



QUALITY

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FOR A
BRIGHTER
FUTURE



European
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Kosovo



EU INFORMATION AND
CULTURAL CENTRE

PREFACE

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QUALITY EDUCATION LEADS TO QUALITATIVE LIFE, AND TO A PROSPEROUS SOCIETY

Dear students, teachers, colleagues,

Europe means culture and culture is at the core of the European Union. Without a full understanding of culture, we, Europeans, risk deleting our long, common and many times difficult history. We risk losing our identity enriched by vast linguistic, artistic and creative variety that makes our continent a unique place. Education is one of the strongest points of the European culture. As Kosovo is part of the European family, it is essential that it treats education as its strategic priority.

Education is the key for success and progress. Only a society that invests in education can go forward. The government, education professionals, civil society must all work to make quality education Kosovo's priority. Education must meet market needs.

As you probably know, the EU Office/EU Special Representative wants to see major improvements in education in Kosovo. To this end, there are many tasks to be achieved in the coming years.

The EU is determined to help skilled Kosovo youth to be well prepared entering the job market. The EU is also determined to create more jobs for the young population. It will continue building modern schools and prepare quality teaching material. The EU will help a greater inclusion of disabled and unprivileged youth, giving them a chance to feel equal in the Kosovo society.

With this in mind, what the EU wants to see in Kosovo in the coming years is: skilled Kosovo youth, able to compete in domestic and EU markets; the gap filled between skills and market needs; greater inclusion of disabled and unprivileged youth; and increased participation of non-majority communities in Kosovo society.

Over the next few years, the EU intends to double its support to good education, allocating some €35 million for this purpose.

So you, the youth of Kosovo, must look ahead towards not only the quality of your education but mostly to the quality of your life, which will make Kosovo prosperous, successful and peaceful.

Quality education is a necessary step on this path.

We, at the EU, will be with you to help as much as we can.



SUMMARY OF EU SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN KOSOVO

Investment in education is certainly an investment for the future. It is crucial for jobs and overall progress in society. Quality education invested over many years is essential for a productive labour force, which contributes to economic growth and national development.

Kosovo has the lowest level of enrolment in preschool and pre-primary education aged 0-6 in the region, which is caused by the lack of infrastructure and staff.

Furthermore, the standardised Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test showed that Kosovo pupils in secondary education have the lowest attainment levels in the region. Kosovo pupils ranked among the bottom three in mathematics, reading and science in the last PISA, which took place in 2015. It remains to be seen if there has been an improvement in this year's PISA results; it is hoped that teachers and students have reflected upon the subjects where performance was weak in previous years and could inspire the future of education in Kosovo.

Kosovo also ranks among the lowest in the region in terms of skilled labour, which is a problem many enterprises face. The underlying cause for this is the poor education system. Reforms in Kosovo's education system are necessary at all levels, as is improved infrastructure in the sector.

The EU has supported Kosovo's educational reform through the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), developing vocational skills according to labour market demands and extending scholarship schemes further. The allocated EU support for the period 2014-2020 in Kosovo is €645.5 million.

In 2016, The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology adopted an administrative instruction on measures and quotas for the enrolment of students from minority communities in public universities. After the first round of admissions, 96 minority students who had successfully completed the admission exams enrolled in six public universities, which is higher than in the previous school year.

The EU has targeted Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities with the aim of increasing their prospects for education. In Prizren and Rahovec, the project was extended to relevant public schools whereby assistance is offered to not only Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities but also majority community pupils, contributing to inter-ethnic integration.

The EU dedicated an additional €3.8 million with an aim to strengthen the link between the education sector and the labour market needs with a particular focus on vocational education and training (VET).

Through a twinning project with Finland and Austria worth €3 million, the EU has supported pre-university education with curriculum and teacher development, quality assurance and assessment of needs for school supplies. In addition, the EU has provided equipment including projectors, laptops, and sports equipment to over 100 schools across Kosovo.

Through different projects, the EU has helped to build or reconstruct premises of educational importance, such as libraries, archives and schools. In Lipjan, for example, the Library and Archive building was allocated €740,000 to create a new, spacious three-floor building of 1500 m² with a large classroom for group studying and reading.

Through the Aligning Education with Labour Market Needs (ALLED) project worth €2.8 million, the EU helped to improve the quality and relevance of educational programmes.

The EU also financed the Kosovo Education and Employment Network (KEEN) to support the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market and education system in Kosovo.

With a total investment of €17 million, the EU supported the implementation of energy-efficient measures in 63 existing schools across different municipalities in Kosovo and 2 hospitals in Pristina. In order to promote a more efficient use of energy, the measures are focused on: improvements to buildings (such as external thermal insulation, replacing external windows and doors, thermal and waterproof roof insulation, etc.); heating, electrical and lighting systems; ventilation control systems; and the introduction of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels for hot water.

Furthermore, numerous schools across Kosovo now have access to Information and Communication Technology and eLearning thanks to EU investment.

The EU has provided support to private higher education institutions, such as the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM). Higher education in Kosovo is also supported through Erasmus+, the Young Cell Scheme, and Horizon 2020 programmes.

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) signed between Kosovo and the EU in 2015 foresees mutual cooperation in order to raise the level of general education and VET. One of the main priorities for higher education in Kosovo is to achieve a standard of education in line with the Bologna Process.

Following the signing of the SAA, education became one of the priorities of the EU in policy dialogue with Kosovo. It is high up on the European Reform Agenda and the Economic Reform Programme as the implementing tools of the SAA.

However, the European Commission's reports for Kosovo continuously state that no progress has been made on improving the quality of education.

Kosovo has one of the lowest GDPs in Europe. It also has a very young population: 50% of the population is under the age of 25. The unemployment rate is 30%, and unemployment is most prevalent among young people. According to the Labour Force Survey conducted in the second quarter of 2017, 51% of young people aged 15-24 in Kosovo were unemployed. Over 27% of that age group were not in education, employment or training. The unemployment rate was higher among females (60%).

Over 70% of Kosovo's female population has received only basic education or no education at all, compared to 38% of men who have received a similar level of education.

Unemployment and low participation rates among women are worrying. The participation rate of women in the labour market is 18%, while employment rates for women are around 11.5%. Over 70% of unemployed women are long-term unemployed.

Additionally, a university degree does not necessarily guarantee a job. About 25% percent of university educated people in Kosovo are without jobs, according to the Labour Force Survey. That percentage increases with people with lower levels of education, i.e. the unemployment rate among people with secondary education is 28.3%, whereas the unemployment rate among people with secondary vocational education is 33.5%. The trade, manufacturing, construction and education sectors continue to employ almost half of employed people.

The European Commission Report on Kosovo 2016 notes that Kosovo's spending per student in primary and secondary education is considerably less than neighbouring countries. In 2015, public spending on education was just 3.9% of GDP. Furthermore, 75% of overall spending on education is for salaries, and increases in education spending are used almost entirely for salary increases rather than improving the quality of education (only 0.2% of education spending was allocated for training teachers). Attendance rates in preschool and pre-primary education are still very low (3.7 % and 74 % respectively), undermining efforts to create a level playing field for the beginning of primary school.

National Development Strategy 2016-2021 foresees improved expenditure planning in the education system, but more work needs to be done to increase the inclusion of children in preschool institutions. Improved quality of teaching in primary and secondary schools and better correlation between skills acquired in education and labour market needs are necessary for success at higher levels of education.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has also drafted two comprehensive strategic plans for the development of education in Kosovo for 2011-2016 and 2017-2021. Their goal is to improve the quality of education and inclusion, but also to provide accountability for pupils' achievements.

Some notable improvements have been observed in the policy-making process in preschool education; however, no significant increase in preschool enrolment was registered. A high level of enrolment in pre-university education has been achieved and pupils' achievement in external examinations has increased modestly, but this will remain a challenge for the education system.

Although around half of pupils in upper secondary education choose vocational education, the linkage of vocational education to the labour market also remains a challenge. Access to information and communication technology (ICT) is still not appropriately integrated into the curriculum.

Addressing the key sectors of education and employment is crucial in order to develop the competitiveness policy in Kosovo. These sectors are closely interrelated and every action that is implemented in the employment sector should take into account developments in the education and/or competitiveness sector¹.



EU SUPPORT FOR PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH

Early childhood education plays an important role in improving the performance of children later in life, especially for children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Kosovo, the enrolment of children aged 0-6 in educational programmes is much lower than in the rest of the region.

Kosovo's public education system has a network of 43 preschool institutions. The lack of physical infrastructure and staff are two of the main reasons for low participation rates of children in preschool activities. The EU has supported Kosovo's preschool education system with the aim to increase the inclusion of children in preschool education in Kosovo.

With a budget of €5 million, the EU has supported the creation of 5-6 kindergartens around Kosovo, including the detailed design and construction of the building. In addition, under IPA 2014, the construction of a new kindergarten in Pristina (Kalabria) is expected to commence in September 2018. The detailed design process, funded by the EU, is ongoing.

In 2016, a brand new kindergarten building was constructed in Ferizaj/Uroševac. The building measures 1983 m² and has capacity for 190 children. It was constructed under an EU municipal, social and economic infrastructure programme, which supports balanced regional development in Kosovo. The public kindergarten "Ardhmëria jonë" now consists of two floors and includes children's rooms, toilets, a kitchen, an administrative office, a staffroom, maintenance and storage rooms, as well as laundry facilities. The head of the kindergarten, Zuhail Avdullahu, says that the conditions in the previous building, which was built in the 1960s, were dismal and that new construction was more than needed.

She hopes more children will attend the institution. "There is space for more, and I expected more children. However, many of them attend private institutions. I opened our doors to all children and no child should be turned down. Our new building now offers everything we need," she says.

The EU also stresses that access to quality education for children with disabilities and minority communities needs to be improved. Kindergartens were also constructed via various other EU funded projects.



In 2016, a new 600 m2 kindergarten with a yard and a playground was opened in the Arberia/Dragodan neighbourhood in Pristina. Another kindergarten worth almost €1 million was opened in Lešak/Leshak, in the municipality of Leposavić/Leposaviq. Support in this sector is crucial because low enrolment remains a concern.

Under IPA 2017, it is expected that €7.2 million will be spent on the detailed design, construction and supervision of three or four schools. EU funds will be used for supervision, construction, and furnishing in the schools. These schools will provide primary and lower secondary education (grades 1-9). The EU has set a goal that by 2020, at least 95% of preschool children aged 4 or above should participate in early childhood education. The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2011-2016 aimed for all children aged 5 and around 50% of children aged 0-4 to be in preschool education by 2016. The plan also foresaw a functional system for educators training and new curriculum. While there were some improvements to the preschool education curriculum and training of educators, and the number of 5 year olds in preschool education increased, there was no progress made in increasing the number of children aged 0-4 enrolled in preschool.

Kosovo's National Development Strategy 2016-2021 aims to achieve universal inclusion in pre-primary education and increase the number of children attending preschool by 5,000 children annually until 2021. It plans to achieve this by increasing the number of public kindergartens and increasing inclusion through private institutions. Based on the proposals of municipalities, 18 kindergartens for preschool education will be built. EU financial assistance also helped different communities in capacity building and inclusion in the basic education system.

The EU, in collaboration with the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS), the Kosova Education Center (KEC), Balkan Sunflowers (BSF), Bethany Christian Services (BCS), Nevo Koncepti (NVK), SHL Kosova (SHL-K), Syri i Vizionit (SiV) and Roma and Ashkali Documentation Center (RADC), teamed up to help Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community in Kosovo in different angles of education. From 2016 until March 2019, more than €1 million is being invested in ensuring equitable access of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children to pre-primary, primary and secondary education by improving the enrolment, retention and attainment levels of children through community-based and financial support.

The project has so far completed its first year, in which 67 scholarships were provided for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students, in addition to 130 scholarships awarded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Second year scholarships are in the final phase of completion.



Within the EU funded project 'Implementation of Energy Efficiency Measures in Schools and Hospitals in Kosovo', 63 schools received support to implement energy efficiency measures (EEM). An additional objective of the project was to measure and monitor the implemented EEM in school buildings over a period of one year. Energy audit calculations in 53 schools showed that there are tangible benefits, both environmental and economic, such as significant annual energy savings (an average of 62%), a 60% reduction of CO₂ emissions. These benefits were achieved with an Energy Payback Period (EPP) of 7,26 years.

These schools were previously large energy consumers and lacking basic comfortable conditions. The implemented EEM has significantly improved the health impacts, comfort and productivity of the learning environments in schools and indoor air quality in hospitals. Reducing energy consumption and fossil fuel use in these buildings will directly support Kosovo in implementing a comprehensive energy strategy and enhancing the policies for renewable energy. The implementation of the identified measures will help Kosovo's government meet their target of an energy saving of 9% by 2018.

Helping the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology with the educational reform process, the project 'Capacity Development in Basic Education (CDBE) in Kosovo' aims to improve the quality of education in Kosovo. It supports the Ministry to foster the educational reform process through the involvement of diverse stakeholders on the national, municipal and local levels. Official institutions, teachers, parents, children and civil society are targeted to contribute actively to the quality of education. Over 3,000 children have participated in extracurricular educational activities such as mentoring, homework assistance and intercultural activities explicitly tailored to support children returning from migration and ethnic minorities.

The project started in 2015 and will continue until next year. Over the course of the project, more than 2.000 children have benefitted from educational summer programmes lasting between 2 and 5 weeks as well as a summer academy offering creative workshops. Besides Pristina, other cities have benefited from the project such as Mitrovicë / Kosovska Mitrovica, Gjakovë / Đakovica, Podujevë / Podujevo, Pejë / Peć, Graçanicë / Gračanica, Obiliq / Obilić etc. Over 500 children have benefitted from pedagogical film screenings and open discussions on educational inclusion, equal opportunities and social cohesion.

Over 2,000 parents and other family members from ethnic minorities have participated in awareness raising activities concerning their children's education and wellbeing.





EU SUPPORT FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM/NEW CURRICULUM

CHALLENGES OF THE NEW CURRICULUM

Although the level of inclusion in pre-university education in Kosovo is comparable to European practices, the unsatisfactory achievement of pupils in external tests remains a challenge. Quality assurance mechanisms and accountability remain undeveloped.

The triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows the performance of students attending secondary schools worldwide. The results published in 2016 show that, out of 72 participating countries, Kosovo ranks among the three lowest performing countries.

On 12, 16 and 17 April 2018, pupils aged 15 took the test again in the capital city, Pristina. They were tested on their knowledge in mathematics, science and reading. This year the test was conducted using computers as opposed to manually. The test was also taken in Prizren and other municipalities. The first cohort of testing will end on the 26 April 2018 and the results of the PISA 2018 will be published in December 2019.

The results published in 2016 were concerning, and the EU called upon education reforms and better transparency and accountability at all levels in Kosovo. New school textbooks, teacher training and the implementation of a new curriculum were several recommendations that the EU and other donors made to Kosovo.

Much concern and debate has arisen regarding different textbooks and their professional values. Many textbooks were published before the 90s or even the 80s and are not up-to-date with the latest facts, while various textbooks from different stages of education in Kosovo have contained homophobic, xenophobic and racist remarks. Last year, a scandal² was unveiled in which people with Down's syndrome were described as 'idiotia mongoloide' in biology books – a pejorative term in this regard. EU and donors have advised for different actors and stakeholders to change this practice and move towards more updated and vocational knowledge.

In 2011, Kosovo's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology launched a new Curriculum Framework for pre-university education. It introduced a change from teacher-centred to student-centred lecturing through modern teaching and learning methodologies based on the results and development of student competencies. The aim was to prepare young people to face the challenges of the 21st century, to generate new competitive knowledge for the global labour market and regulate the pre-university education system. A shift from a content-based to competence-based curriculum is essential to improve the achievement of students. Besides seven areas of learning (languages and communication, math, science, society and environment, health and welfare, life and environment) core competences include communication and expression, thinking, learning, life, work, personal and civic competencies. These reforms require more learning material, teacher training and new assessments.

Only about 10% of schools in Kosovo are currently implementing the new curriculum and around 30% of teachers have received the relevant training. The slow implementation is due to lack of trainer with relevant qualifications.

From 2014 to 2016, an EU twinning project with Finland and Austria worth €3 million supported the Ministry of Economy, Science and Technology with the implementation of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2011-2016.

Twinning is a European instrument for cooperation between public administrations of EU states and beneficiary countries. Twinning projects bring together public sector expertise from EU Member States and beneficiary countries with the aim of achieving concrete mandatory operational results through peer-to-peer activities.

The project focused on the implementation of the new curriculum, teacher development and capacity building of institutions aligned to the new curriculum, setting up a quality assurance system, and providing basic supplies required for the new curriculum.

Within the project, tools such as the roadmap for the implementation of the new curriculum and inclusion in education, and roadmap for ICT in teaching and learning and a quality assessment strategy were prepared.

As a result, all schools in Kosovo were informed and instructed on the new curriculum, relevant syllabi were developed, and the Ministry was supported in planning and delivering professional development programmes for teachers. In total, 2,200 teachers were trained in five areas: Languages and Communication, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Society and Environment, Physical Education, Health and Wellbeing.



The twinning project has supported the initiative of the Ministry to develop a comprehensive strategy for quality assurance in order to contribute to the improvement of educational services.

The analysis indicated the following weaknesses in quality assurance: the division of responsibilities between the three levels of educational institutions (Ministry, municipalities, and schools); their capacity to manage tasks; the unsystematic approach towards the process of development planning in schools and at the municipal level; and, importantly, low awareness of the problem of quality of education in Kosovo.

Although the EU has invested a significant amount in this project, Kosovo will need support in further implementing the new curriculum, until the final national evaluation in spring 2021.

However, more effective teacher training for the new curriculum is required. There are approximately 23,000 teachers who require training for the new curriculum in 1,200 pre-university schools across Kosovo. Since the implementation of the new curriculum on a national level will be a challenge, there is also a need for advocacy and awareness raising.



FACT SHEET: EU SUPPORT TO EDUCATION

- Education has been, and continues to be a priority of EU to supporting Kosovo. Investment in education is investment in the future and it is crucial for jobs and overall progress in society. Quality education and years spent on it are essential for a productive labour force, which contributes to the economic growth and development.

 - The EU supports Kosovo in improving Quality of Education. From strategic planning, infrastructure, technology, teacher training and administration, scholarships in European Universities and participation in advanced programs.

 - From the 2014 IPA funds, European Union targeted Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in terms of increasing their prospects for education.

 - From 2007 to 2013 EU has supported the education sector with approximately €35 million. The total estimation of the IPA Fund for the period 2014-2020 in Kosovo is €645.5 million. From 2017 IPA funds, additional €3.8 million allocated to strengthen link between education sector and labour market needs, focusing on Vocational Education and Training (VET).

 - Through the twinning project with Finland and Austria worth €3 million, EU has supported pre-university education in the fields of curriculum and teacher development, quality assurance and assessment needs for school supplies. In addition to that value, the EU has delivered equipment, data projectors, laptops, general and sport equipment to over 100 schools across of Kosovo.
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- Through the **Aligning Education with Labour Market needs (ALLED)** project worth €2.8 million, the EU helped improve quality and relevance of education programmes.

- Numerous schools across Kosovo now have access to **Information Communication Technology and e-Learning** thanks to the EU investment.

- The EU has set a goal that by **2020**, at least **95%** of pre-school children of **4 years or older** should participate in early childhood education.

- Over **2.000** children from different cities in Kosovo, benefitted from educational summer programmes.

- The EU supported an action of MEST called "**ICT and e-Learning in Education**", with the overall EU investment in this field being €4.5 million. With additional EU funds, **134** schools received ICT equipment, out of which **75** were primary and lower secondary schools, **29** gymnasiums, **25** VET schools and **5** resource centres.

- To improve higher education in Kosovo, EU has helped with: **inter-culturalism and the Bologna process** project worth €1.4 million. Enhancing the management and quality of the general education system through sector-wide approach in education project worth **3** million euro.

- The EU supported with €1.6 million the **International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)**, a multi-ethnic college opened in 2010. In addition, the EU will also finance IBCM operations for the academic year, **2017-2018**.

- The EU is also supporting higher education in Kosovo through the **TEMPUS, Young Cell Scheme, ERASMUS MUNDUS** and **Horizon 2020** programmes.

- The EU actively supported education in Kosovo in close cooperation with the other donors: (**Austrian Development Agency (ADA), German Embassy, GIZ, LuxDev, Swiss Cooperation, SIDA, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank**) and is focusing vastly in establishing merit-based processes at all levels in education and thus, in promoting excellence that will transpire the whole system.



SUPPORT FOR ICT AND E-LEARNING

IN STEP WITH TECHNOLOGY

Integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in learning and teaching is essential if schools are to retain the attention of pupils. Even though Kosovo is a country with a high rate of ICT use (an estimated 76.6% of Kosovo population are internet users), Kosovo schools have on average one computer per 46 pupils. In EU countries, one computer serves 3-7 pupils on average.

The EU has supported e-Learning in schools across Kosovo through a project which equipped 57 schools with ICT facilities worth €25,000 per school. Schools with minority community students and students with special needs were also beneficiaries of this project.

The resource centre “Përparimi” in Pristina, which provides educational services for 113 pupils with special needs, was one of the schools to receive the support, which included video projectors, laptops, iPads, and TVs.



Igballe Potera, Director of “Përparimi”, has expressed her gratitude towards the facilities provided by the EU in the centre, a unique place for learning with a very sensitive mission.

“This equipment helped our teaching process immensely. In these types of schools, we always have to modify or adapt our learning system in accordance to our pupils’ abilities. This technology provides us with many possibilities to do well in our work. Our teachers are very satisfied with this investment and their work has become much easier. Moreover, it is also a moral uplift for parents because they see that others also think about their children,” says Potera.

The project also involved training teachers and students on how to use online resources for teaching and learning.

Besides this, the EU supported an action of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology called “ICT and e-Learning in Education” with the overall EU investment in this field being €4.5 million.

An ICT roadmap was drawn up in cooperation with the Ministry in order to support teaching and learning. With additional EU funds, from 2015-2017, 134 schools received ICT equipment, out of which 75 were primary and lower secondary schools, 29 gymnasiums, 25 VET schools and 5 resource centres. In these schools training was also provided for teachers and headteachers, as well as for ministry and municipality representatives.







SUPPORT FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MATCHING THE SKILLS WITH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

About half of pupils of secondary education in Kosovo attend vocational schools, despite these schools not being in line with the labour market needs.

The EU has been supporting the development of vocational knowledge through several projects, aligning education with labour market needs by improving the quality of practical and applied teaching and learning.

Vocational education and training (VET) secondary schools in Kosovo offer two main types of work-based programmes: work-based learning in workshops at the school, and professional practice in enterprises. There are 59 general VET schools in 26 major towns which operate under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. They fall under the following divisions: general, technical, economics, medicine, artistic, agriculture, tourism, theology, and centres of competence (commerce, administration and trade).

The EU funded Aligning Education with Labour Market Needs (ALLED) project focuses on three sectors: agriculture, machinery and food processing.³

Under ALLED, four study programmes were developed and implemented in eight vocational schools across Kosovo. These programmes focused on agriculture, food processing, mechatronics and production. Teachers were also trained to deliver these programmes.

Jonuz Zejnullahu VET high school in Viti/Vitija was one of the eight vocational schools which received laboratory equipment to implement the newly developed programme in food processing, which was inaugurated in September 2017. The programme received a lot of interest from students, with 59 students applying at the first round of the selection process.



The director of the school, Nijazi Lutfiu, says that the project was very successful and it helped the school to fulfil its mission. With a new cabinet and a laboratory for the analysis of food products, the school is now conducting meat processing, producing milk and fruit products and, recently, pasta.

Nijazi Lutfiu calls it a mini-factory, adding that this was the biggest project implemented in the school so far.

“Our pupils can now accomplish the modules of professional practice in the best possible way. They are taught in practice, and they are being prepared for the labour market. Vitia is known for its agricultural market and here we have several associations which are involved in the processing of flour products. This means that Vitia’s market will be able to partly accommodate our pupils,” Lutfiu says.

She believes that Kosovo needs to increase its budget for vocational schools, so they can exercise their right to produce and sell goods in order to support themselves.

The European Commission Report on Kosovo 2016 notes the poor link between vocational schools and enterprises in the market. Around 40% of graduates with a vocational diploma do not have the necessary skills demanded by the labour market. VET programmes are poorly coordinated and they do not reinforce Kosovo’s economic development strategies. The National Development Strategy identifies the mismatch between the labour market and vocational knowledge as one of the key obstructions to higher employment rates. This is because there is no system that determines skills requirements in the labour market in Kosovo. Public spending for VET schools is very low and schools lack opportunities for practical work.

An interesting network is the Kosovo Education and Employment Network (KEEN). KEEN is a strategic coalition of four Kosovo-based civil society organisations focused on education, employment and social policies. KEEN is an EU funded project that aims to improve the employability of vulnerable groups in Kosovo and their inclusion in both the labour market and the education sector by participating in decision making, policy development and policy monitoring, and by facilitating dialogue between education & training institutions and businesses. More specifically, KEEN aims to synchronise education and training programmes with labour market needs.



The strategies that KEEN develops to achieve its aims focus on improvement of the capacity of civil society organisations to participate in the development and monitoring of policies at both central and local levels. Capacity development initiatives include training programmes, expert advice, learning from associates and exchanging experiences.

The KEEN project is implemented through a coalition that is led by the Centre for Education of Kosovo (KEC) in cooperation with the Academy of Training and Technical Assistance (ATTA), Balkan Sunflowers Kosova (BSFK), Employment Promotion Agency Kosovo (APPK), and Stichting SPARK.





**SUPPORT FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION**

FOR A BETTER QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION IN KOSOVO

Kosovo has the largest number of higher education institutions and students per capita in Europe. Currently, there are 39 accredited higher education institutions, 9 of which are public and 30 private. The number of students increased threefold, from 40,000 in 2004 to 122,000 in 2015/2016. The rapid increase in the number of students enrolling in higher education has contributed to the need to open new public universities.

Besides the University of Pristina, there are five other public universities located in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjakova/Đakovica, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovica and Prizren. In 2014, Kosovo spent €703 per capita (or 23.8% of per-capita GDP) on higher education. However, although public spending is increasing, spending per student is declining due to the increased number of students.

Kosovo currently faces the highest unemployment rate in Europe and quality education is one of the main challenges identified by employers.

The EU has recommended that:

- Kosovo should invest in improving the quality of education at all levels;
- Higher education institutions should operate independently;
- A new law for higher education should be introduced to meet international standards; and
- More should be invested in research and innovation capacity at a national level in order to increase competitiveness and integration into the European Research Area.

Kosovo is not formally a member of the Bologna Process, but ever since the University of Pristina introduced the Bologna Reforms in 2001/2002, Kosovo made efforts to adjust its national legislation and harmonise study programmes in accordance with the Bologna Process guidelines.

The objectives of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan put emphasis on the improvement of quality through the promotion of excellence in teaching, scientific research, innovation and internationalisation. The mobility of academic staff and students is also one of the objectives.

Higher education, however, is still facing non-compliance with the quality standards, study programmes do not reflect labour market needs, and there is no sufficient scientific research being carried out. With the enforcement of the new Law on Higher Education in Kosovo, all higher education institutions need to harmonise their statutes and regulations in accordance with the national law.

The EU has supported higher education through various projects. One of them was advancing education in Kosovo through the “Education in Kosovo: Inter-Culturalism and the Bologna Process” project worth €1.4 million. The project provided support for reforms in primary, secondary and higher education to improve intercultural awareness and understanding, and to further integrate Kosovo into the Bologna Process. Another project worth €3 million focused on enhancing the management and quality of the general education system through a sector-wide approach. This project also contributed to building a comprehensive strategy for education with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Under the €3 million Aligning Education with Labour Market Needs (ALLED) project, the EU aimed to strengthen the quality and relevance of education programmes and the link between higher education and labour market needs through the development, modernisation and quality reform of higher education programmes. Another similar project with a value of €3.8 million will focus on enhancing the quality and relevance of lifelong learning and study programmes with an emphasis on vocational education and training.

The EU has also supported the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), a multi-ethnic college which opened in 2010 under the auspices of the Dutch non-governmental organisation SPARK. The college was due to close in 2017 because of a lack of funds but the EU decided to finance IBCM operations for another academic year, 2017-2018. The EU funded the college with €1.6 million.

The director of the college, Brian Stains, says that the EU's support was vital for the college to survive, after its closure was announced in July 2017. However, because the funds are only secured for one year, the college has had to freeze recruitment. Stains explains that the IBCM has produced a business plan which foresees that the college will reach self-sustainability by 2022.

IBCM will become a self-sustainable higher vocational education institution that provides high-quality international education at an affordable rate. Through the provision of excellent education and training, it will provide youth and adults in the Mitrovica region with economic opportunities and support economic development in the region. Through applying the IBCM motto "From Theory to Practice", IBCM students are equipped with an up-to-date set of skills, enabling them to develop professional careers. The EU is also supporting higher education in Kosovo through the Tempus, Young Cell Scheme, Erasmus Mundus and Horizon 2020 programmes.

Tempus was an EU programme designed to support the process of higher education reforms in Partner Countries, and promote and modernize mutual learning between regions and people. Tempus was brought to Kosovo in 2000 and the Kosovo Tempus Office opened in 2003. Ever since, public and private educational institutions in Kosovo have participated in 78 Tempus and Erasmus+ projects in total, which have enabled institutional cooperation with EU countries.

Kosovo has been a partner country of Erasmus+ since 2015 through its Kosovo Erasmus+ Office in Pristina, and its branch office in North Mitrovica. Erasmus+ offers opportunities for individuals to undertake a period of mobility or volunteering abroad and for organisations to collaborate in project partnerships in the fields of academic and vocational training, schools, adult learning and European sporting events. The programme also foresees cooperation with Partner Countries in the field of higher education and youth. The programme supports organisations, institutions or groups that, in turn, support a wide range of individuals including students, trainees, pupils, volunteers, teachers and professors.

Currently, Kosovo can take advantage of four Erasmus+ components: International Credit Mobility for students and academic staff; scholarships for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees; capacity building and Jean Monnet Activities to promote excellence in teaching and research in the field of EU studies worldwide.



Higher education institutions in Kosovo are very active in International Credit Mobility and there is a high level of interest among youth to benefit from these opportunities.

For example, the University of Pristina (UP) has created partnerships with universities all over Europe, according to Lumnije Bajrami, Director of the Office for International Relations at UP.

“Not only students, but also academic staff can take part in this programme. The number of agreements with partner universities is increasing every day, as is the number of participants. Our students from different academic levels can spend one or two semesters abroad and earn credits for it, and our academic staff can spend a week lecturing in one of our partner universities. It’s an opportunity to travel, learn, practice another language and gain new experiences,” Bajrami says.

So far, 1,341 participants from Kosovo have taken part in International Credit Mobility, whereas 647 participants from other European countries came to Kosovo.

ERASMUS +

Granit Brajshori, Kosovo Albanian

BA degree in Political Science, currently pursuing an MA degree in European Integration and Public Administration at the University of Pristina.

WHICH PROGRAMME DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN AND WHY?

I participated in the Erasmus+ programme as an exchange student at Vilnius University in Lithuania. I attended four courses across different faculties. One of my courses was in the Faculty of Law, another was in the Faculty of Economics, while two others were within the curricula of the Vilnius University Institute of International Relations and Political Science. The reason that I enrolled in those courses was that they were the most appropriate, even though they were not necessarily directly related to my studies in my home university.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE ABROAD? WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?

My experience abroad was an additional and valuable opportunity to gain new knowledge and new experiences. I would consider it as a good experience despite studying different subjects to those offered at my home university. I had the chance to experience new cultures and work and study in a multicultural environment, which undoubtedly provides opportunities for increased creativity, as well as challenges.

HOW USEFUL IS THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE RECEIVED UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

The mobility period was an asset to my academic career and it will hopefully give me an advantage in terms of dealing with challenges and having experienced the feeling of living with and sharing ideas with people from different backgrounds and countries.

Edis Galushi, Kosovo Roma from Prizren

MA degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the University of Zagreb

WHICH PROGRAMME DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN AND WHY?

I participated in an Erasmus Mundus programme because it offered me the best suitable conditions and an unprecedented support which enabled me to prosper both personally and academically. I received my MA degree at the University of Zagreb after I graduated from the University of Pristina. During my undergraduate degree, I also participated in an exchange programme for one academic year at the University of Vilnius, Lithuania, through Erasmus Mundus.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE ABROAD? WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?

Bearing in mind that Kosovo is one of the most isolated places in Europe, the ability to travel and study abroad has definitely broadened my horizons and has helped me to expand my professional knowledge and experiences. What I liked about the experience is that it made me realise the social and cultural diversity of Europe. It made me see the world from another perspective, something that unfortunately many in Kosovo do not have the chance to experience.

HOW USEFUL IS THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE RECEIVED UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

Having graduated from a university which is renowned for preparing students for professional life, and thanks to the knowledge and the experience I received, upon completing the programme I feel that I am in a good position to compete in the labour market and have definitely increased my chances of getting a decent and well paid job.



YOUNG CELL SCHEME

Since 2004, Kosovo students have participated in the Young Cell Scheme (YCS), an EU Postgraduate Scholarship Programme which aims to contribute to effective and efficient public administration in Kosovo at all levels, by building professional and apolitical civil service through scholarships. The EU funded project give Kosovo citizens with an undergraduate degree the opportunity to pursue further studies in an EU university. After completing the course, they have a contractual obligation to return to Kosovo and work for at least three years in Kosovo public administration.

The scholarship covers tuition fees, living allowances, visa costs, health insurance and travel costs. Over 250 students have taken part in this programme, and around 80% now work for government institutions. In 2014, the Young Cell Scheme was extended to the municipality in northern Kosovo, with an aim to support the local government reform.

Sanja Mrkić from North Mitrovica was one of the participants in the scheme. She gained a master's degree in International Relations from the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) under the YCS scholarship programme.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE ABROAD? WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?

Studying and living abroad, especially in such a metropolitan city as Barcelona, gave me an insight into a different educational system, a new culture and language. Given that I completed my bachelor's degree under an outdated educational programme, this experience provided me with valuable knowledge of more advanced systems in education.

HOW USEFUL IS THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE RECEIVED UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAMME FOR YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

The experience and knowledge received proved to be incredibly useful for my professional growth considering my personal interest in foreign affairs and geo-political issues. Moreover, this experience has also confirmed my dedication to encourage members from non-majority communities to seize this opportunity and gain new experiences.

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