EDUCATION - AN OBLIGATION FOR A VISIONARY STATE!

KOMF STATEMENT ON THE INVOLVMENT OF CHILDREN IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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KOMF:

16 non-governmental organizations working in the area of child protection in Kosovo have joined with the purpose of further coordination of their efforts in child protection, having a mission to protect, respect and advance the wellbeing and the rights of children in Kosovo.

Member organizations are: Associazione Amici dei Bambini, Association for Social Training, Research and Advocacy - ASTRA, Initiative 6, Center for Protection of Victims and Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings PVPT, One to One Children’s Fund, One To One Kosova – Center for Counselling of Families, Youth Organizations Akti, Save the Children, Hope and Homes for Children Kosovo, Terre des hommes, World Vision, SOS Children’s Villages in Kosovo, OPFAKKOS, Kosovo Education Center - KEC, Civil Rights Program and VoRAE.
Introduction

Education is one of universal rights, a right guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Article 28. This universal right of the child is also adopted by the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, in its Article 42 and then adjusted through laws and regulations.

Given the fact that the Law on Pre University Education in the Republic of Kosovo (no. 02 / l - 52) made compulsory pre-primary education since 2015, KOMF in order to respect the right of children in inclusion in education, has taken the initiative to make an analysis on the real options regarding the inclusion of all children and institutional capacities to implement this legal provision. In the meantime, this document does not affect issues related to the quality of pre-primary education.

The education system in the Republic of Kosovo in all its levels, is organized based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED UNESCO), classification which includes 9 levels in total, ranging from Level 0. Pre-university Education, has 5 levels, which are:

- **Level 0**: Pre-school education (age zero (0) to six (6) years). With the Pre-University Education Law the education for the ages of five (5) to six (6) years is specifically regulated (pre-primary education);

- **Level 1**: Primary education lasting 5 years (normally from the age of six (6)), which includes classes from 1 - 5;

- **Level 2**: Lower secondary education lasting four (4) years (normally from the age of twelve (12)), which includes classes 6 - 9;

- **Level 3**: Upper secondary education lasting three (3) years (normally from age fifteen (15), including classes from 10 to 12, including high school, vocational high school, the school of music and art;

- **Level 4**: post-secondary education institutions and vocational education in period one (1) to two (2) years (usually by the age of eighteen (18)).

Law on Pre-University Education in Article 9.2 has determined the compulsory schooling that includes level 1 and 2, respectively primary and lower secondary school for a period of 9 years.

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1 Law no. 04 / l-032 for Pre-university Education in the Republic of Kosovo, Article 9.1
Pre-primary education is mandatory by 2015

One of the novelties of this Law and the Education System in Kosovo in general, is the pre-primary classes, which as a class has begun to be organized well in advance, but with this law, it is regulated in particular, while aiming that the pre-primary education become part of compulsory education from 2015. But this will be achieved only after the financial analysis\(^2\) of the inclusion of all children in pre-primary education. Pre-primary education, according to this law is organized as part of the Level 0 (pre-school, ages 0-6 years) and part of the Level 1 of Kosovo Curricula Framework.

The importance of pre-primary education

Pre-primary and pre-primary in general has a special importance. In addition, the involvement of children in pre-primary education is essentially the realization of a fundamental right of the child at the earliest possible age, different researches show the importance of preschool education in early childhood, (ILO, 2012; UNICEF, 2011), not only in the development of the overall personality of the child, both in terms of mental, psycho-physical, socio-emotional and behavioural, but also for the social impact in the later stages of development of the child in society, such as:

- The impact on the development (improving) of the readiness of children for school and learning;
- Enables the registration on time in first grade in school;
- Influences better attendance of the first grade, while making school more desirable;
- Children who attend pre-primary, were less likely to repeat the grade and to drop out the school;
- Pre-primary education influences the higher achievements of children and their successful completion of schooling;
- Investing in pre-primary education, reduces the costs of education at later stages\(^3\);
- Reduces inequalities in education and society, as well as reduces prejudices about diversity in education, culture and society in general, etc.

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\(^2\) Law no. 04 / L-032 for Pre-university Education in the Republic of Kosovo, Article 49.2

Organization of pre-primary education

Pre-primary education in the Republic of Kosovo, under the legislation in force, can be arranged in several ways, such as:

- Within the school, as preschool class where pupils usually stay 2-3 hours a day at school and is free of charge (in public institutions);

- Then, it is organized within kindergartens, day care centers, for which parents participate in public institutions with 50% of financial means (the percentage (%) varies by municipality);

- Pre-primary classes in pre-university education private institutions, institutions in which parents pay for their children’s education up to 100% of assets;

- And, the fourth form of organizing preschool classes is that within the Community Based Centres, which are funded by the community, by various donors, the donor-community cooperation and for some centres, the burden of organizing and financing was taken by their municipalities.
Findings:

The Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection, in defence of children’s fundamental rights guaranteed under the CRC, states its position on the enrollment of children in pre-primary education:

• During the 2013/14 academic year, in public pre-primary education a total 21,383 children\textsuperscript{4} were included, of whom 1,480 children in kindergarten and 19,903 children are involved in preschool classes. However, in private education altogether 35 children\textsuperscript{5} were involved. In these statistics children that are attending pre-primary education through Community-Based Centres, are not included. Viewed as a percentage, gross enrolment rate in preschool education in 2011/12 was 74\%, in 2010/11 was 71.2\%, whereas in 2009/10 was 69.6\%\textsuperscript{6}.

• There is no official analysis that tells exactly how many children are not involved in pre-primary education. However, if we refer to previous years education statistics\textsuperscript{7}, where from the number of students who have attended first grade we substract the number of children who have attended pre-primary education in the previous year, it appears that each year an average of 6000 - 7000 children remain out of pre-primary education process, respectively, depending on year this number represents, up to 30\% of the total number of children of pre-primary age. This is consistent with Kosovo Education Indicators 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12\textsuperscript{8}, according to which indicator, every year continuously the number of children enrolled in pre-primary education had increase, to achieve in 2011 / 12 up to 74\%. In relation to the possible involvement of the number of children which are not included in pre-primary education, a detailed analysis regarding the overall cost of their involvement in pre-primary education is missing, including the specific needs of each municipality in: capital investment, wages, goods and services, in order to cover the needs of each municipality to reach the involvement of children to 100\%.

• Overall, Kosovo is considered to have a very advanced legislation in the field of education\textsuperscript{9} (pre-primary education for children aged 5-6 years is expected to become mandatory after a financial analysis done by 2015). Also, the legislation is quite complete with supporting documents (Administrative Guidelines, Curricula Framework and core curricula that specifically addresses pre-primary education, development and learning standards in early childhood 0-6 years old, Guidelines with Best Practices in classes for pre-primary educators, etc.). Despite this, all this legislation should find its application such as to enable the 100\% inclusion of all children in pre-primary education and not to create disparities among them\textsuperscript{10}.

• Preschool education\textsuperscript{11} is made a priority and part of all national policies in pre-university education. However, this cannot be said for the local level, where even though with the legislation, municipalities have the main authority regarding the preschool education\textsuperscript{12} (this applies to preschool education, while the decision for it to be mandatory by law is not done). This in a way also has led many municipalities to not open new preschool class, because priorities have been other issues in the education.

\textsuperscript{4} MEST (2014), Statistics on Education in Kosovo 2013/14, Pre-university education, Pristina, Pg. 12
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid. Pg. 45
\textsuperscript{6} MEST, (2013), Indicators of Education in Kosovo 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12, Pristina, p.12
\textsuperscript{8} MEST, (2013), Education Indicators in Kosovo 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12, Pristina, p.12
\textsuperscript{9} Law no. 04 / l-032 for Pre-university Education in the Republic of Kosovo; Law no. 02 / L-52 on Pre-primary Education; Law no. 03/068 on Education in the municipalities of Republic of Kosovo; Law No. 2004/37 on Inspection of Education in Kosovo, etc
\textsuperscript{10} MED - Fushe Kosove: „In a primary school where new curricula are being piloted , no pre-primary class”
\textsuperscript{11} Education Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016; Strategy for Development of Pre-University Education in Kosovo 2007 - 2017
\textsuperscript{12} Law no. 02 / l-52 on Preschool Education, Article 19 (2)
• The physical infrastructure of school buildings is improving day by day, creating special conditions for pre-primary classes. In general, also through field interviews it is confirmed that the physical infrastructure in most cases allows the opening of pre-primary classes even in those places where these class are missing. Exceptions to this do a small number of separate schools and classes in which classes are held in old facilities and insufficient space for learning.13

• Important factor that affects the quality of work in pre-primary education, is also the monitoring and evaluation of performance of preschool institutions (including pre-primary grades) and the teachers. Based on the Law on Inspection of Education, as well as current legislation and education policy, monitoring and evaluation is one of the responsibilities of the Inspection Department of Education (SIA), which is part of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. However, is not only the task of SIA to do the monitoring because it a responsibility also of the municipal level of education, and undefined, and the lack of clear division of tasks associated with monitoring the quality of education, remains one of the greatest challenges for quality assurance. In relation to all the work that has to do with monitoring the quality of education, in general, there is an impression that monitoring is a weak point in all pre-university education and the pre-primary education in particular.

• Parents and the community in general, are not sufficiently informed about the importance of pre-primary education in child development. There are cases when certain locations offer pre-primary classes, however not all parents send their children to pre-primary class.15

13 Sh.F.M.U, „Drita“, in Rubofc village, municipality of Lipjljan, learning is held in an old facility, which is divided into two parts, one taught in Albanian and one in Serbian. In this school conditions are not as suitable for educational work, with a lack of space to work. For that reason until today there were no pre-primary classes offered.
14 Impressions of the representatives interviewed (DKA, MEST, school principals, UNICEF)
15 Interview with the principal of Sh.F.M.U. „Ibrahim Krasniqi“ - Smallusha, Lipjani. It states: „At the beginning of each school year usually there are 2-3 students coming into first grade of primary school and who have not attended pre-primary classes.“
**Recommendations:**

The Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection (KOMF), with the purpose of inclusion of all children in pre-primary education RECOMMENDS:

- To have an overall analysis by MEST on the situation of pre-primary education, the latest by the first half of 2015. This analysis should find in detail the exact number of children who are not involved in pre-primary education; then the place where they are located; what should be done to include these children in pre-primary education; accurate financial analysis of the cost of inclusion of these children and how to allocate funds proportionately according to the number of children in those places (Municipalities) where children are involved in pre-primary education.

- The decision has to be taken by the Minister of MEST, in conformity with Article 9.3 and Article 49 of Law no. 04 / I-032 for Pre-university Education in the Republic of Kosovo, under which pre-primary education eventually becomes part of compulsory education for all children aged 5-6 years throughout the Republic of Kosovo, from the 2015/16 school year.

- Legislation and all legal frameworks in the field of preprimary education, including the strategic documents such as the Curriculum Framework, Core Curriculum, Development and Learning Standards in early childhood 0-6 years, etc., to be supported financially and with human resources for an effective implementation also in those parts that relate to preprimary education.

- To work more on the local level, to strengthen the municipalities in exercising their responsibilities in the field of education with the current legislation, so that the pre-primary education to be a priority of local policies in education.

- To create infrastructural conditions where there is no infrastructure by MEST and municipalities, in order to create the opportunity for inclusion of all children in the pre-primary education in the relevant regions. In the case of construction of new facilities it is necessary to plan the construction of pre-primary classes.

- Where there is no sufficient infrastructure to open pre-primary classes and lack of the conditions for such a thing, alternative forms of the preprimary education to be organized from the MEST and municipalities. This can be done in two ways:
  - Opening of community-based centers, or other alternative forms of education,
  - By subsidizing the private education, for the part of the pre-primary education and,
  - To stimulate public-private partnership in the organization of the preprimary education.
• To do an analysis about the quality of education offered in preprimary education.

• It is necessary for a better quality of education, a quality monitoring and inspection of the work from the MEST and municipalities throughout the pre-university education System in accordance with legislation, including in particular the pre-primary education.

• To work more to sensitize the parents and the community in general by the MEST and municipalities, civil society etc., on the importance of pre-primary education for children’s development. The positive attitude of parents to pre-primary education is a key factor for the inclusion of all children in pre-primary classes.

KOMF is aware of the budgetary constraints that exist with the current budget, but we consider as inherent the best interest of the child to realize a fundamental right, what is pre-primary education. Current investment in pre-primary education means investing in and developing the country’s economy in the long term, no later than in the next 20 years.
Achievements in pre-primary education

• Involvement so far of over 70% for each year of children aged 5-6 years in pre-primary education.

• The introduction of pre-primary education as obligated by 2015 through the Article 9.1 of the Law on Pre-University Education, although it is conditional on a financial analysis, constitutes a huge reach in the field of education.

• Development of strategic documents such as Curriculum Framework and core curriculum that specifically include preprimary education, then the drafting of the Development and Learning Standards in early childhood 0-6 years, Best Practices Manuals in classroom for pre-primary educators and other important documents, as well as piloting them in schools including pre-school classes, shows that MEST is making efforts for pre-primary classes within the compulsory education.

• Introducing Article 5 in AI 47/2007 that enables educators to work with two groups of children during the day and the organization of alternative forms of pre-primary education through Community Based Centers, show the interest of MEST to create various opportunities for the involvement of children in pre-primary education.
## Number of children in pre-primary education

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<th>Female</th>
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- Female: 48.0%
- Male: 52.0%

Source: Education Statistics in Kosovo