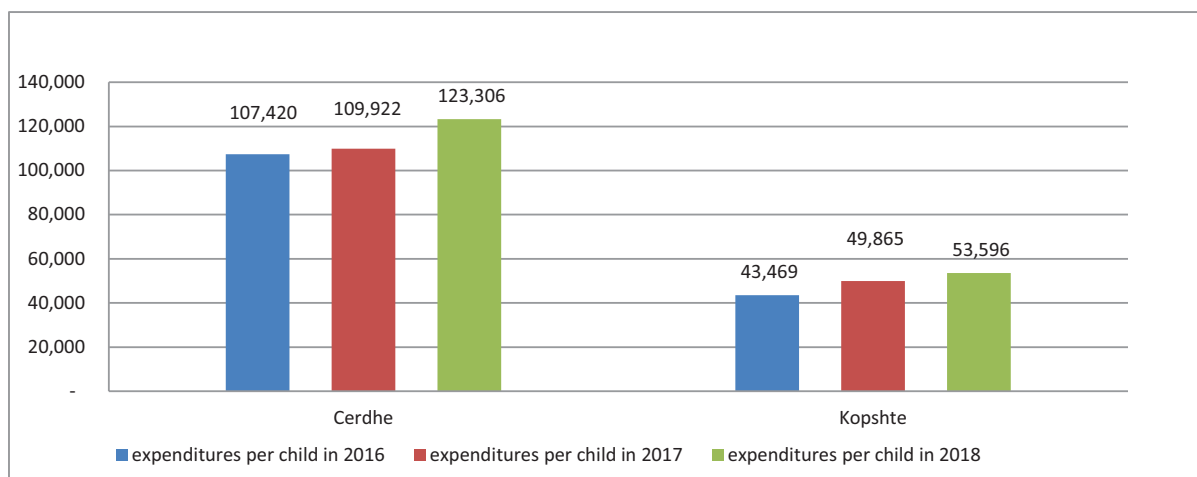
Costs calculations for children include: (i) staff; (ii) current (operational) costs, (iii) maintenance and reconstruction costs. Within these 3 groupings are included expenses related to education, entertainment, lighting, water and communication costs, food costs, lunch breaks (beds, blankets, etc.), cleaning materials, heating costs etc. Graphs 17 and 18 show the annual costs per child in crèches and kindergartens.

Graph 17. Planned annual expenditures per child, in 2017 and 2018, Municipality of Elbasan



Source of information: Economic Centre, Elbasan Municipality 2018

Graf 18. Planned annual expenditures per child, in 2017 and 2018, Municipality of Korça



Source of information: Economic Directory, Korça Municipality, 2018

Indicators of expenditure per child show limited budgets dedicated to pre-school education, which complicate the application of inclusive education.

In 2017 there is no difference of the basic annual expenditures between the two Municipalities under study for a child attending kindergarten: 49,891 ALL for Elbasan and 49,865 ALL for Korça. In the year 2018, in Korça Municipality expenditures per child have increased, compared to the Municipality of Elbasan, by around 6,000 ALL per child or 500 lek per month per child. The reasons behind this difference are related to the size of the budget and the number of children attending pre-school education. In 2018, compared to 2017, the budget of Municipality of Korça for preschool education has increased, while the number of the children attending is diminished. In the Municipality of Elbasan in 2018, compared to 2017, there is an increase in the number of children in pre-school education, but this is not associated with an increase in the pre-school budget.

5.7 The cost per child with disabilities in all-inclusive kindergartens

To calculate the average cost per child with disability in pre-school education we have to **rely on the method based on the resources used**. According to this method, the cost of preschool education per child with disability consists of the cost of preschool education for a normal child (without special needs), adding the spending that lowers/reduces inequality or obstacles for equal participation of these children in the mainstream educational system.

The cost per child, shown in section 5.6, is the cost for a normal child (without special needs). To this cost will be added the costs that allows equal access of children with disability in mainstream education system. In Municipality of Elbasan, expenditures dedicated to children with disabilities have as a source allocations from Elbasan Municipality itself, Qark of Elbasan and the Ministry of Education and Sports. These expenditures cover a small fraction of children with disabilities and also are sufficient to reduce the majority of the inequalities and hindrances.

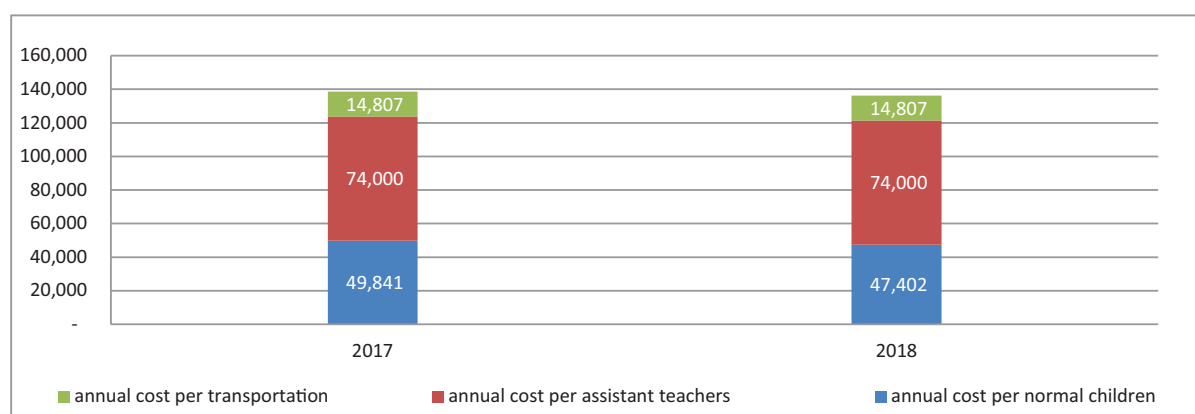
Elbasan Municipality covers transportation costs; Qark of Elbasan covers the cost of support services (rehabilitation); The Ministry of Education and Sports covers the cost of the assistant teachers.

Elbasan Municipality has supported in 2017 and will continue for the 2018 to support free transportation for 70 children with disabilities attending public social centres. Out of these, 6 are children of 3-6 years old attending public pre-school education.

In 2017 and 2018 the municipality of Elbasan has not financed any cost related to assistant teachers in the kindergartens. DAR Elbasan has assisted inclusive preschool structures with 23 assistants teachers⁹, who are part of the compulsory education staff. These assistant teachers work on part time basis in preschool education. For the purpose of calculating the budgets, their partial involvement is converted into of 5 full-time assistant teachers.

Based on the above information, in 2017, the average annual cost per child with disabilities in pre-school inclusive education is 138,648 ALL or 2.8 times more than the cost of a normal child (without special needs). In 2018, the planned annual cost per child with disabilities in pre-school education will be 136,209 ALL. The cost reduction for children with disabilities (by 2,439 ALL) will only be due to the reduction of basic expenditures, which will also affect the budget for children (without special needs) attending pre-school education (Graph 19) .

Graph 19. Annual cost per child with disability in preschool education (kindergarten), Elbasan Municipality (in ALL)

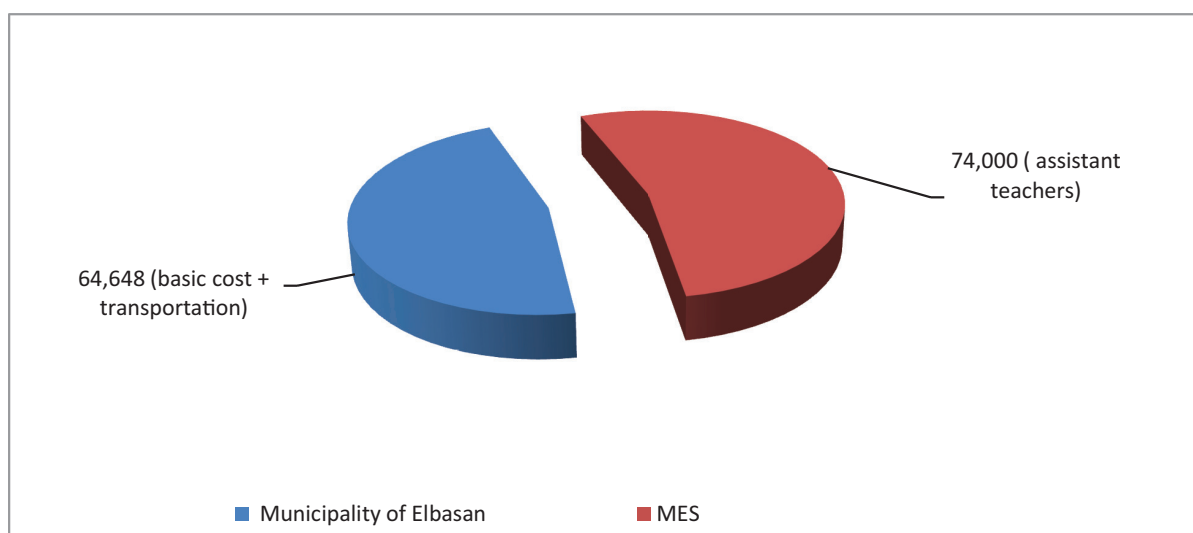


Source of information: Economic Directory, Elbasan Municipality, 2018.

9. Out of 38 that work in the preuniversity education.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Sports has included in the budget of pre-university education expenditures for didactic equipment for special schools and obligatory education, including preparatory classes. In the municipalities' plan of expenditures for kindergartens, this budget item is not yet introduced. Even during field visits, headmasters and teachers in kindergartens raise the problem of unavailability of didactic equipment and devices provided by own kindergarten or school (for preparatory classes). In all the kindergartens and schools visited, didactic equipment is provided by the parents at a monthly cost of 1,000 ALL. Teachers/educators indicated that children with special needs need special didactic tools, whose cost is higher (on average 1,500 ALL per month). **If these expenditures were covered by the Municipality or the Ministry of Education and Sports, then the annual value of didactic equipment/materials (in kindergarten) would increase the total cost with 18,000 ALL annually per child with disability and attending the kindergarten/preparatory classes.**

Graph 20 Financing sources of kindergarten expenditures per child with disability in 2017 (in ALL)



Source of information: Economic Centre, Municipality of Elbasan 2018

Cost of rehabilitation services. Children with disabilities need rehabilitation services that are offered outside the educational structures. In the group of children with disabilities, children affected by the autism and children with communication disorders, children with retarded mental development, children with emotional disorders and children with multiple disabilities are the categories that require more interventions and impose more rehabilitation expenses. Thus, in addition to normal cost estimates, the rehabilitation cost that enable the inclusion in pre-school education of certain categories of children with disabilities (such as those falling in the autism spectrum, speech problems, hyperactivity and concentration problems, motor disorders, etc) would be included in the cost calculations.

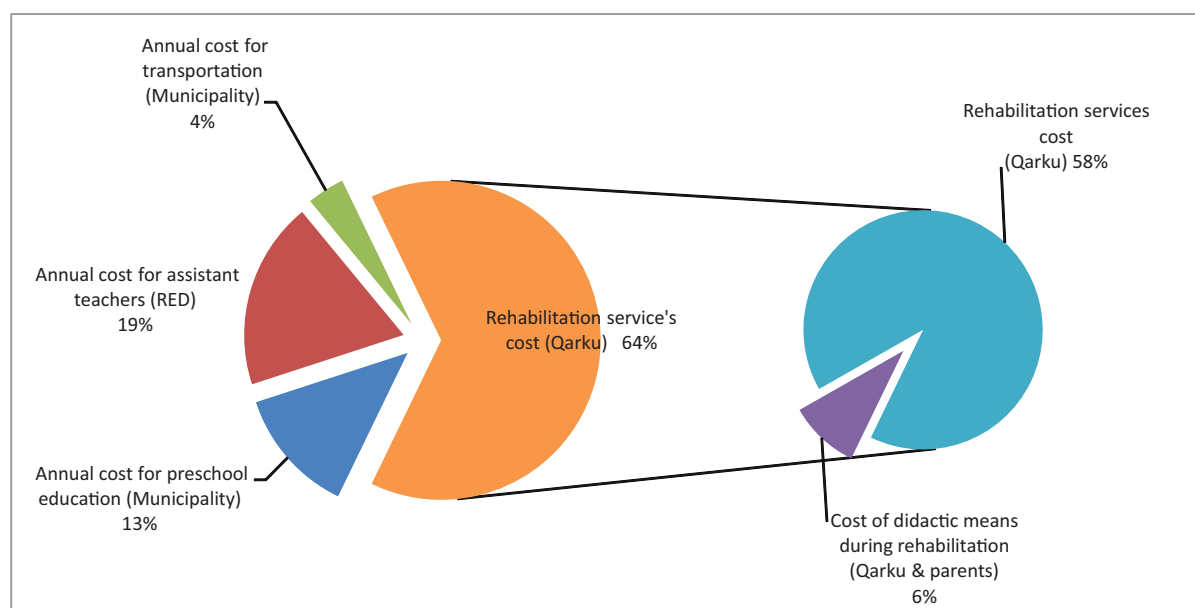
The experience of the Autistics Centre is very helpful in this instance, as it have been in operation for many years in providing support to children residing in the Qark territory. This centre is administratively and financially under the management of Elbasan Qark Council and located in the Elbasan city. At the Autistic Centre are receiving services 64 children, of whom 20 are children 3-7 year old with disabilities (autism, speech problems, hyperactivity and concentration problems, motor disorders) living in the Municipality of Elbasan. Autistics Centre does not provide pre-school education, it is a community-based centre, which works to rehabilitate children by facilitating children involvement in pre-school education. Only 6 children attending the Autistics Centre frequent public preschool education.

The annual cost of children in this centre in 2017 was 226,415 ALL. In this cost, 24,000 ALL, are annual expenditures for didactic tools that are partially covered by the Centre and partly by parents.

The expenditure of the Autistics Centre is important in our way for calculating the annual cost per child with a disability attending pre-school education and who needs multidisciplinary interventions to facilitate his/her inclusion in pre-school education and beyond. **If to the cost of 138,648 ALL per child with disabilities in the public kindergarten (as per 2017) we add the rehabilitation cost (in 2017) of 226,415 ALL,, based on the calculations from Elba an Autistics Centre, then we come to the total annual cost per child of 365,063 ALL for year 2017.**

It is difficult to estimate the cost of pre-school education for a child with disabilities, as it is dependent upon age, curriculum/program needs, location, type and severity of the disability. However, we can say that expenditures for one child with disabilities that enable his/her access to inclusive preschool education vary from 138,648 to 365,063 ALL per year (in 2017).

Graph 21. Cost composition and funding sources for a disabled child who benefited pre-school education, rehabilitation and transport services in 2017, Elbasan Municipality



Source of information: RED Elbasan; Economic Centre Elbasan; Economic Centre of Elbasan County, 2018

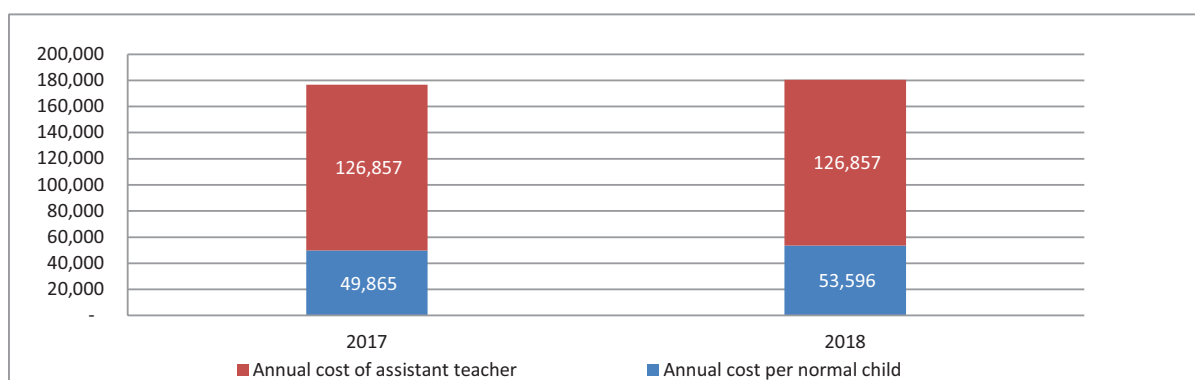
As it is made evident from the graph, the expenses for a disabled child supported by the Municipality, are 2.8 times higher than the pre-school expenses for a normal child (without special needs). But if we add rehabilitating services, then the costs amount to 7.8 times higher. According to educators and teachers, many children with disabilities are in need of multidisciplinary intervention in specialized structures, and it would be good that such centres would be set up in some kindergartens or schools where all children with disabilities could benefit from their services.

In the Municipality of Elbasan a small number of children 0-6 years age group and with disabilities benefit from public services such as pre-school education, rehabilitation services and free transport. Picture 1 represents a visual description of this situation. By this picture, **only 6 children receive free pre-school education, free transportation and rehabilitation services; 24 children are partially supported (only pre-school education or only transport), while 364 other children receive no service.**

Following the same rationale for the Municipality of Korça, the cost per child with disabilities, spent by the public structures, is a sum of basic expenses, adding the costs incurred for provision of an assistant teacher providing services for 7 children. According to RED Korça, the Municipality does not have access to qualified support staff (assistant teachers) to work in kindergartens with children with disabilities.

In the Municipality of Korça, the cost of a child with disabilities who attends pre-school education in public kindergartens was 176,722 ALL in 2017 and is planned to be 180,453 ALL in 2018. For a child with disability in Korça, the municipality and the Ministry of Education and Sports spent 3.5 times more than for a normal child (without special needs) in 2017, while it will go down to just 3.3 times in 2018. Graph 22.

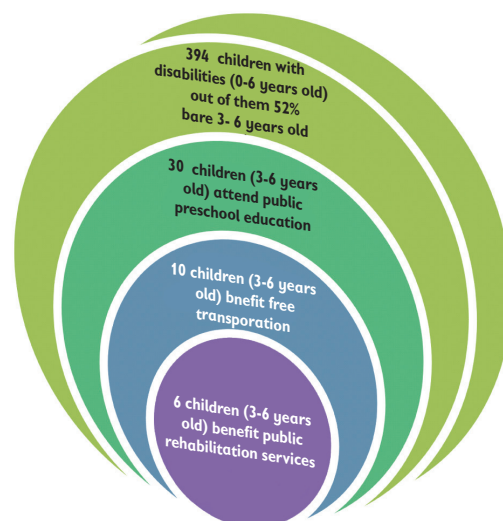
Graph 22. Annual cost per child with disability in pre-school education in public pre-school education (kindergartens), Korça Municipality (in ALL)



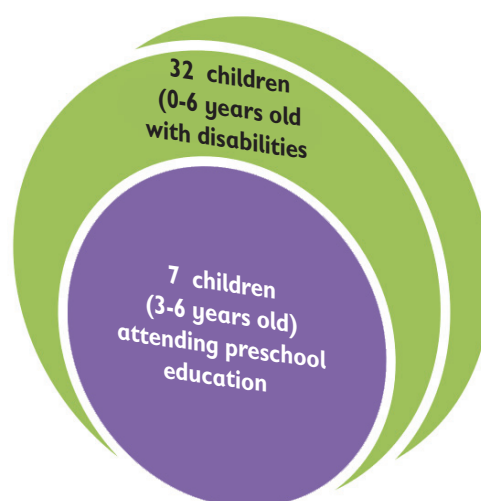
Source of information: Economic Centre, Municipality of Korça, 2018

In Korça Municipality, out of 32 children with disabilities of the 03-6 age group, only 7 children benefit from public services of preschool education. Some 25 other children with disabilities do not benefit from any public services that supports them with rehabilitation or inclusive pre-school education. Picture 2.

Picture 1



Picture 2



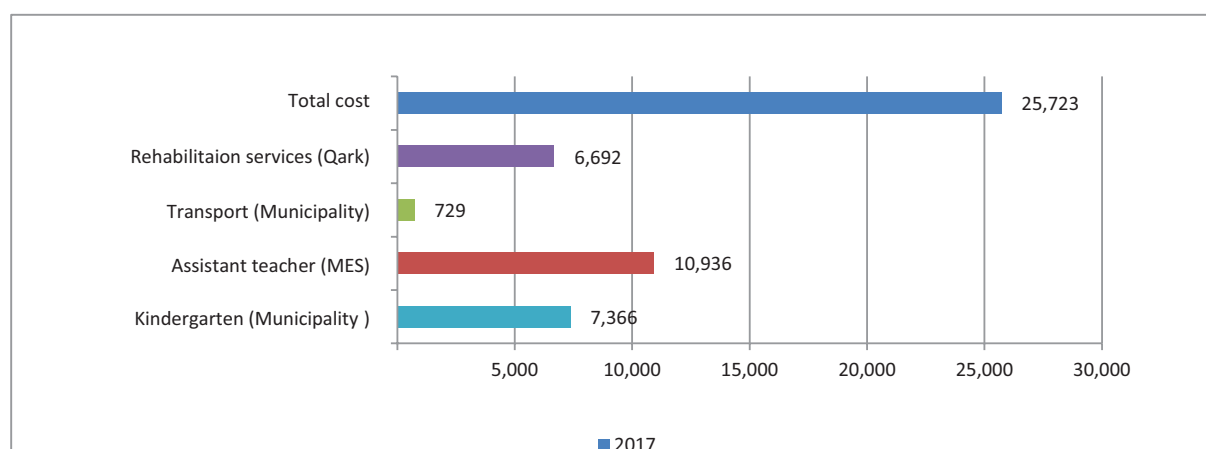
5.8 Budgets for preschool education (kindergartens) for children with disabilities, versus inclusive pre-school estimates

The cost per child with disabilities in the municipalities of Elbasan and Korca, is the amount that singular structures spend for the children attending them. Cost differences between a child in the municipality of Elbasan from that of a child in Korca, do not show that they have different needs, but show inequities in access to public services they need.

Since the municipality of Elbasan offers a larger variety of services and by a greater number of public structures, the estimating the actual budgets against the budgets that would be required for the application of inclusive education will be based on the costs per child with disability in Elbasan. This logic is based on the rationale that the biggest part of the costs for special services are salaries of personnel working in the public sector and that otherwise there should be no significant differences between the two municipalities. Estimation of budgets would serve as an orientation, while further studies and analyzes need to be carried out to determine the exact number of children in need, the type of services required, the duration of services provided in accordance with type of disability, the costs incurred for each service.

In 2017 the budget for children with disabilities of 3-6 year olds age group (for pre-school education, transport and rehabilitation services) living in Elbasan municipality, was 5,221,805 ALL. If we divide this amount by the total number of children with disabilities of this age group (203 children of 3-6 year age group) living in Elbasan, then the cost per child amounts to 25,723 ALL. This is the average cost per child, which the municipality and other public providers spend for a 3-6 year old child with disability. Graph 23 shows how this “per child cost” is shared between actors, with the assumption that beneficiaries are 203 disable children of 3-6 years age group.

Graph 23. Composition of average cost per child with disability according source of financing and cost, (in ALL) Municipality Elbasan



Source of information: Economic Centre, Municipality of Elbasan, 2018.

To calculate the budget differences for 2018 for the municipality of Elbasan we utilise three hypotheses. First hypothesis: In 2018, all children with disabilities aged 3-6 (203) are enrolled in kindergartens or preparatory classes and receive all the services they need. Second hypothesis: The 30 children currently benefiting from full or partial support receive all the services they need. Third hypothesis: in 2018, the number of children with disabilities enrolled in kindergartens or preparatory classes is doubled to 60 children (of 30 children currently) and all children receive the services they need.

In table 9, provides information on total budgets needed and budgets shortfalls for 2018. The calculations are based on the costs in 2017.

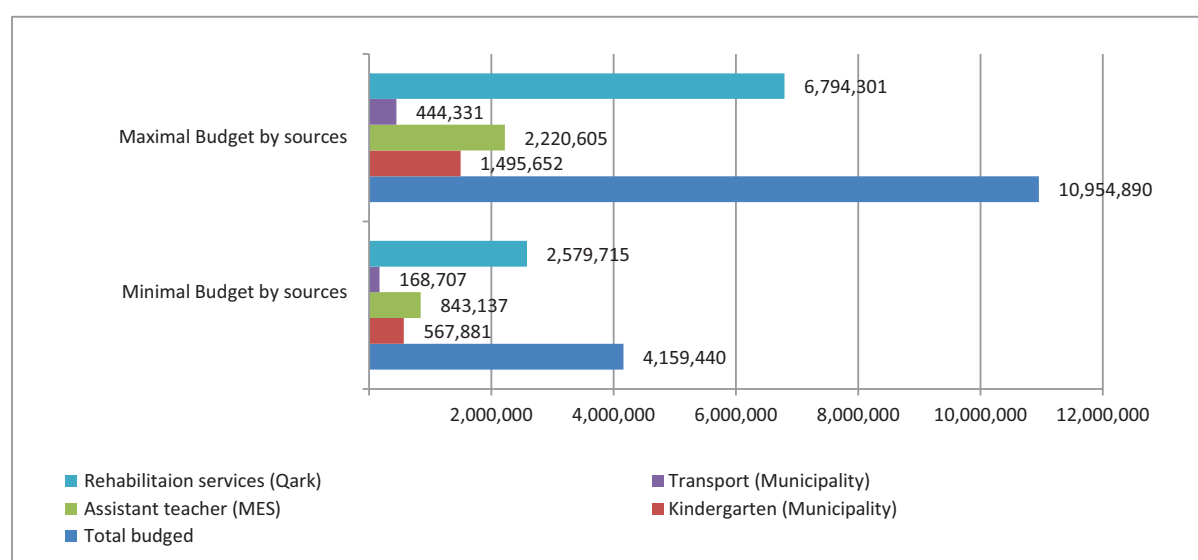
Table 9. Budget projections by hypotheses, for 2018, Municipality of Elbasan

	Minimum cost (by individual needs)	Maximal cost (by individual needs)	Actual cost (averaged)	The difference between the actual cost and the minimum cost approach	The difference between the actual cost and the maximal cost approach
Cost per child with disability (2017)	138,648	365,063	25,723	(112,925)	(339,340)
	Budget with minimum cost	Budget with maximal cost	Budget with actual cost	Shortfalls in the budget using minimal cost	Shortfalls in the budget using maximal cost
Budget 2018 (for 203 children with disabilities) (hyp. 1)	28,145,544	74,107,789		(22,623,775)	(68,886,020)
Budget 2018 (for 30 children with disabilities) (hyp. 2)	4,159,440	10,954,890	5,221,769	(1,062,329)	(5,730,121)
Budget 2018 (for 60 children with disabilities) (hyp. 3)	8,318,880	21,903,780		(3,097,111)	(16,682,011)

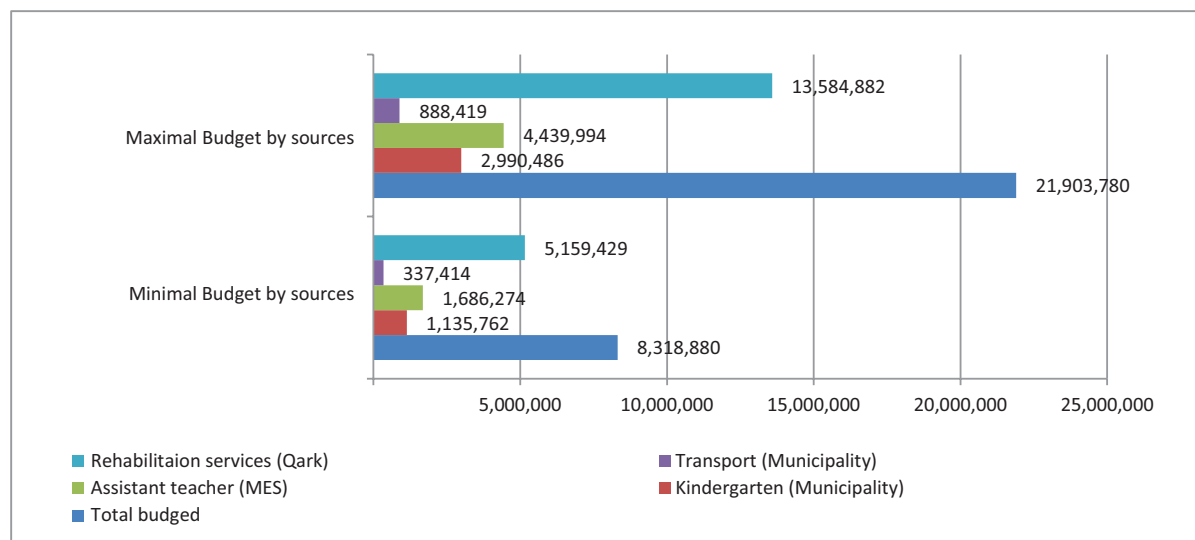
In Table 9, hypothesis 2 and 3 are more realistic for the municipality of Elbasan.

Funding of education in Albania, from the point of view of funding sources, is a mix between the central government with the Ministry of Education and Sports as the main agency, and the local level, the municipalities and Qark. Graph 24 and 25 provide more detailed information on the allocation of projection budgets to public service providers according two hypotheses (that with number of children 30, and that with number of children 60).

Graph 24. Budget projections (for 2018) by sources of funding using Hypothesis 2 (30 children), Municipality of Elbasan (in ALL)



Graph 25. Budget projections (for 2018) by sources of funding using hypothesis 3 (60 children), Municipality of Elbasan (in ALL)



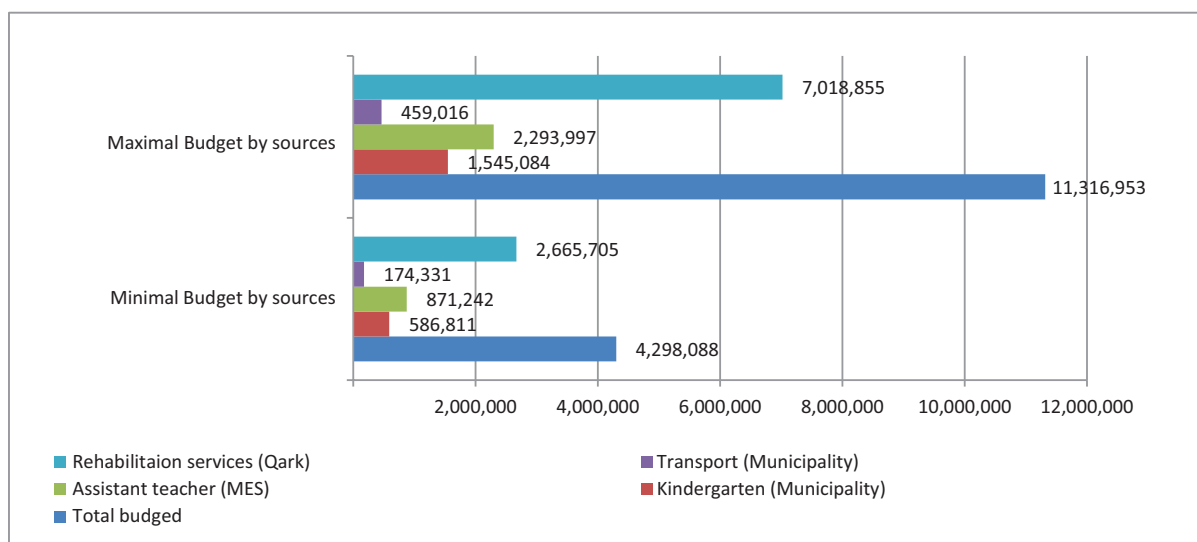
The number of children with disabilities in the Korça municipality is low, so we will define only one hypothesis: in 2018, all the children with disabilities of the 3-6 years age group (31) are enrolled in kindergartens or preparatory classes and receive all the services they need (transport and rehabilitation services). Table 10 gives the total budget and the missing budget for 2018. The calculations are based on the 2017 per child costs of the Elbasan municipality.

Table 10. Budget Projections for 2018 according hypothesis 1, Municipality of Korça

	Minimal cost (by individual needs)	Maximal cost (by individual needs)	Actual cost (averaged)	The difference between the actual cost and the minimum cost approach	The difference between the actual cost and the maximal cost approach
Cost per child with disability (2017)	138,648	365,063	39,904	(98,744)	(325,159)
	Budget by minimal cost	Budget by maximal cost	Budget by actual cost	Shortfalls in the budget using minimal cost	Shortfalls in the budget using maximal cost
Budget for the 2018 (for 31 children with disabilities)	4,298,088	11,316,953	1,237,054	(3,061,034)	(10,079,899)

For the Korça municipality, the expenditures are divided between the Municipality of Korça and the Ministry of Education and Sports by respective ratio of 80% and 20%.

Graph 26. Budget Projection by funding sources for 2018 (Hypothesis 1 = 31 children)



6

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Sports approved the Law “On Pre-University Education” which paves the way for the implementation of inclusive education. Although 6 years have passed, the legal framework of the inclusive pre-school education is not completed with by-laws. In the two municipalities under study (Elbasan and Korça), inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities suffers from the consequences of poor support with adequate policies and insufficient financial resources. In the two municipalities, currently, the number of children with disabilities attending inclusive preschool education is extremely low: only 2 in every 10 children with disabilities 0-6 years of age.

The study shows that interventions in early childhood for children with disabilities are not yet a priority not only of the municipalities of Elbasan and Korça, but also of the central government, represented in this line of action by the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

This presents itself in:

- (i) poor access,
- (ii) insufficient of budgets allocated by central and local governments
- (iii) inadequate professional capacity for early intervention assessment (0-2 years old), early prevention and therapies,
- (iv) insufficient pedagogical staff in support the inclusive pre-school education,
- (v) insufficient multidisciplinary rehabilitation and supporting services,
- (vi) failure in providing equal access/support between the urban and rural areas,
- (vii) poor coordination between health structures, structures responsible for inclusive pre-school education and local social services

The above-mentioned problems are interrelated, so addressing even some of them will have a positive impact in improving the application of inclusive pre-school education.

The study showed that there are problems with the access and availability of information. Official information on the number of children (0-6 years) with disabilities is not complete. World Vision and Save the Children have recently conducted a disability prevalence assessment in the age group of 2 -17 years old¹⁰. This study and data for disability among children 0-2 years old according KMCAP highlight the fact that the real number of children with disabilities for the age group 0-6 years is about 2-2.5 times higher than the current level certified by KMCAP. This shows that a large number of children with disabilities are not included in official statistics, and therefore unsupported with the services they need.

Information problems are also expressed by the lack of indicators that monitor the application and the impact of inclusive pre-school education in children with disabilities. The indicator of enrolments

10. World Vision & Save the Children, “Disability in children with disabilities in Albania”, April 202

in mainstream pre-school education structures is the only indicator collected and reported. Information problems not only limit recognition of the need for intervention, but pose limits and misleading in planning budgets in accordance with needs.

Awareness of the importance for developing adequate information and using it as an advocacy tool for designing policies and programmes is still low. The study shows that the two municipalities (Elbasan and Korça) have a disability under-reporting, also due to the lack of understanding of the power and role of information. Information and especially the one that “nourishes” advocacy and awareness is a powerful tool in changing the behaviours of interested actors (parents, local governments, public service staff) to break discriminatory attitudes and to encourage and support the involvement of children with disabilities in mainstream pre-school structures.

The first detection of disability in most cases occurs with delay, causing permanent disability consequences. Policy makers at the central and local level should be aware that intervention at an early stage (0-3 years old) are not just a matter of respecting children’s rights, but they also enable the reduction of public spending in the years to come.

The current public (as well as non-public sector) system is not an integrated system. Pre-school education of children with disabilities is going to rely on services outside the education system and requires multispectral collaboration. The study shows that health care services, pre-school services and social services do not operate in close cooperation with each other. Supporting with prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation programs are the basic requirements that strengthen inclusion throughout early childhood, and the inclusion in pre-school education of children with disabilities, in particular.

The study shows that the public funds allocated for addressing inclusive pre-school education and rehabilitation and support services, including early identification are largely insufficient. Albania and the two municipalities under study are facing considerable budget constraints. Under these conditions it is necessary that interventions in pre-school education for children with disabilities be as efficient as possible. There are no studies to explore or support cost-effective examples or strategies (such as special education versus inclusive education, access to education costs, additional costs associated with resources and equipment that enable full inclusion, etc). A part of services directly or indirectly related to pre-school education for children with disabilities are currently covered by the family itself or non-governmental structures (NGOs or private structures). As a result, many children still remain without the necessary support for all-inclusive services.

The study also found that there are problems with funding and long-term support. Financing pre-school education for children with disabilities is not yet a priority and well-supported with funding at local and national level. The allocation of funds for inclusive pre-school education (from the Ministry of Education and Sports and the municipalities under study) does not provide support in line with the needs of children with disabilities. Although the budgeting process adopted the “per student” calculation, the formula is not considering the specificities of children with disabilities which would require additional support. The Ministry of Education and Sports does not yet have a model for allocation of funds that enable the application of inclusive education, including pre-school education.

The study concluded that the allocation of funds for children with disabilities in pre-school education is not based on data on the number of children and the needs for all-inclusive education. Allocation of central government funding through (unconditional and specific) grants and of local government by its own revenues, should ensure equality and non-discrimination and enable pre-school structures to adapt to the needs of children with disabilities. This is important because it switches the focus of attention from “presence or registration” in pre-school structures of children with disabilities, towards learning outcomes, individual empowerment and positive benefits¹¹.

11. World Bank, 2013.

6.2 Possible ways to improve inclusive pre-school education for children with disabilities

Adopting the concept of inclusion in the pre-school system also takes time and transformation in the perception and behaviour of the society as a whole; it requires policy adjustments that improve access to pre-school education and support services; requires information and data that monitor progress, and it also requires improvements in the funding mechanism.

It would not suffice to build awareness raising campaigns that parents of children with disabilities send their children to pre-school structures, but it is of paramount importance that the decision-making structures at the local and central level should be aware that children enjoy the right for being educated and being an integral part of mainstream educational structures.

Financing of pre-school education for children with disabilities should be based on the needs of children and with clear regard for the final purpose, their successful education. This approach seeks to improve information system and data base; develop early identification and evaluation interventions; to strengthen the support of services alongside the education system (with health services and social services) through a close cooperation that enables a holistic approach, as well as supported by the allocation of reasonably sufficient budgets.

The current information system needs to be improved in relation to:

- (i) the system of indicators (prevalence, access to and achievement/outcome of inclusive education);
- (ii) building a data base with a measurement unit to enable the tracking of the progress over a long period of time,
- (iii) strengthening periodic analysis and evaluations in order to measure the effectiveness of all pre-school education policies and to identify issues related to the application of a quality education.

Today evermore importance is placed to the impact and effectiveness, rather than the overall funds spent. This means that spending on pre-school education for children with disabilities for municipalities is one of the steps to be taken, but on the other hand strengthening information on how it is spend and what impact it brings to inclusion of children with disabilities is even more important and helps to understand if the system is working well or needs to be updated and improved.

Strengthening of early identification and evaluation interventions requires

- (i) that the healthcare service is more pro-active and effective in early identification and early treatment
- (ii) that in the structure of the health service, be established and operates the Early Multi-disciplinary Assessment Team, for the identification of disabilities, before the age of two, whenever possible .
- (iii) the parent's awareness on the signs of disability at an early age; of the benefits in case of early addressing of disabilities and of negative and long-term consequences in cases of neglect.

Strengthening the support by services within and outside the education system, for a holistic access approach, requires:

- (i) ensuring a supporting environment within the pre-school setting (non-discriminatory environment, professional teacher, learning process tailored to the special needs of children with disabilities, didactic tools and appropriate equipment; close collaboration with school-parents).

- (ii) support with multidisciplinary centres and staff (with community service centres or with mobility groups, in areas with a small number of disable children).
- (iii) support of children of poor families with transport service, reimbursement of books and school supplies,
- (iv) applying incentive policies for sending children with disabilities to school (such as applying a monthly payment on attendance of preschool education).

Allocation of sufficient budgets

- (i) applying the model of calculation of expenditures “per student with disability” based on the “specific weight of each pupil” for some large categories of disabilities,
- (ii) deepening the process of decentralization as regards the financing scheme of the inclusive education, but by strengthening the control of the Ministry of Education and Sports, towards the application of inclusive education (including pre-school education)
- (iii) support budget calculation (for inclusive pre-school education, early identification, rehabilitation/support services). based on data/information.
- (iv) capacity building of local actors (pre-school structures, local NGOs, municipalities’ staff) in raising funds through well designed projects.
- (v) increased support from central and local government for inclusive pre-school education through tax redistribution or by increasing the weight of the inclusive pre-school education in the conditional grant.

In the face of insufficient budget condition, attention should be focused on empowering and capacity building of educational staff in pre-school education. Increasing skills, competences and awareness raising enhances agility in the application of inclusive education. The difficulty faced by educational staff comes from the variety of characteristics that children with disabilities display. It is necessary for the Ministry of Education and Science and the Municipalities to allocate financial resources to strengthen the recruitment process, the retention and the development of staff capacities both professionally and in performing a leadership role during the whole process of education and development of children with disabilities .

List of contacted persons

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