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**KEC**

## **POLICY FOR INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION THROUGH ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood education programs re-started to be implemented from 1999, through financing from international agencies and NGO-s in cooperation with local institutions and NGO-s. Majority of children in Kosovo still do not have access in formal early childhood programs. Number of children enrolled in preschool institutions continues to be very low, which leaves the early childhood education care to be exclusively in the hand of families, regardless of their educational level. Public preschool institutions, being only 43 and not all in function, are located mainly in cities. Private preschool institutions are mainly located in big urban centers and are one of few preschool education alternatives.

Preschool education represents the least developed level of educational system in Kosovo. Comparison studies show that in the preschool education development aspect, Kosovo is leveled as one of the last countries in Europe. Until 1999, inclusion of children in preschool education was leveled as the lowest in Europe, with only 2.6% of children. Average percentage of inclusion in Western Europe is around 70%, whereas in Balkans around 30%.

Main reasons for the low inclusion are believed to be: low living standard, low awareness for the influence of preschool education, lack of preschool education tradition, politic conditions in the last decade, lack of ideas and initiatives for various alternatives for preschool education and lack of infrastructure for preschool institutions.

It is a well known fact that preschool education increases the efficiency of learning in primary education for 30 %, as well as that it impacts the rapid physical, mental, emotional, and social development of each child, as well as the development of society. Researches show that investment in preschool education, in latter periods, increases the value of investments in society for 7 times, increases the quality of learning for the future levels of schooling and facilitates child integration in school especially of children from marginalized groups.

According to MEST data, child inclusion in preschool education continues to decrease. Statistics show that from 1,675 registered children in public preschool institutions in 2006/07, the number in school year 2007/08 has decreased 1,521 children. The same is with the pre-primary education (preschool classes within the primary schools) where we have a decrease of children inclusion from 21,089 to 19,716 children. One of the reasons is the closing of pre-primary classes due to the limited number of teachers within a municipality.

Lack of sufficient financial means, as well as the insufficient municipal budget for education especially for preschool education has impacted, among others in the lack of infrastructure for preschool education. Preschool education in general, continues to lack the position it deserves within the system of education, contrary to the fact that Law on Preschool Education determines as MEST objective to provide inclusion of children until the age of six in preschool education until the year 2010.

### **MAIN ISSUES**

Low inclusion in preschool education does not provide premises for qualitative compulsory education and for educated personality development with the world advanced levels. Low investments in preschool

education, especially in infrastructure did not enable the sufficient inclusion of children in preschool education. Unfortunately, the fee parents pay for their children are not managed by the preschool institutions, but are directed in the municipal budget, which, provide the financing for the institutions. The above mentioned facts don't allow the preschool institutions and primary schools to increase their capacity for enrolling more children in preschool education.

This is the reason why the functioning of alternative forms of preschool education is a necessity. Alternative forms of preschool education have several direct impacts:

- Increase the children inclusion in preschool education;
- Facilitate the integration of children in primary education;
- Lower the expenses for preschool education;

## **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

In order to increase the inclusion in preschool education, the following policy objectives have been identified:

- To increase the level of inclusion of children in preschool education;
- To support alternative forms of preschool education, through awareness raising and stimulating the relevant stakeholders.

## **POSSIBLE OPTIONS**

### **Option 1**

#### **Providing possibilities for alternative preschool education within preschool institutions and primary schools**

The request for enrolment in preschool education is bigger than the possibilities of inclusion. Therefore, the unused spaces in preschool institutions and primary schools need to be used for inclusion of a bigger number of children in preschool education.

Some closed spaces or spaces that are used for other purposes exist in some preschool institutions and primary schools that can be adapted for preschool education activity classes.

Existing spaces in preschool institutions may be used after working hours aiming at including children who are not enrolled in preschool education.

#### **Advantages:**

- Increased participation of children in preschool education;
- Rational use of existing spaces;
- Opportunity for new working places

### **Option 2**

#### **Providing opportunities for alternative preschool education, through preschool education activity rooms in municipal property buildings and in working buildings.**

Municipal property buildings that have unused spaces may be considered for finding ways of using them as preschool education activity rooms, including the hospitalized children as well. Likewise, classes may be created in working places with higher number of workers, where worker's children would attend the preschool education.

**Advantages:**

Increased participation of children in preschool education  
Rational use of municipal existing spaces  
Opportunity for new working places

**Disadvantages:**

Difficulty in monitoring teacher work

**Option 3****Education in family**

Education in family may be developed in rural and urban places where institutional forms of preschool education don't exist. In cooperation with municipal bodies and civil society organizations dealing with preschool education, in some chosen houses spaces may be created, where children from the neighborhood would be gathered and spend some time together.

**Advantages:**

Increased participation of children in preschool education  
Parent awareness and parent increased engagement for their child education.  
Financial benefit for house owners

**Disadvantages:**

Difficult management  
Difficulties in monitoring the teacher work

**CHOSEN POLICY AND IMPLICATIONS**

For the development of this policy, the following alternative forms have been chosen:

- a) Providing possibilities for alternative preschool education within preschool institutions and primary schools, and
- b) Providing opportunities for alternative preschool education, through preschool education activity rooms in municipal property buildings and in working buildings

Both these forms are economic, functional, rational, and reach urban as well as rural places.

The most direct and key impact of these actions is the increased access possibility for preschool education and certainly an increased participation of children in this level of the system of education.

While the education in family will not be taken into consideration since this form is more difficult to implement due to the unfavorable conditions for the implementation and lack of supervision mechanism.

**IMPLEMENTATION****Objective 1. Providing possibilities for alternative preschool education within preschool institutions and primary schools**

**Measure 1:** Plans are developed for the provision of possibilities for opening preschool education activity rooms.

**Description:** Municipalities identify unused existing premises which can be adopted for activity rooms, as well as possibilities for building annexes within preschool institutions. In order not to overload the municipal budget with new employees, wages can be covered with the participation of parents.

**Implementers:** Municipal Assembly, MEST, Preschool Institutions

**Timeframe:** Max. 18 months.

**Measure 2:** Premises are used after working hours and during the weekend

**Description:** Having in mind there is a huge need for preschool education in Kosova, it would be wise to use rationally the premises Preschool Institutions poses. Administrative regulation 44/2007 enables preschool institutions to use premises after working hours during the weekend for activities with children who are not included in preschool education and in the same time a chance will be given to the ones who are enrolled in preschool education. Parents will pay a certain sum for their children to take part in these activities, which would cover the needed expenses, including the teacher wages.

**Implementers:** Preschool Institutions, Municipal Assembly, MEST

**Timeframe:** In continuity.

## **Measure 2. Providing opportunities for alternative preschool education, through preschool education activity rooms in municipal property buildings and in working buildings**

**Measure 1:** Utilize unused premises in municipal buildings

**Description:** In municipal premises spaces exist, which are not used by anybody for years. These unused spaces under the municipal administration are adapted for preschool education. Parents will pay a certain sum for their children to take part in these activities, which would cover the needed expenses, including the teacher wages.

**Implementers:** Municipal assembly, MEST

**Timeframe:** In continuity

**Measure 2:** Utilize premises in public and non-public institutions for preschool education

**Description:** Practice has shown that utilizing premises in employees working places where they would bring their children for preschool education, increases the efficiency at work as well as decreases the family expenses. Therefore, we should work with the public and non-public institutions to give their contribution for increased inclusion of children in preschool education.

**Implementers:** MEST

**Timeframe:** In continuity

**Measure 3:** Utilize activity rooms for hospitalized children

**Description:** Health institutions utilize activity rooms for hospitalized children for their education and development. Nurses within the hospital, students and volunteers could be engaged for these children's education.

**Implementers:** Municipal assembly, Ministry of Health, MEST

**Timeframe:** In continuity

**Measure 4:** Utilize various premises in rural places for preschool education

**Description:** Community Based Centers are another form of increasing the inclusion of children in preschool education. Establishment of these centers increases the inclusion of children in preschool education from rural places as well as creates new working places for villagers. Parents will pay a certain sum for their children to take part in these activities, which would cover the needed expenses, including the teacher wages.

**Implementers:** Municipal assembly, Municipal Education Directorates, NGO, MEST

**Timeframe:** In continuity

## **EVALUATION**

Evaluation will be focused on measurable results of this policy. The following will be evaluated and checked:

- Number of children included in preschool education;
- Number of activity rooms in preschool institutions and primary schools;
- Number of activity rooms in municipal premises and other institutions;
- Number of activity rooms in rural places;
- Number of new working places;

One year after the initiation of policy implementation, MEST and municipalities shall gather data for the abovementioned measures, whereas each year from the initiation of the policy implementation, NGO-s, MDE and Inspection Offices shall measure the quality of learning in primary education.

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