

Project “Regional Support for Inclusive Education”

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**THE FIRST MEETING OF THE
POLICY TEAM OF BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA

- *REPORT* -**

Prepared by

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Introduction

The first meeting of Policy Team of Bosnia and Herzegovina was organized according to the instructions of the Project Officer in charge of PolicyNet Component of the Joint EU/CoE Project "Regional Support for Inclusive Education".

Date of the meeting: Monday, 24 February 2014, 11.00 -16.00

Place: Sarajevo, Hotel Europe

Participants: 9 members of the Policy Team from Bosnia and Herzegovina and members of CoE Office in Sarajevo: Zorica Lesic, Project Officer and Elmaja Bavcic, Project assistant. Milena Juric, a member of the BH team, was absent from the meeting due to illness. Also, Valentine Cuk did not attend the first meeting (instead of her Zeljka Perisic attended the meeting) (Annex 1: List of participants).

Moderator: Lejla Kafedzic, Member and Focal point of Policy Team from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Preparation of the Meeting

The meeting was prepared by members of staff engaged in Project in CoE Office in Sarajevo, Zorica Lesic i Elmaja Bavcic, as well as Focal Point of Policy Team of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nominated by CoE.

Draft Agenda of the Meeting (Annex 2) and presentations were proposed by Zorica Lesic, Project officer in charge of Policy Component. Also, the basis of the presentation was suggested by Mrs. Lesic, with a little adaptation of Local Point for B&H. Logistic support was organized by CoE Office in Sarajevo.

Course of the Meeting – Discussion, Questions and Comments of Participants

Members of the Policy Team introduced themselves by names, positions, background and specific experience in inclusive education area. The first meeting of the BH team was implemented in three parts:

1. Presentation of the project and the presentation of the third component of the project.

Project "Regional support for inclusive education" was presented by Zorica Lesic. She explained the main points: project objectives, five project components, TeacherNet, School Net and showed details from the website of the Project.

Lejla Kafedzic presented the Policy Component of the Project: broad understanding of inclusive education in the project, the objectives of the third component, the framework and the roles of the Team for inclusive education policy and Focal Point, presented the main activities within the group of experts meeting in Belgrade (1-2 October 2013) and the Regional Conference in Tirana (6-7 November 2013).

Important question which was asked: Working dynamic of the Team in the framework of the third component, time frame and tasks?

2. Discussions on the country context priorities and challenges in project implementation

Discussion on recent implementation of inclusive education in B&H was opened by presenting conclusions from the meeting in Belgrade about the shortage of educational policies and suggestions for advancement from regional conference in Tirana.

In addition, all members of BH team took part in the discussion. A lot was said about the problems in implementation of inclusive education in B&H, as well as about the good experiences, strengths and challenges.

The Team members think that B&H has well organized regulations/laws/documents, which are coordinated with international documents, but still some acts should be passed, makes documents to be non-discriminatory, and to be realized in practice, that is to be more realistic and less rigid. Obstacles, in creating the documents which would be fully applicable in practice, present that they are not concrete enough and very few professionals from practice are involved in their creation. Besides, law regulations are not attainable, because schools have no support. Other questions which need to be worked at additionally in B&H were being discussed (see more in Table 2, column 3- Joint issues and challenges). It is emphasized how important it is to take care about the expectations of children from vulnerable/marginalized groups. It is stated that in B&H there are many examples of good practice, results of excellent work of government and non-government institutions/organizations, development of inclusive educational institutions and communities, but there is a lack of system/systematic solutions, which would be sustainable.

Forces in BH educational system and society are: teachers (who are at the same time weakness), regulations, students as resources of teaching universities, recent practice, media, low degree of pupils leaving school, etc.

3. Discussion on priorities for advancing of inclusive education in B&H, challenges for implementation of priorities and ideas for lessening challenges.

At the beginning of this part of the meeting, the members of BH team are divided into three groups according to levels/sort of education. The suggestion for this division was given by the Team Coordinator, which was accepted with one change.

The division of the members of BH team and the results of the discussion can be seen in the addition: Outputs of the Meeting.

Outputs of the Meeting

Table1: Cross- beneficiary Teams

LEVEL/SORT OF EDUCATION	NAMES OF MEMBERS CROSS-BENEFICIARY TEAM
PRIMARY EDUCATION	1. Begić Elmedina 2. Ćuk Valentina 3. Nikšić Mirna
GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION	1. Bjelan Sandra 2. Jurić Milena 3. Trbić Dženana

SECONDARY EDUCATION -VET	1. Divović Lejla 2. Garača Zorica 3. Popović Biljana
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The Focal Point will participate in activities of all three teams.

All members expressed satisfaction in being a part of this Project and optimism regarding the expected results. They also expressed personal readiness to contribute to project achievements in the best possible way.

All members of the working groups have actively participated in the discussion on priorities in advancement of inclusive education, challenges in realizing the priorities and ideas to lessen the challenges (complete table can be seen in Annex 3).

Table2: Discussion results in the working groups

LEVEL/SORT OF EDUCATION	ISSUES AND CHALLENGES BY LEVEL/SORT OF EDUCATION	JOINT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES ¹
PRIMARY EDUCATION	<p>Issues: TEACHER EDUCATION (pre-service and in-service)</p> <p>Challenges: Existing programs of education and training are based much more on theory than on developing practical teacher skills.</p> <p>Issues: MORE FLEXIBLE EDUCATIONAL PLAN AND PROGRAM</p> <p>Challenges: Rigid attitudes and understanding of the curriculum as a document which cannot be changed and improved.</p> <p>Issues: EDUCATION OF THE COMMUNITY</p> <p>Challenges: Prejudice. Stereotypes. Lack of information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudes (of professionals, parents, the public), - Narrow understanding of inclusive education, - Non adequate initial/academic education and advanced teacher training, - Non flexible curriculum, - Discontent of parents with the implementation of inclusive education, - Discontent of teachers with the implementation of inclusive education, - Indifference of teachers for advanced teacher training, - The problem of transition through levels of education, - Absence of support for teachers,
GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION	<p>Issues: INCREASE ACCESS TO GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN BELONGING TO MARGINALIZED GROUPS</p> <p>Challenges: Low expectations from children belonging to marginalized groups.</p> <p>Issues: CURRICULUM</p> <p>Challenges: Long procedures modifications of curriculum. Rigidity of curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence or bad cooperation among various institutions/sectors such as: special and <i>regular</i> schools, education-health-social policy, - Inability of parents to enroll the children with difficulties in <i>regular</i> schools, - Regression of children in special sections of classes, - <i>Regular</i> schools are not prepared for working with children with difficulties

¹ Discussion results of the whole team in the second part of the meeting.

	<p>Curriculum is not student-oriented but content-oriented.</p> <p>Issues: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AND MANagements IN SCHOOL</p> <p>Challenges: Teachers and school management do not see a need for professional training in the field of inclusive education. Understanding of Inclusion only like working with children with disabilities.</p>	<p>(e.g. individual treatments of a speech therapist and special education teacher),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of early intervention, - Exclusion of parents from the discussion about the child, - Lack of support for teachers in inclusive schools.
<p>SECONDARY EDUCATION -VET</p>	<p>Issues: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AND MANagements IN SCHOOL</p> <p>Challenges: Training of teachers.</p> <p>Issues: THE ESTABLISHMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND LABOR MARKET</p> <p>Challenges: Establishment of tripartite advisory council. Joint creation of curriculum.</p> <p>Issues: IMPROVING ATTITUDES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION</p> <p>Challenges: The media campaign (including written, printed, electronic media), as well as cooperation with NGOs and international organizations. Obligatory parent involvement.</p>	

Conclusion

The first meeting of the BH Team for inclusive educational policies had three aims: mutual introduction of the Team members, presenting details about the project “Regional Support for Inclusive Education”, with special review over the third component of the Project, as well as discussing recent implementation of the inclusive education in B&H, priorities that need to be worked on in the future and division of the Team members in the working groups.

All three aims were accomplished on the meeting held in Sarajevo on 24 February 2014.

Many problems were identified in the implementation of inclusive education in BH educational systems, still some good; strong points were emphasized, which need to be further strengthened. The most important thing would be to establish some systematic solutions and to change the philosophy of education, which would promote inclusive education as quality education.