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EDUCATION OF ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES IN KOSOVO

EDITORIAL



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Public Discussion on the Report

“Education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo”

The inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the education system in Kosovo has improved over the past decade. However, these communities continue to face challenges which manifest themselves in every aspect of their education, including low enrolment and attendance, poor academic results, insufficient quality of teaching etc. The overall impact of these challenges leaves the children of these communities without adequate protection and support in the education process.

In order to identify core facts and analyze the state of things, on 21 December 2021, Kosovo Education Center (KEC) organized a virtual public discussion on Zoom. This discussion was held in the framework of FPA project **Quality, Accountability and Inclusiveness in Education 2021**, which is funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo (EUOK) and implemented by KEC.

The discussion evolved around the presentation of a research report (hereinafter “Report”) compiled by an expert hired by the aforementioned project for this purpose. This Report adopted an analytical and critical stance towards the situation on the ground, based on data, interviews and focus groups, and provided a primarily qualitative analysis of the existing circumstances. The Report sought to include almost every aspect in the education of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, touching on all layers of said topic.

The author of the Report presented the findings, including an overall description of the work done so far by institutions and civil society organizations that operate donor-funded projects. Finally, recommendations were put forth on ways to improve the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo. One of the most crucial points made was that such improvement requires a thorough restructuring of the relevant legal framework, to ensure that this process no longer depends solely on short-term projects but is rather a continuous long-term endeavor.

Participants in the discussion included representatives from the Division on Communities with the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) and Municipal Education

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Directorates (MEDs) from municipalities where these communities live, civil society organizations, the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Education at Prizren University, Prof. Vedat Bajrami, who is a long-time expert in the field of education and inclusiveness, as well as Mr. Fridon Lala, who is a Member of Kosovo Parliament from the Egyptian community.

During the Q & A portion of the discussion, participants raised a number of important issues, expressing their opinions based on many years of experience in education among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and gave suggestions about aspects that need to be prioritized. Some of the most significant points made included:

- the lack of reliable data and problems in collecting information, as factors that help understand the situation and identify solutions down the road;
- insufficient employment of qualified professionals from these communities in schools and learning centers attended by students of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities;
- additional attention to be paid to students with learning challenges;
- the necessity to review and supplement the administrative instruction on learning centers;
- the need to supplement textbooks with information on the history and culture of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities;
- the importance of parental involvement in children's school life, mostly from a motivational point of view.

Public discussions of this kind continue to prove useful tools to identify the multidimensional challenges met by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo as they pursue their right to education. In addition to pre-existing obstacles, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought on new problems in the education of children from these communities. In this regard, the Report presented during this public discussion is likely to provide useful material in future efforts to improve the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo.

This editorial was drafted by Bora Shpuza Kasapolli within the program "Quality, Accountability and Inclusiveness in Education 2021" implemented by the Kosova Education Center (KEC) with the support of the Office of the European Union in Kosovo. The content of this editorial will in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union Office in Kosovo.

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