EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES KOSOVO

Socioeconomic Conditions in Northern Kosovo
Factsheet on Education

This thematic factsheet seeks to provide a specific overview of the findings reported in the recent survey on the "*Socioeconomic Conditions in Northern Kosovo*". The full comprehensive narrative of the report, issued by ECMI Kosovo in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and the British Embassy in Prishtinë/Priština, is available in pdf on ECMI Kosovo official webpage, under our "Publication" section: https://ecmikosova.org/publications/.
The objective of this report, based on the perceptions and subjective opinions of the respondents, is to spotlight issues encountered by northern Kosovo residents in their daily lives, to voice their needs, concerns and aspirations. The report shows a quantitative and qualitative analysis of answers from a questionnaire administered to a sample of 721 respondents living in the four municipalities of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveqan. When analysing and comparing responses between municipalities, it is very important to remember that the questionnaire addresses perceptions and not necessarily the objective reality of the current situation.
For the sake of clarity, all the data and figures published in the following factsheet refer to the abovementioned report – where not otherwise specified.

Introduction

The provision of public and formal education is the responsibility of the municipality[1]. However, northern municipalities also receive significant support and direction from Serbian institutions, especially in terms of education in Serbian, which remains fully under Belgrade's jurisdiction. Parallel systems of education for the different ethnic communities result in inconsistencies regarding the recognition and employability of school diplomas, both inside and outside Kosovo.

Key Findings

- Overall perceptions about formal education are positive.
- Formal education is deemed insufficient for expanding employment opportunities.
- Informal education could be a way to create employable skills.
- Inclusive education for people with disabilities is obstructed by existing discrimination, and the lack of training and school equipment.

I. General Perceptions

Throughout all four municipalities, perceptions about the delivery of formal education are generally positive (between 70% and 55% of the respondents in all municipalities declared to be somewhat or fully satisfied).. The majority of the respondents expressed at least some level of satisfaction; however, when asked about the quality of teaching, the level of satisfaction is not particularly high, especially in Mitrovica North, what can be explained by the higher level of expectations from a better educated population.

II. Transition from Education to Employment

The transition from education to employment remains very difficult: when asked about employment opportunities within their field of study or geographic area, respondents expressed a high degree of pessimism.

[1] Under the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (CSP), available at: http://www.unosek.org/unosek/en/statusproposal.html

The majority of participants in northern Kosovo, or 54.72%, see few opportunities for work within their field of study, whilst a striking 28.90% see no opportunities.
There is clearly a perceived discrepancy between the labour demand and supply in northern Kosovo. One way to bridge the gap between education and employment or to mitigate the risk of working in other fields is to enhance informal education, considered a plausible way to acquire the skills necessary for the labour market according by a vast majority of the respondents in each municipality. Language courses and IT skills are the most popular forms of informal education, forming almost half of the overall sector. It has to be noticed that informal education is mostly provided by local NGOs.

III. Inclusive Education

Lack of inclusion in education in northern Kosovo is another important focus of the survey. This report focuses on people with disabilities, although inclusive education also concerns special needs. Discriminatory practices are certainly perceived to exist to varying degrees in each of the four municipalities. Such practices can be considered as discriminatory in both a legal sense, i.e. the lack of physical access to facilities, and based on individuals' subjective definitions, i.e. marginalisation in social life. The majority of respondents reported discrimination towards people with disabilities: 33.58% saying "often" and 23.36% "very often".
This high perception of discriminatory practices towards people with disabilities can be attributed both to the general school infrastructure as well as the low awareness and lack of pedagogical tools among teachers to properly face the specific needs of this target groups when it comes to education. The lack of school resources and training are the main challenges to implementing existing legal standards and further exacerbate the low awareness about inclusive education.

Recommendations

- Maintain efforts to invest in and enhance the capacity of the education system.
- Conduct additional research to assess strengths and weaknesses of each distinct level and type of formal education, including vocational education.
- Make significant efforts to adapt the educational system to matching the requirements of professional life.
- Further develop and intensify informal education as a means to help people integrate into employment by extending their knowledge and know-how base.
- Enhance the capacities of local NGOs to provide high quality informal education in various domains.
- Improve hard and soft infrastructure to better accommodate people with disabilities and fight discrimination.