

# Kosovo\* Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED): ‘Addressing the weak links’

Final report

March 2023



\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



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## Key messages to policy-makers / executive summary

The Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED) Kosovo is an analytical exercise conducted by the European Training Foundation (ETF) at the request of the European Union services, including the European Commission Directorate General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and the European Union Office in Kosovo (EUOK), to inform the EU programming cycle. It provides an evidence-based analysis of the entire education system, addressing, as per the standard RED methodology and EU priorities, three main thematic areas: inequality, financing and governance. In addition, specific attention is paid to early childhood education and digitalisation as areas of possible EU intervention. As the aim of RED is to bring attention to priority reform needs, focus is placed primarily on challenges and critical issues, notwithstanding achievements and progress made and reported elsewhere.

This analysis was carried out by an expert team of education, finance and data analysts over a 6-month period in the second half of 2022, with a contribution from Kosovo's stakeholders for data collection in particular. Beyond the consolidation of previous reports that remain accurate and relevant, and based on an in-depth use of quantitative data, and qualitative evidence for confirmation, it endeavours to offer a new perspective on inequality, financing and governance dimensions.

While the primary audience of this report are EU services, the recommendations might be useful for the Kosovo government, in particular the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) and the Prime Minister's Office, for setting priorities in the framework of the current Education strategy 2022-2026.

The title *Kosovo Rapid Education Diagnosis: Addressing weak links* has been chosen to alert readers and prompt a viewing of RED's findings through a certain lens. In Kosovo, many of the education system's problems feature 'links' as their root cause. Whether missing, broken or weak, related to information flow, to coordination mechanisms or to collaboration frameworks, these defective links prevent the smooth running of the system, and undermine the implementation and effectiveness of the decision-making and reform processes. Therefore, it is essential that they should form the common thread of this analysis.

The main findings and recommendations of this Rapid Education Diagnosis presented hereafter are further developed and supported with graphic and qualitative evidence available in the full report.

### Findings

RED findings should be considered in relation to the current context of the Kosovo education system: the latter combines a demographic decline of the learning population (with 0-14 year-olds still representing a quarter of the total population), sector fragility linked to political changes and social unrest, but provides an enabling policy framework, with the existence of the Education Strategy 2026 aligned with the National Development Strategy 2030, combined with steady support from external development partners.



## Inequality

*Average access and quality.* If one only considers averages, access to education in Kosovo is an issue mainly in early childhood education (37.8% enrolment of children below 6 years old). Gross enrolment rates in primary (101.1%) and secondary (85%) education are very similar to those in the region and are relatively high. With more than half of upper secondary students, vocational education and training (VET) is well developed but is often diverted from its original function and used as a pathway to higher education. Higher education is estimated to be attended by almost half of the approximate target youth population (49.4% of 18-22 year-olds), but has experienced a huge drop over the last five years that cannot be explained by demographic decline only, and does not demonstrate its relevance in terms of employability and transition from school to work.

However, quality is a well-recognised problem, as evidenced, for pre-university education, by PISA results, in which Kosovo was ranked among the last three participating countries in 2018. A huge gap remains between the reform efforts (in all quality areas: shift to competence-based curricula, teachers' initial training and continuing professional development, pedagogical resources, digitalisation of education) and their resulting implementation.

*From averages to determining factors of inequality.* The available, although not similarly reliable, disaggregated data have led to the identification of the following conclusions: the factors of inequality are mainly linked to the schools' characteristics, with a particular influence of the existence of multiple shifts (operated in two thirds of the public schools, but not necessarily for all classes<sup>1</sup>) and the availability of pedagogical resources (the impact of teachers' characteristics, although reported as a major challenge, could not be documented due to lacking data). Pupils' characteristics seem to play a more minor role. Families' wealth does not seem to be a major factor as of yet, but could increasingly become one, along with the development of private provision, especially in pre-school level. Gender is not a discriminating factor when looking at education only, but becomes one in terms of transition from school to work.


*The rural – urban divide ... some counter-intuitive results.* While the distinction between rural and urban schools is a parameter in the MESTI education management system, it does not show substantial, constant differences but rather counter-intuitive results: despite the rural exodus and the concerns of 'empty schools' (200 operate with fewer than 150 students) and 'surplus teachers' (estimate: 2000) raised by the MESTI itself, 63% of rural schools operate with *some* multiple shifts, not so far away from the 73.6% of urban schools.

*The alarming recent increase of enrolments in private education.* The overall decrease of pupil numbers at all education levels is not reflected in enrolments in pre-university private education, which have almost tripled in 6 years, rising from 1.1% to 5.5% of total enrolments between 2015/16 and 2021/22. Although this remains a tiny proportion of the education provision, and notwithstanding the myriad reasons for this increase – increasing mistrust of parents in public education quality, and/or lack of public offer in certain (urban) areas or for certain levels like pre-school –, this development represents both a worrying issue of inequality based on households resources.

*The uneven use of resources at school level.* As the (too scarce) data shows, a clear equity and efficiency problem results from the uneven use of resources, including school premises, teaching force, digital equipment and pedagogical material at school level. The legislation related to teachers and their decentralised recruitment by municipalities currently impedes a needs-based management that would improve fairness across the country and be in line with decreasing trends

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<sup>1</sup> Data is not available to know exactly how many students attend classes operated in multi-shift.



in enrolment. Weaknesses in the inclusive enrolment planning process impact negatively on specialised staff and other support provision for students with special needs.

*Digitalisation: less a factor of inequalities than a national challenge.* The issue of infrastructure and digital capacity of schools is the first striking impediment to education digitalisation, with one out of six public schools without internet access, two thirds without an IT laboratory and only 1 computer for 35 learners on average. This is on top of the primary challenge for an equitable digitalisation of the education system linked to the lack of digital competences of educators in designing and delivering lessons combining and mastering traditional and digital methods.

*An inequitable and uneven pre-school education system.* Finally, the pre-school education offer is insufficient, lacks in quality assurance, and also risks reinforcing rural-urban and work-related inequalities. Ten municipalities are deprived of public institutions (be they classic public pre-schools, community centres or public-private partnership run pre-schools); the lack of coordination between the ministry of trade, which issues work permits, and the MESTI, which delivers the accrediting license, leads to the existence of a substantial number of unlicensed pre-schools outside the scope of quality assurance mechanisms; the largely private offer in urban areas benefits families who can afford them; and last but not least, the limited number of teaching hours at public pre-school and pre-primary levels does not solve the issue of low activity rates among women, as it is not a sustainable solution for finding a full or even part-time job.


## Financing

*Education budget.* The limited budget priority given to the sector exposes some discrepancies, but allows for improvement in quality and offer. Education accounts for 4.1% of the gross domestic product, or 13.3% of total government spending. However, compared to other neighbouring countries, the per student (or per capita) spending is low, due to the important child population. In addition, the comparison between budget allocation by education level and the enrolment numbers reveals several discrepancies, including in higher education, where the budget allocation increased slightly while enrolments decreased, or in pre-school and pre-primary education, where the budget increase was not sufficient, at least until 2020, to meet the increasing needs.

*Digital education is increased at the government priority level through the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2023-2025.* Budget plans foresee some investments to support digitalisation efforts, in cooperation with other actors (Agency for the information society), but they remain below the ambitions stated in the Education Strategy 2026, where half of the costs of the digitalisation pillar are still to be covered, jeopardising its feasibility and sustainability. The analysis of the distribution of the budget by economic items shows encouraging room for manoeuvre for policy measures in favour of quality improvement and public provision expansion: salaries and allowances represent little more than two thirds of the budget (68%), which means that almost one third remains available for capital expenditure (school or class construction, IT equipment, etc.) or goods and services (including pedagogical, digital resources, etc.).

The comparison between planned and executed budget indicates a need for enhancing the budget planning capacity, but also for exploring the reasons, through inter-ministerial collaboration, behind the discrepancies. Indeed, the satisfactory total execution rate (100%) hides an overconsumption of goods and services and an underconsumption of capital expenditure, although needs in the latter domain are huge.

*Decentralisation and financing.* The decentralised financial management is a priority work area for appropriate and transparent school financing via the municipality education directorates.



To start with, the sources of funds documented in budget documents show that the State remains the main funder of the sector, despite the decentralised model: it provides 92.5% of the sectoral budget, while municipalities' contributions from their own resources represent 5.3%. Compared to their respective own resources, this contribution to education amounts to one sixth on average, with important disparities among municipalities. For instance, Pristina's budget to education amounts to one fifth of its own resources, as well as one fifth of the total education budget spent at municipal level, probably to make up for the sharp rise of social demand for education; more surprisingly, some rural municipalities devote up to a quarter of their own budget to the sector (e.g.: Peja or Kacanik), contrary to others in similar conditions (less than 1%). In a policy perspective, analysing the reasons underlying the decisions of municipalities to fund the sector and the type of expenses covered could make it possible to reward the most voluntary municipalities or to encourage those lagging behind through incentives.

The funding formula used to allocate pre-university budget to each municipality needs urgent revision, as acknowledged and taken forward by the MESTI. However, this will take time, as it requires a change in the local government law. In particular, the current formula does not take into account the occupancy rate of the schools, does not differentiate the needs of vocational education and training, and calculations are not always based on accurate data, in particular for Serb-majority municipalities where data are several years old. Higher education institutions are not funded through a funding formula that would integrate a performance criterion; this shortage needs to be urgently worked out jointly with the ministry of finance, taking into account other countries' practices.


The schools' lack of financial autonomy mirrors their lack of management autonomy in general, which hampers smooth operations according to daily needs. Income-generating activities are possible but not fostered by current arrangements.

*Monitoring, accountability and institutional capacity related to financing.* Accountability and monitoring of spending is a critical issue, as existing reporting frameworks are lacking in this regard, nor backed by appropriate coordination mechanisms that would facilitate information flows and secure regular communication channels, namely between the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfer and the MESTI, and between the MESTI and municipality education directorates on financing matters.

The problem of efficiency in spending, as illustrated by the low pupil-teacher ratio among other indicators, reflects the difficulty in complying with norms and standards, namely due to political and social sensitivities. It also calls for greater analysis of school data through the prism of finances and efficiency.

*Policy costing and donor funding.* The Education Strategy 2022-26 is, remarkably so, accompanied by a cost estimate. However, this estimate raises four main concerns : i) ambitious target for the strategy's budget, which is planned to double over five years (with a total cost of EUR 322 million over five years, the budget is expected to grow from EUR 40 million in 2022 to 70 million in 2026); ii) a strategy representing a limited part of the current system operations, although it already constitutes a considerable reform effort (the strategy's budget amounts to between 12% and 20% of the yearly budget to the sector); iii) a feasibility challenge, as the funding gap represents one third of the entire education strategy; iv) a pillar of the strategy particularly at risk, as half of the funding gap concerns the digitalisation pillar.

The MESTI is said to be one of the Kosovo institutions benefitting the most from donor funding. However, there is no clear and regularly updated record of all donor contributions, neither in terms of amount, nor in terms of activities – be it in the medium-term budget framework, the annual



budget plans, or elsewhere. This hinders both the consolidation of all resources allocated to the education sector and limits (or reflects) the steering or leadership capacity of the MESTI.

*Institutional capacity for financial management.* The widespread issue of institutional capacity applies to the financial management function, and is derived from the lack of easily available financial data and of inter-institutional coordination, which are required to oversee the financing chain, from budget planning to expenditure review and efficiency assessment. It concerns the macro level (MESTI), meso level (municipality education directorates (MEDs), and micro (school) level, including procurement and auditing competences, and should be addressed specifically, although as part of a broader effort.

### **Governance**


In Kosovo, the governance of the education system is expected to rely 'vertically' on three levels: the macro or central level, mainly entrusted to the MESTI; the meso level, represented by MEDs; and the micro level, focusing on schools. Efficient linkages between these three levels are a critical element for implementing such a decentralised education system. However, the governance arrangements and practices reveal many weak not to say missing links.

*Responsibilities and coordination mechanisms in a decentralised system.* First, the roles (or functions) and responsibilities are formally defined by law based on a subsidiarity principle, but are not strictly respected.

At central level, the institutional setting points to a sometimes confusing role of the MESTI and a multiplicity of institutions with uncertain complementarity of their functions. By law, the MESTI is mainly responsible for the policy and regulatory framework design, as well as for quality assurance and inspection, and has a limited competence in terms of operational management of the education provision, which has been mostly transferred to Municipalities through the law on local self-government. However, in practice and in contradiction with its human resource shortages, the MESTI is still greatly involved in the implementation. Conversely, MESTI's leadership role is neither fully recognised nor enabled by the institutional setting, as it lacks important units to officially lead on key reforms and functions such as digitalisation or quality assurance. Last but not least, there is a multiplicity of small size institutions, with unclear roles, limited power and insufficient resources to deliver, and the duplication of functions is frequent.

At meso level, the municipality education directorates (MED), expected to be the cornerstone of the education management process, are not empowered and do not have sufficient capacity and resources to fulfil their role. They have a long list of duties, but usually lack the human resources to fulfil them. However, as decentralisation does not impose on MEDs to report on achievements (and weaknesses), it is difficult for the MESTI to recognise and act on such shortages. Obviously, this situation does not foster transparency, nor does it instil a culture of responsibility.

At micro level, the autonomy of schools is almost inexistent, despite an enabling legal framework. As is often the case, the legislation is more enabling than its implementation shows. As a basic, practical obstacle to their autonomy, schools do not know their budget. Constraining rules on income-generating activities do not encourage dynamic management. Other hampering factors include appointment procedures for school headmasters, as well as the lack of managerial competences of the school management team, the limited participation of teachers, students or parents in the school decision-making processes, namely through the school board, which often appears to be little more than a formal body.



The functional review conducted in 2018 by GiZ analysed in detail these institutional weaknesses, namely at MESTI (central) level, and provided an inspiring set of recommendations. Unfortunately, no clear follow-up, in terms of decision or structured dialogue was mentioned, and MESTI's new draft organisation chart, which is not fully compliant with the recommended simplification, still remains to be approved.

Second, institutional coordination is the missing link everywhere. This creates 'black holes' and does not support transparency and accountability, nor flexibility and responsiveness. Between the macro, ministerial level and the meso (MED) level, the lack of central coordination together with the absence of clear lines for informing, deciding or reporting impedes a streamlined and effective decision-making process. The absence of coordination among MEDs also impedes locally found solutions.

Third, the legislative processes are, in general in Kosovo, fragmented and lengthy, and are impeded by political concerns. This does not help the responsiveness of the education system to adopt remediation measures that would be needed to address urgent needs (such as the redeployment of surplus teachers where needed) or to improve the efficiency of the system (e.g. the rationalisation of the schools' network to avoid the existence of many inefficient, or redundant, small schools). However, this would require introducing, upon clear justification and possibly by means of temporary arrangements, flexibility in the decentralisation framework, which is a highly sensitive issue.


*Data and monitoring for policy making.* The collection and use of data is an acute weakness that impedes greater needs-based efficacy, and actual accountability at all levels. At municipality level, there are no monitoring, reporting or evaluation mechanisms of any kind in place. Data exists, as well as two education management information systems (as mentioned above), but they are not used for setting up an accountability and monitoring mechanism, let alone for informing policy dialogue in order to inspire reforms. Data is scarcely used for system management and policy making, at central or municipal level.

*Institutional capacity.* The institutional capacity challenge manifests itself, in terms of quantitative and qualitative resources and competences, at all governance levels; it is the overlooked fundamental basis for effectively managing the education system. At MESTI level, beyond the pending reorganisation as per the organisation chart, there is no digitalisation of working methods. At municipality level, data is missing to further qualify, locate and address the shortages. At school level, organisational problems in the teaching environment (multi-shifts, teacher allocation, etc.) are among the most problematic.

*Teacher and school headmaster management.* The management of school staff, in particular teachers and headmasters, raises concerns in relation to initial training, recruitment, deployment and support. School headmasters are appointed by municipalities, with frequent problems relating to transparency and competences, despite the criteria set by the MESTI.

*Leadership over the sector and role of education partners.* The strategic vision lacks an incentivising environment of public debate and a supportive, cohesive donor community. The limited leadership capacity of the MESTI on the sector does not compensate the ownership risk due to the multiplicity of donor interventions. There is a conceptually good strategic vision of what the system should look like, but the basics are lacking to enable and secure its implementation. As there is hardly any space for public debate, the MESTI vision for education is not owned and supported as it could be, with a more participatory approach.





On top of that, the role of donors in Kosovo is ambivalent. Donors provide huge support, which helps build the education system of this young country. However, it is largely uncoordinated, and risks overlaps in interventions, merely advancing the respective agendas, or substitution. And the weak, mainly formal donor coordination under the MESTI's leadership does little to mitigate these risks and address inconsistencies.

Inequality, financing and governance issues underpin the resilience of the Kosovo education system: resilience of the Kosovo education system is first and foremost related to a certain stability of the system, which confines to resistance to change.

## Recommendations

The Chapter on Recommendations offers a selection of options or menu, depending on the preferences and standpoint of the reader. The first section, addressing all readers, provides general recommendations on reform priorities; the second section, addressing primarily the EU services, proposes priorities for EU external support, which could also inspire other donors. The third section addresses the Kosovo government and the MESTI, relating RED recommendations to the plans of the Education Strategy 2026.

### Key recommendations

Drawing from the findings, recommended actions and related work priorities have been identified, sequenced whenever possible (short term, medium term, long term) and clustered under three key recommendation areas. They are presented below. Details on the time frame are available in the full report.

#### **KEY RECOMMENDATION AREA A - Data, Analysis and Monitoring**

##### **Action A1: Set up a sound monitoring and evaluation mechanism for ES 2026**

- ✓ Create an ad hoc group on education monitoring, under the leadership of MESTI, with a 3-to-6-month mandate focused on the monitoring mechanism associated with the strategy
- ✓ Define thoroughly the monitoring mechanism of the education strategy 2026
- ✓ Organise annual joint sector reviews based on this monitoring mechanism up to 2026
- ✓ Conduct a Lessons Learnt exercise

##### **Action A2: Carry out a number of ad-hoc, data-based analyses on specific issues**

- ✓ Detailed data-based analysis of the teaching force
- ✓ Analysis of education management at municipal level
- ✓ Mapping of schools' premises
- ✓ Mapping of planned donor contributions to the sector
- ✓ Data needs assessment

##### **Action A3: Develop education and financial data management, building on improved management information system(s)**

- ✓ Set up a mixed team in charge of the revision of the education management information systems
- ✓ Make a functional review of the existing system
- ✓ Fix the education, labour market and financial management information systems focusing on interoperability and use for policy-making

- ✓ Ensure through training and ownership of all key stakeholders
- ✓ Make compulsory the tracing of financial data through the municipality level to the schools

### **KEY RECOMMENDATION AREA B - Governance frameworks, including coordination mechanisms, for effective decentralisation**

#### **Action B1: Streamline the institutional and governance setting based on the functional review**

- ✓ Review, update and discuss the recommendations of the functional review, and plan to act on the feasible ones for streamlining the institutional setting, linked with the new draft organisation chart and the functions to be performed
- ✓ Concentrate the quality assurance function into a single organisational unit
- ✓ Appoint an organisational unit in charge of advancing the digital agenda
- ✓ Revise the legislation for enabling the desired adjustment of the institutional setting
- ✓ Make schools the responsible level for more regular quality assurance procedures

#### **Action B2: Create or activate coordination mechanisms at the various governance levels**

- ✓ Between education and finance: establish and activate a joint committee between MESTI and MFLT
- ✓ Between government and donors: make the education donor coordination framework operational and purposeful
- ✓ Between MESTI and MEDs: create a simple and user-friendly mechanism, facilitated by MESTI, for information sharing and flexibility across MEDs on their educational resources
- ✓ Define a framework (a space) for regular, public debate on education involving the Kosovo civil society
- ✓ Initiate an inter-ministerial discussion involving municipalities on school network optimisation

### **KEY RECOMMENDATION AREA C - Holistic capacity building for a quality-assured, equitable system**

#### **Action C1: Implement a holistic, systematic and user-centred approach to capacity building**

- ✓ Conduct a comprehensive training needs analysis (TNA)
- ✓ Draft a user-targeted and time-sequenced capacity building (or training) master plan
- ✓ Secure resources and divide the responsibility of implementing the capacity building masterplan according to the user targets
- ✓ Introduce a holistic reform of the teaching profession, including a modernised capacity building scheme for teachers

#### **Action C2: Build capacities for a full-fledged implementation of the quality assurance function**

- ✓ Train micro and meso actors (headmasters, QA coordinators at school level and in MEDs)
- ✓ Coach MEDs and inspectors to jointly develop, in each municipality, a mid-term inspection plan

#### **Action C3: Revise the funding framework for the various education levels, making quality a key parameter for resource allocation**

- ✓ Adopt and activate a new funding formula for pre-university education, differentiating general education and VET
- ✓ Learn lessons from municipalities' good practices for decentralising budget management at school level for upscaling the best practices
- ✓ Define and adopt a performance-based funding formula for higher education

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- ✓ Facilitate alternative financing models for ECEC

#### **Action C4: Revise the approach to early childhood education and care**

- ✓ Convert empty classrooms in rural areas in appropriate preschool learning environments
- ✓ Reconsider the choices made for the pre-school education policy, including moving to a broader concept of 'early childhood education and care'

#### **Action C5: Make digital education a driving lens for rethinking the quality of the education provision**

- ✓ Secure digital infrastructure and equipment
- ✓ Draft quality assurance and quality standards for digital education with a low-tech approach
- ✓ Make the reinforcement of digital education competence of educators a starting point for activating digital in teaching learning and assessment practice

### **Recommendations for EU (and donor) support**

*Priorities for EU financial assistance.* Beyond aligning with the Education strategy 2026, we recommend that EU financial assistance should support the interventions listed under the three key areas identified, which are fully compliant with the global EU support framework. The ideal support scheme should combine long-term support to reinforce key functions for a well-functioning education system overall, with short-term, quick fixes in terms of evidence base and analyses for decision-making.


In the short term, the EU could foresee to order and/or fund a set of targeted in-depth studies, with a contribution to their terms of reference. It should also play an active role in bringing together the different ministries (MESTI, MFLT, MPA) to achieve the creation of the needed task forces and inter-ministerial groups. Although this should be part of a reinforced policy dialogue, it may be worth including it also as activities in the EU intervention.

In the medium to long term, two functions deserve a special, substantial and steady/long-lasting support from the EU, as they are crucial for substantive progress on the quality of the education system: the monitoring and evaluation function and the quality assurance function.

*Modalities for EU financial assistance.* If ever envisaged, budget support would need to wait for the revision of the data chain to be effective, so that an adequate, result-oriented monitoring and evaluation mechanism is in place and can meet the conditions of this support modality regarding regular assessment of sector policy.

Capacity building actions, which are much needed, should be organised into an integrated plan (with a capacity building component for each component of EU assistance rather than a dedicated CB project) and entrusted to a pool of national institutions, supervised by a joint EUOK/MESTI steering committee. This pool could include, as mentioned above, the public administration bodies in charge of public servants' training, universities, and other public or private actors to be identified.

Last but not least, in order to foster bottom-up approaches and ground-based solutions, the EU could choose implementation modalities for its projects that encourage civil society participation and empowerment, such as calls for tenders targeting civil society organisations (incl. parents' associations, NGOs, etc.), for instance.



*A good case for developing cross-sectoral programming.* If administrative and organisation barriers could be overcome, the education sector in Kosovo could offer at least four opportunities for cross-sectoral EU support: on digitalisation (with digital transition, e-governance), on early childhood (with health, social protection, nutrition), on institutional capacity building (with public administration, public finance management, governance and decentralisation) and on financing mechanisms (with budget and public finance management). Conversely, it would be interesting, within other EU support programmes (PFM, PAR, Information society, etc.), to make the education sector a priority for the implementation of transversal reforms.

*Implications for the policy dialogue between Kosovo and the EU.* Given the level of financial assistance provided by the EU institutions (40% of total ODA received by Kosovo in 2017), the EU has full legitimacy to lead on the policy dialogue between Kosovo government and its donors (not only between Kosovo and EU). Concretely, this could include:

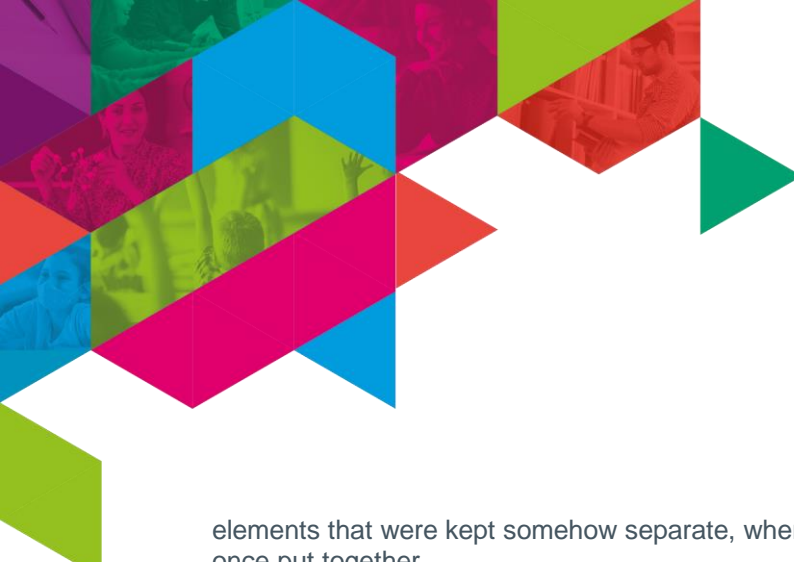
- organising meaningful joint sector reviews, at sub-committee meetings, putting the Education Strategy 2026 and RED in the spotlight of these sub-committee meetings, and granting dedicated back-to-back meetings to the sector;
- embracing and sustaining a political leadership at highest level on sensitive but critical issues for a successful reform of the education system, including cross-ministerial (regular and operational) coordination, holistic institutional capacity building and functional review follow-up, or the gradual move to objective-based budget programming.

### **Recommendations to Kosovo's government and MESTI**

Despite the sound policy vision offered by the Education Strategy 2026, there is a need to set clearer priorities among the many actions to be implemented over 5 years, acknowledging the still important funding gap, the first year of implementation results, and taking realistically into account the absorption capacities, including the constraints linked to the institutional capacities and the human resources. This would set the basis for a credible policy agenda that donors and development partners could then more easily support.

This reality check was done by comparing the actions and work priorities recommended by RED to the actions planned in the Education Strategy 2026, as MESTI's roadmap for the coming 4 years. This final analytical effort, compiled into a simple table that can be consulted separately, confirms that the Education Strategy 2026 entails many relevant and important reform measures that mirror RED concerns. Nevertheless, the structure of the document, organised around the four main education levels plus the digitalisation objective, does not demonstrate the synergies, complementarity and integration across these levels, and across the public institutions in charge of implementing the reform, as they are now in charge of running the system. It does not situate the possible role of other education stakeholders nor does it detail the monitoring and evaluation mechanism that should guarantee a close and timely steering of the change process. Connecting these dots, and putting 'oil' in the system is probably the most urgent action for MESTI's roadmap to become comprehensive and owned by all the concerned stakeholders.

*RED, an evidence-based milestone within a demanding reform journey.* This Rapid Education Diagnosis may not lead to breakthroughs in the knowledge of the challenges that the system currently encounters, but it certainly documents them in a systematic and data-based way. It also integrates qualitative evidence gathered through consultation, which is a way to foster a participatory reflection, engaging the various stakeholders beyond the macro level, as well as outside the ministerial remit. Ultimately, it endeavours to reconcile many pre-existing analytical



elements that were kept somehow separate, whereas they provide strong messages for reform once put together.

The RED report advocates for improving transparency and accountability in the education system, thanks to more comprehensive data management, analysis, basic tracing of spending and efficiency down to the decentralised level, and clearly defined and applied monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; these are the basics of adaptive and resilient education systems. But the very cornerstone and main success factor of reforms, which should not be forgotten, remains human capital, at all levels of the system from the schools to the municipalities and ministries. This attention to human capital is essential to ensure that reforming efforts go beyond a mechanical approach to education system management, and make human capital development, including competence and capacity reinforcement, a strong and 'organic' priority.

The European Union, through both its Office in Kosovo and the DG NEAR in Brussels, is fully legitimate, and holds an important responsibility in promoting the next steps, including the creation of the ad hoc working groups and discussion spaces needed as pre-conditions for structural changes, and pushing for domestic inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation, under a Kosovo high-level political leadership.

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# Introduction

Kosovo\* Rapid Education Diagnosis: Addressing weak links. Why this title? To alert the readers, prompt them to view RED's findings through a certain lens. In Kosovo, many of the education system's problems feature 'links' as their root causes. Whether missing, broken or simply weak, whether related to information flow, to coordination mechanisms or to collaboration frameworks, these defective links prevent the smooth running of the system and undermine the effectiveness of the decision-making and reform processes. Therefore, it seemed important to make them the common thread of this analysis.

## Background, target audience and objectives

**Background.** In April 2022, the European Commission (EC) requested the European Training Foundation (ETF) to carry out a Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED) in Kosovo, as **an input to the next European Union programming cycle in favour of the education sector**. Such analysis follows a methodology<sup>2</sup> developed by the ETF and previously applied in Lebanon in 2021. Following the initial discussion with EC DG NEAR defining the general framework, the purpose, scope and focus of the analysis were submitted to and refined with the EU Office in Kosovo (EUOK), and the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI).

**Priority target audience** for this diagnosis is two-fold:

- EU services, in order to inform both the next financial assistance programmes and the EU/Kosovo policy dialogue;
- Kosovo's government, in particular through the MESTI, in order to enlighten possible priorities within the recently approved national Education Strategy 2026.

**Objectives.** It is essential to emphasise from the outset that **this analysis first and foremost aims to identify gaps and challenges**, so that they can be paid priority attention by the government, and be focused on by EU support. This explains why policy achievements and systems improvements are hardly acknowledged in this report and does not alter the fact that they exist.

## Methodology

**Scope and content.** The RED analysis consists of a quick but **evidence-based review** of the entire education system, from early childhood to higher education levels. By evidence, we mean both quantitative evidence, with substantial analysis of disaggregated statistical data, and qualitative evidence, obtained through bilateral interviews and focus groups that involve key stakeholders of the education sector.

**Thematic focus.** The RED is tailored to countries' education sectors' specific analytical needs, but maintains a **transversal focus along three essential dimensions** of any education system: **inequality, financing and governance / resilience**. In Kosovo, it was requested that particular attention be paid to **early childhood education and to the digitalisation of education**, as areas identified for possible future EU interventions, and that financial assistance be aligned with government priorities for the sector.

**Implementation process.** The RED has been implemented around modules, from mid-2022 to the end of 2022, as per the visual presented below:

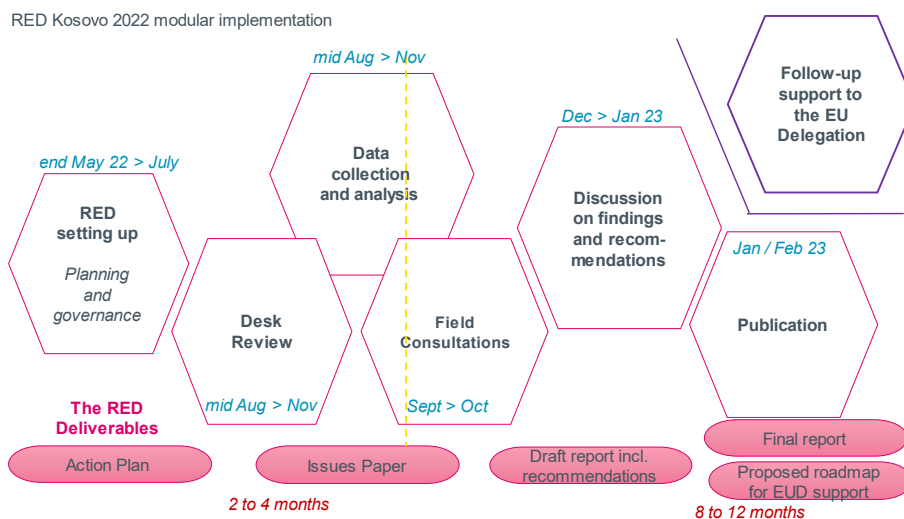
- **Setting up** of a governance model (including operational and steering process) and agreement on a time-bound workplan
- Comprehensive **desk review** (see *Annex 1* that provides the bibliography)

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<sup>2</sup> European Training Foundation (ETF), *Rapid education sector diagnosis methodology*, Turin, 2022, available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-12/Rapid%20education%20sector%20diagnosis%20methodology.pdf>

- **Data collection and analysis** (see [Annex 2](#) for the list of data used)
- **Field consultations** (See [Annex 3](#) for the list of persons involved in the process, either through bilateral meetings or focus groups - called Targeted Consultation Meetings, TCM)
- **Discussion of findings and recommendations** based on an issues paper and then on a draft final report (the present document)
- **Publication** will follow the discussion of this draft report, with editing, layout and translation into Albanian and Serbian.
- **Follow up** with the EU Office in Kosovo, will be the final step of the diagnosis, aiming at discussing how to support and monitor the implementation of some priority recommendations

Figure 1: The Rapid Education Diagnosis implementation process



Between August and November 2022, the team reviewed about 64 documents, interviewed around 30 persons, made field visits to 3 municipalities (Fushe Kosova, Podujeva and Mitrovica), involved 73 persons in collective targeted consultation meetings (including municipality education directorates, school heads, teachers, parents, students, NGOs, higher education institutions), and collected and analysed many school, municipality and financial data. This process enabled the collection of quantitative and qualitative evidence for the diagnosis presented below. The education donor community was consulted during this exercise as it developed.


**Disclaimer.** While the abovementioned process reflects a robust analytical basis, one must acknowledge that, at the time of finalising this report, some data inconsistencies, discrepancies or unavailability are still observed, which hampers a fully comprehensive analysis. The choice was therefore made to come up with some case studies to serve as illustrations; above all, it calls for remediation actions at national level for the future in the area of data management; this has been added to the recommendations.

We would also like to reiterate in this disclaimer the fact that the specificity of the RED exercise is to focus on critical issues, gaps and challenges. This means that the RED exercise will not dwell on past and ongoing achievements, but this should not be construed as negating or questioning their existence.

Finally, given that ETF regularly produces focused analyses on vocational education and training, and external efficiency of the education and training system vis-à-vis the labour market, this aspect has not been explored in this report.

**National and partner contributions.** As part of the governance set up, the MESTI established a national technical team<sup>3</sup> of practitioners from the different national and partner institutions having a role

<sup>3</sup> See list of members in [Annex 3](#)



in relation to the education provision, tasked with contributing to the data collection and commenting on the analysis. Other national stakeholders were consulted on an *ad hoc* basis through bilateral interviews or collective ‘targeted consultation meetings’ (TCMs). Under the leadership of Deputy Minister Dukagjin Pupovci, Majlinda Rizvanolli acted as the national focal point, with Ryve Prekorogja as a backup. A Steering Committee<sup>4</sup> comprised of the four partners ensured strategic monitoring throughout the task. Close operational support was provided by Stergios Tragoudas, RED counterpart in the EU Office in Kosovo.

We extend our gratitude for their support and contributions.

### Team and authorship

This diagnosis is the output of a collective effort that was almost fully internal to ETF, conducted under the leadership and overall coordination of Marie Dorléans, senior human capital development (HCD) and education financing expert. The multi-disciplinary project team also involved the following analysts: Carmo Gomes (senior HCD expert, focus on Governance), Alessandro Brolpito (senior HCD expert, focus on Digitalisation); Stefano Lasagni (Data analyst, overall data analysis and focus on Inequality); national consultants Ruzhdi Halili (Public Financing Management expert, focus on Financing and financial data collection) and Gerda Sula (Education expert, focus on Early Childhood education and qualitative evidence collection).

Administrative and organisational support was ensured by Chiara Margagliano, project officer, Enea Zenuni, interimaire, Sabina Asselle, project manager and Evelyn Viertel, Country liaison officer for Kosovo. Mihaylo Milovanovitch, Content coordinator, and Hugues Moussy, Head of the Unit Systems Performance, Monitoring and Assessment, supervised this project.

Authorship reference to this report should be: ETF, 2023, *Kosovo\* Rapid Education Diagnosis Kosovo: addressing the weak links*. Draft before Publication

### Outline of the report

This report is structured around two main chapters, divided in three sections each:

- **Chapter I provides the main findings** in terms of critical issues, challenges and/or gaps. These are organised around the three main thematic dimensions of the RED methodology: **Inequality, Financing and Governance**. Early Childhood Education and Digitalisation of education are developed within these three main dimensions.
- **Chapter II presents the recommendations**. Its sections are to be seen as a ‘menu’: the same recommendations are clustered in three different manners, depending on the reader’s interest and identity:
  - o Section 1 groups the recommendations under a limited number of **(umbrella) Key recommendations**, which present the main ‘macro’-areas identified as priorities for policy reforms and cluster measures according to their time frame (short term, medium term or long term).
  - o Section 2 analyses these priority reforms and measures **to draw up recommendations for EU services**<sup>5</sup>, as the key stakeholders and target audience of this report, both **in terms of support programmes and policy dialogue**.
  - o Section 3 further relates these recommendations to the education strategy 2026 action plan, as deemed useful for their uptake by **the Kosovo’s government (primarily the MESTI)**.

Numerous figures and tables are used to facilitate understanding of the key data, while textboxes are used to illustrate the analysis with specific examples, or offer a description of specific aspects of the system.

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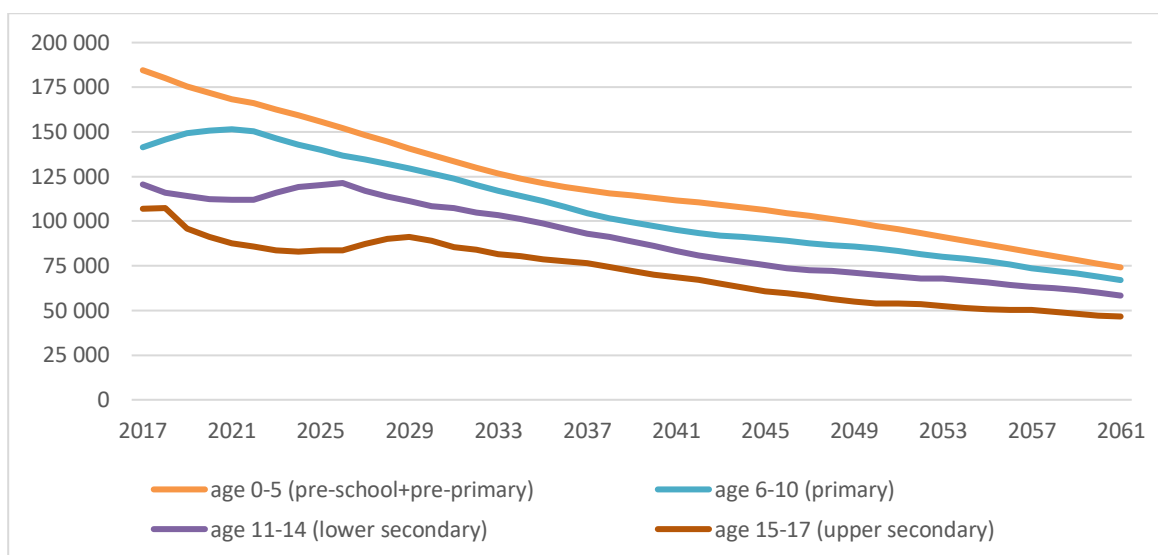
<sup>4</sup> The Steering committee included: Giulio Crespi, Vassilis Maragos, Javier Menendez Bonilla, Simone Rave and Fanny Seree, DG NEAR - Stergios Tragoudas, Anne-Sophie Houée and Johannes Stenbaek Madsen, EU Office to Kosovo – Dukagjin Pupovci, Edona Maloku-Bërdina and Majlinda Rizvanolli, MESTI – Hugues Moussy and Marie Dorléans, ETF.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this report, ‘EU services’ mainly refers to the EU office in Kosovo (EUOK) and DG NEAR in Brussels.

## Context of the Kosovo education system

In general terms, education in Kosovo is faced with an acute **demographic challenge**, which combines population decline, rural exodus and emigration, these three factors contributing to empty schools, especially in rural areas. The impact on school-age children is illustrated in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2: Population projections of school-age groups in Kosovo



Source: KAS. Publication on school age population projections 2017-2061 (medium variant).

The current period presents features of **high fragility** for the country and its education system in particular. After a period of political instability, which, in the absence of a stable government until March 2021, impeded any difficult reforms, the sector experienced an extremely politicised general teachers' strike from 25 August to 3 October 2022, which kept schools closed and deprived children and students from return to school for one month, with a risk of reiteration announced by unions for early 2023<sup>6</sup>.

The institutional organisation of the country, with a **high level of decentralisation** of competences and responsibilities **to municipalities**, also applies to education, with the municipality education directorates (MED); this is both an opportunity and a challenge, as will be explored throughout this report.

However, from a **policy** point of view, the **context is enabling**: the MESTI finalised its new strategic framework - the Kosovo education sector plan (KESP), recently renamed as the **Education Strategy, covering the period 2022-26**<sup>7</sup>. As assessed through a comparison of the corresponding sectoral objectives, indicators and targets, this education strategy seems to be consistently articulated with the draft **National development strategy (NDS) 2030**<sup>8</sup>. The MESTI confirmed the momentum that exists around the sector strategy; but pled for more evidence to back policy decisions and agreed that these strategic planning efforts need a robust and reliable monitoring system in place that would measure progress regularly and systematically.

Last but not least, Kosovo steadily benefits from **large-scale donor support**, with net official development assistance (ODA) amounting to USD 392 million, representing **5.4% of the gross national income (GNI)** in 2017<sup>9</sup>, with **funding from EU institutions representing 40% of this aid**. This includes support to the education sector (representing around 10% of net ODA in 2017), but also

<sup>6</sup> The Law on Salaries of Public Officials has been approved and published, and will come into force in February 2023. The value of the salary grade was expected to be decided at the time the report was completed.

<sup>7</sup> The Education Strategy was officially approved by the Government on 30 September and by then renamed Education Strategy (ES) 2022-26, available at: [https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/Storage/Consultations/14-54-14-17062022/3.-Draft-Education-Strategy--2022-2026\\_En.Doc](https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/Storage/Consultations/14-54-14-17062022/3.-Draft-Education-Strategy--2022-2026_En.Doc)

<sup>8</sup> At the time of closing this report, December 2022, the NDS still remains to be approved by the Government.

<sup>9</sup> 2017 is the last available year in the OECD public database.

to public finances, public administration and digitalisation reforms, which have an impact on education. This also means a strong dependence on external investment and assistance. This finally reflects the important responsibility that donors, including the EU, have in developing coherent and aligned interventions.

Figure 3: Official Development Assistance by donor and sector

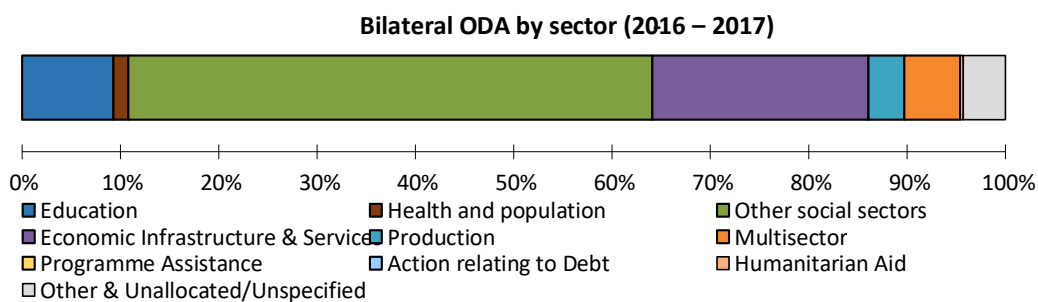
Receipts	2015	2016	2017
Net ODA (USD million)	438	370	392
Bilateral share (gross ODA)	46%	53%	48%
Net ODA / GNI	6.7%	5.4%	5.4%
Other Official Flows (USD million)	-15	27	4
Net Private flows (USD million)	188	108	306
Total net receipts (USD million)	610	505	702

For reference	2015	2016	2017
Population (million)	1.8	1.8	1.8
GNI per capita (Atlas USD)	3 980	3 880	3 890

Top Ten Donors of gross ODA (2016-17 average)		(USD m)
1	EU institutions	157
2	United States	57
3	Germany	49
4	Switzerland	24
5	OSCE	18
6	Sweden	14
7	Turkey	11
8	International development associations	10
9	Austria	8
10	Luxembourg	8



Source: OECD. Aid at a glance Kosovo.

# I. Main findings

## INEQUALITY (in access to a quality education system)

### Access and quality of the Kosovo education system: preliminary and 'average' remarks

**Some considerations regarding access to the different levels of education.** As a starting point, **attendance by level of education** (hereinafter 'access' or 'participation') **usually provides an indication of the 'health' of an education system.** This is why this analysis begins with a brief screening of enrolment rates<sup>10</sup>.

**On average, (gross) enrolment rates in primary and secondary education** are very similar to those in the region, and relatively high (**101% and 85%**, respectively<sup>11</sup>); inequalities in access to these levels of education are therefore not easy to spot.

As part of upper secondary, **vocational education and training (VET) is well developed, with more than half of upper secondary school students choosing this path, but it has been diverted from its original function,** which should be, first and foremost, to prepare students with the skills needed in the labour market. In Kosovo, because it also prepares for the '*matura*', VET is not only seen as the second choice education (as in many countries), but it also secures the prospect of continuing studies in higher education, instead of going to work; while in some countries, the existence of such a pathway is positive for enhancing the image of VET, in Kosovo it also curbs the urgency to make VET more relevant to economic and employment opportunities. Solutions might include a greater involvement of business actors, or a differentiation in the number of years of studies between general education and VET.

**Early childhood education is poorly developed, with a gross enrolment rate of 37.8%** for preschool and pre-primary education together (children aged 3 to 5), lower than OECD and EU averages<sup>12</sup>. Within this average, **pre-primary education, which refers to the last year before primary school for 5-year-olds, achieves an enrolment rate of 89.1%**<sup>13</sup>. Early childhood education is however granted a promising political priority, as it receives more than **10% of the State budget allocated to education** (see next section on education financing)<sup>14</sup>. Field observations sow doubt on the feasibility of the policy intention to make the last year (pre-primary) compulsory for all pupils from September 2023<sup>15</sup>: Actually, an important addition in the final law specifies 'if conditions permit', confirming that the MESTI shares this concern. Difficulties may be explained by both the lack of available premises<sup>16</sup> and the little availability of qualified or specialised teachers/educators, especially in rural areas or for children with special needs.

<sup>10</sup> We will not discuss which indicator, between gross and net enrolment ratios, should be used as a priority, as our purpose is not to go into details, but to draw the 'big picture'.

<sup>11</sup> Gross enrolment rate (ETF calculations) for secondary education is estimated to be 85% (pupil enrolled in public and private secondary education\*/estimate of population living in Kosovo in the secondary education age group\*\*). Better than North Macedonia (80%, 2018, UIS UNESCO), worse than Montenegro, Serbia and Albania (90%, 92% and 94% in 2020, UIS UNESCO) \*KAS data on 2021/22 enrolments, \*\*age group 11-17 years old from KAS Kosovo population projection 2017-2061 - medium variant.

<sup>12</sup> According to the OECD, in 2018 about 37.5% of Kosovar children aged 3-5 years attended a pre-school facility, which is lower than most regional peers and far below the OECD (81.7%) and EU (99.9%) averages (OECD 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Estimates from the MESTI Annual Statistical Report with Education Indicators 2021-22. ETF calculations differs: GER 79% for pre-primary, using EMIS data on enrolment in public and private pre-primary classes, compared with KAS estimates on population projections 2017-2061 (medium variant) of population aged 5 in year 2021. Data might be biased due to the lack of information on Serb-majority municipalities.

<sup>14</sup> 2016-2021 budget spending analysis.

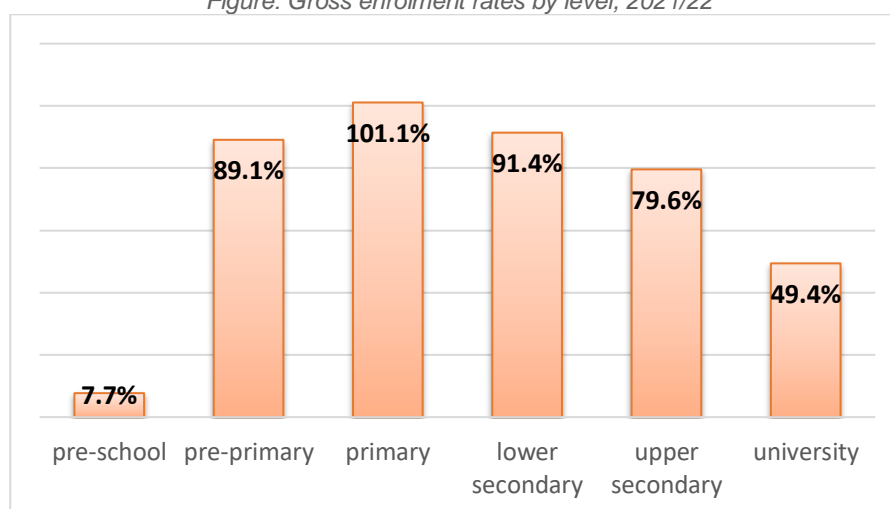
<sup>15</sup> Draft law on early childhood education'

<sup>16</sup> In most cases pre-primary classes have been added to existing primary schools.

**Higher education is estimated to be attended by almost half of the concerned youth population, with a gross enrolment rate of 49.4%**<sup>17</sup>. This figure, which lies below that of other countries in the region<sup>18</sup>, calls for some comments. First, it suffered a substantial recent decrease, as this enrolment was almost 30 percentage points higher five years ago, and this drop would deserve to be further investigated by the MESTI, as it cannot be explained by demographic decline alone<sup>19</sup> (are the missing students abroad, for studies or work?). Second, there is no data on the outcomes of higher education attendance on youth employability (including smooth transition from school to work that could be measured through tracer studies, would they exist, etc.), which would verify the relevance of the studies offered to these students.

**Private education in Kosovo represents 5.5% of total education provision** (in terms of student enrolments from pre-school to upper secondary in 2021/22), following an increase at all education levels in the last years<sup>20</sup>. It is particularly developed at **pre-school level, where it covers more than half of total enrolments** (see below), but also in **higher education, where 4 out of 10 students** (39%) are registered in private colleges (this proportion being relatively stable over the last years).

Figure: Gross enrolment rates by level, 2021/22



Source: MESTI 'Annual Statistical Report with Education Indicators 2021-2022' for pre-school to upper secondary level; ETF calculations on KAS/MESTI data for university

Note: GER for pre-school calculated on age group 0 to 5, as the 3-5 population is not known, but public pre-school institutions do not provide services for children under the age of three, so this figure must be placed in the correct context.

<sup>17</sup> ETF calculations, using MESTI school data and KAS projections: ratio between total enrolments in public and private tertiary education divided by KAS projections for age group 18-22. In 2021/22, 82 389 students were enrolled in public and private tertiary education, compared to 123 243 in 2016/17 (corresponding to a GER of 77.9%).

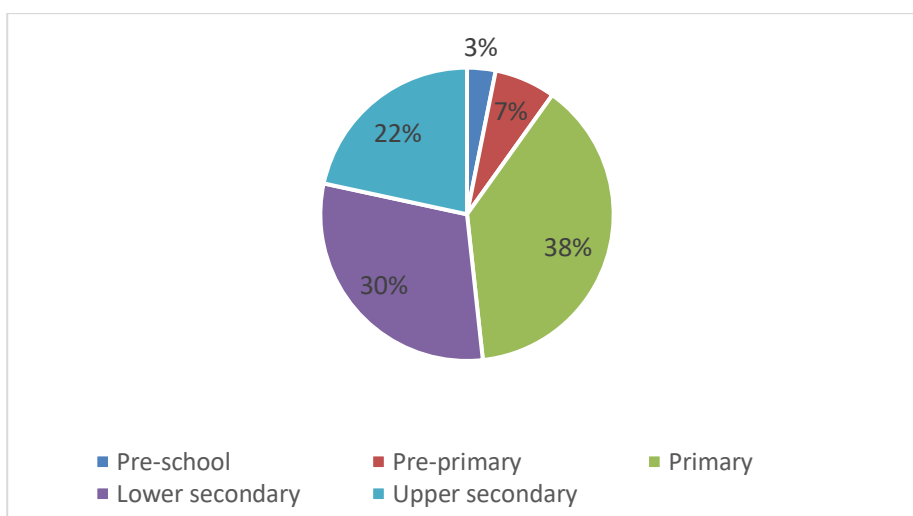
<sup>18</sup> According to the UNESCO Institute of statistics, in 2021 the gross enrolment ratio in higher education was 69% in Serbia and 57% in Albania.

<sup>19</sup> According to KAS projections, the reference age group 18-22 should have increased from 2017 to 2022.

<sup>20</sup> in 2015/16 this represented only 1.7% of total enrolments (KAS/MESTI).



Figure 4: Distribution of students by level 2021/22




Source: MESTI enrolment numbers for both public and private

**Considerations on quality.** Besides the issues of access to pre-university education, **quality of education provision is a well-recognised problem in Kosovo, as demonstrated by the PISA results:** the mean score was 353 in reading performance (ranking **73 out of 76** participating countries), 366 in mathematics (**ranking 74/77**) and 365 in science (**ranking 74/77**).

While this problem has many factors, one can note that **the competence-based curricula and corresponding study programmes are not yet applied**, although they have been introduced more than 10 years ago; **textbooks have not been revised** to reflect this new approach nor the impetus towards digitalisation (with e-textbooks), despite the efforts to introduce better quality learning materials in schools; and **teachers' initial training and continuous professional development (CPD) is lagging behind**, as shown in the two examples below:

- Regarding the pedagogical skills of **subject teachers**, as well as their continuous professional development, one should note that they do not receive pedagogical training, and only have scientific training, which might affect their teaching skills.
  - *'My daughter says: It's not my fault that my teacher doesn't know how to explain. She, like all subject teachers in Kosova, does not have a pedagogical training. Only pre-school and primary school teachers attend the Faculties of Education' (Parent)*
- The implementation of the **competency-based curriculum** is not yielding the expected results. Despite intense revision and greater focus on the students' learning, its implementation suffers from **overburdened content, lack of pedagogical skills** among teachers to first understand and then implement the changes, uninteresting textbooks and assessment methods still focusing on the content/knowledge rather than on the learning outcomes/competences. In a nutshell, this essential reform was probably implemented too quickly, without the proper support mechanisms for internalising the proposed changes
  - *'If we assumed that, in 10 days' training for 200 000 teachers, we can bring about change in the education system, we have assumed wrong.'* (Parent)

In the specific case of early childhood education, and **beyond the abovementioned participation issue, an apparent paradox was noted regarding early childhood education in Kosovo.** Usually, a child who attends pre-school performs better thereafter, at least at primary level. In Kosovo, the PISA data seem to show **a negative relation between pre-school attendance and later learning** (the ones having attended pre-school perform worse in reading tests than those without institutionalised early childhood education). This may be explained by the latest available data (2018), when pre-school was much less developed, in which case the data would not be meaningful. But it could also be linked to the pedagogical approach used in early childhood programmes, whose 'formality' could be detrimental to the harmonious development of cognitive skills. Whatever the reasons may be for 2018, it will be



important to carefully look at the next PISA results in this regard. In addition, access to high quality pre-school education across the country is impeded by the lack of an approved and sufficiently adequate curriculum based on play rather than formal learning, and of quality assurance mechanisms with harmonised national standards and tailored implementation at provider level.

In order to identify concrete improvement measures, it is essential to go beyond general observations and averages and identify the underlying inequalities in terms of quality and access, as these are the ones that will require specific, targeted policy measures.

We have endeavoured to do so in this report by using all the disaggregated data we could find. However, as shown in *Table 1* below, **the information system in Kosovo (through its two different education management information systems (EMIS), called SMIA for pre-university education<sup>21</sup>, SMIAL for higher education) does not yet produce all relevant and detailed information that would enable a precise identification of these inequalities down to the level of the schools, teachers and students. In addition, it presents challenges in terms of reliability, whether in terms of data items (in particular in SMIA) or technical limitations (such as the absence, in SMIAL, of a unique key ID system for each student, which would prevent possible duplication of individual data (in the case of students changing university, for instance).**

**These examples also sow doubts regarding data quality assurance** and to what extent information is cross-checked by MESTI with the schools and the municipalities, and then used for data-driven quality assurance processes <sup>22</sup>(see below).

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<sup>21</sup> SMIA is the name of the pre-university EMIS in the national language. It is most often used in this report.

<sup>22</sup> Some of these insights could lead to simple analysis (like the calculation of a pupil-teacher ratio in each school) and provide useful insights for the inspectorate; however, from our field interviews, it appears that there is a lack of data analysis and a corresponding data-driven lack of collaboration between MESTI and the inspectorate.

Table 1: Key data for analysing inequalities

Available data	Missing data	Monitoring gap
<p><b>STUDENT-RELATED DATA</b> SMIA: Student enrolment by gender, by grade, by educational level and by ethnicity, per municipality and per school*</p> <p><b>TEACHER-RELATED DATA</b> SMIA: Number of teachers by gender, by educational level, per municipality and per school*. Public and private schools** (partial coverage for private)</p> <p>SMIA: Number of teaching hours planned and held by municipality, school, grade and class**</p> <p><b>SCHOOL-RELATED DATA</b> SMIA: info at school level on physical structure of the school building, IT equipment, number of books**</p> <p>SMIA: Number of shifts operated in each school</p> <p>SMIAL: individual data of enrolled students for each university</p>	<p><b>Total population at school age in each municipality</b> (a new census is foreseen for 2023)</p> <p>At <b>school level</b> teacher data is available only for the main schools, without knowing how these are distributed among main schools and satellite schools. Moreover, the number of teacher is not disaggregated by educational level (a single school can have multiple levels) for each school Data on <b>teacher qualifications</b>, length and type of contract, planned year of retirement <b>Teaching hours per teacher</b>, by week or month, reported for nominatively (not only the average) in each school</p> <p>The SMIA system has a field on <b>budget at school level</b>, but this field is always empty.</p> <p><b>Shifts disaggregated by educational level and/or grade, class</b></p> <p><b>Limit of SMIAL:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- students are reported in the system only at the moment of enrolment and graduation</li> <li>- the system does not properly keep track of student transfers between universities (in that case students are counted twice, not removed from one university and added to another)</li> <li>- enrolments are counted per calendar year and not by academic year</li> </ul> <p><b>Tracer studies and surveys</b> on employability of the graduates</p> <p><b>Labour market needs analysis</b></p> <p><b>MUNICIPALITY RELATED DATA</b> Total school-age population in each municipality (a new census is foreseen for 2023) <b>School data in Serb-majority municipalities</b></p>	<p>Currently we cannot calculate enrolment rates for each educational level, by municipality and by ethnicity.</p> <p>It is hard to determine a detailed pupil-teacher ratio for each school taking into account the educational level.</p> <p>Missing information that could help MESTI to better monitor teaching quality and optimise opportunities. Knowing the amount of teaching hours of each teacher in each school could help in monitoring potential overloads in teaching hours and could provide a better view of the current teaching force in each school and municipality.</p> <p>Schools do not receive a yearly budget from the municipalities and therefore do not report it. Having an idea, at least at aggregate level, of the budget allocation and expenditure would be very helpful in monitoring teaching quality at each school. It is impossible to estimate how many educational levels/grades/classes and students are concerned by multiple shifts in each school. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate the actual extent (and impact) of multiple shifts. It is difficult to accurately determine the number of students currently enrolled in a university.</p> <p>Lack of information on graduate outcomes on the labour market and potential gender and salary gaps. A clearer idea of the horizontal and vertical skills mismatch could also lead to ad hoc collaboration and investments of the private sector with universities.</p>

\* Various figures with significant discrepancies were sent regarding these data, which calls into question their reliability.

\*\*partial coverage, information does not appear to be reported systematically.

## Determining factors of inequality in access to a quality education system

In Kosovo, school characteristics appear to better explain inequalities in equitable access to quality education than student characteristics, as demonstrated below in the list of determining factors of inequality. Each of these elements is further developed in the following sections of the Inequality chapter.

- **Teaching and learning conditions, in particular the existence of multiple shifts,** have a direct impact on the number of 'learning' hours during which pupils study in front of a teacher. The **class size, or average number of students per teacher**, which is in other countries a determining factor of inequality in teaching and learning conditions, has not been retained here, for various reasons, including its low level (**13.4 on average** for 2021/22)<sup>23</sup>, but this aspect will be analysed under the Financing chapter, as a factor of (in)efficiency (rather than of inequality).
- **The type of education provision (public or private)** is a determining factor in terms of learning environment, not always in the direction one would presume. However, and as explained below, this aspect seems to be less salient in terms of learning outcomes (despite lack of detailed data, including through PISA).
- **Access to pre-school education, as an entry point to the education system,** is a factor not only in maximising learning processes at later education levels for all pupils, but above all in levelling inequalities at birth for vulnerable groups – under specific conditions related to the teaching and learning methods – see later.
- **Access to appropriate pedagogical resources in schools, in terms of quantity and quality, including digital resources** in particular (digital competence of educators, infrastructure (internet connection), and school digital capacity (equipment and digital learning environment), are key elements that compensate for uneven availability of resources at home. Although little disaggregated data is available in this regard, important discrepancies seem to exist across the country regarding the distribution of resources.
- **Other elements such as gender or family wealth do not appear to be, in general, determining factors of inequality** in Kosovo, as they sometimes are in other country contexts, **but could become so in the future**, hence the need for close monitoring.

Regarding gender, the problem does not lie in access to the education system, but in bridging to the labour market. There are no visible or concerning gender gaps regarding access to public and private

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<sup>23</sup> Reasons for not considering the class size or average number of students per teacher within the factors of inequality are the following. First, regardless the education level concerned, the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in Kosovo, which is the most useable proxy indicator for class size, is **very low, at 13.4 on average** (aggregate of all public school students and teachers from pre-school to upper secondary 2021/22. Based on international research, this means that pupils enjoy good learning conditions, even if this ratio varies depending on the education level (ranging from **8.1 (in public pre-schools) to 13.8 (in public pre-primary, primary, lower secondary schools) and 12.8 (in upper secondary schools)** from one municipality to the other (probably due to population size, some classes remaining open in remote areas despite very low numbers of students) or sometimes from one school to the other, including in the same municipality (see for example the focus on Fushe Kosova and Podujeva below in the report).

Comparison with some other countries shows (source: Eurostat data for 2020):

**Pre-school:** Estonia 8.2, Latvia 9.2, Lithuania 9.6, Serbia 11.2, North Macedonia 5.0 (Kosovo 8.1)

**Primary and Lower secondary:** Estonia 11.6, Latvia 11.1, Lithuania 11.4, Serbia 11.9, North Macedonia 11.1 (Kosovo better with 13.8 but includes also pre-primary)

**Upper secondary:** Estonia 15.4, Latvia 11.5, Lithuania 9.2, Serbia 10.1, North Macedonia 10.1 (Kosovo 12.8)

The above PTR data are derived from ETF calculations based on *MESTI published data Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics (KAS), Education Statistics in Kosovo\* 2021/2022*. In 2019/20, this PTR was 14.2, compared to 13.8 in 2020/21. This decrease is mainly due to the falling number of enrolled students in public education: the number of pupils enrolled at this level is decreasing faster than the number of teachers (in the last 2 years: pupils -5%, teachers -1%). At these levels, learning does not improve, while the system costs more to the State. However, the PTR 2021/22 differs when calculated using SMIA data extraction at school level: 12.3.

education<sup>24</sup>. In 2021/22, around two thirds of bachelor and master graduates were women, but this does not appear to bring more job opportunities for women, as they still struggle to access the labour market<sup>25</sup>.

**Regarding the wealth element, the development of private education may make household income an increasingly dividing factor in the future**, as is probably already the case for early childhood education (see paragraph below).

*Taking the example of the impact of family wealth on learning outcomes, results from the **PISA 2018 study, which are generally concerning for Kosovo, did not demonstrate worrying inequality problems**, as compared to other countries. In other terms, **being 'poor'** (coming from households with low income) is, expectedly, a worsening factor for results, but less than in the other PISA countries<sup>26</sup>. It is important to note that these results are already 4 years old; it will be important to check this in the PISA 2022 results, which are expected to be published in 2023.*

*Taking the gender example, in **TIMSS 2019**, Kosovo fourth-grade students performed poorly overall<sup>27</sup>, with no statistically significant difference between boys and girls in mathematics, and a small statistically significant difference in science in favour of female students. A new round of TIMSS will be carried out in 2023, with updated insights (expected publication in 2024).*

- However, **disabilities remain an inequality factor** in Kosovo, as in many countries, although they are difficult to document: statistics on the prevalence of disability do not have a sound basis<sup>28</sup>, but children with disabilities are roughly estimated to account for 2.1% of students in schools<sup>29</sup>.

Such pupil characteristics play a role for certain levels (e.g. gender in access to higher education versus to labour market) or may become more important in the future (e.g. increasing trend in private education, which may lead to selective access based on resources); therefore, **the MESTI should continue monitoring and analysing these characteristics**.

\* \* \*

Hereafter, the team endeavoured to analyse the abovementioned determining factors, based on the data that could be gathered and processed, starting from the most disaggregated level (school, and then municipality), including data provided by MESTI officials in charge of SMIA and other data.

**A commonality across most of these factors is their uneven distribution according to the degree of 'rurality' of the territory in which the schools operate**. However, the outcomes are less black-and-white than they may appear at first sight, as the next section will explain.

<sup>24</sup> In 2021/22, female enrolments accounted for around 48% of total enrolments at any education level from pre-school to upper secondary (KAS/MESTI). These numbers are comparable with the sex ratio at birth, usually estimated at around 105-107 males born for every 100 females around the world (UN DESA).

<sup>25</sup> In 2020, the activity rate for the age group 15+ was 49% among men and 18% among women, compared to 29.4% among men and 14.9% among women for the age group 15-24 (KAS). In the third quarter of 2021, female unemployment was higher than male unemployment at all levels of educational attainment (age group 15+), including levels ISCED 5-8 (tertiary education), standing at 9.2% for men and 18.9% for women (ETF calculations on KAS data).

<sup>26</sup> In 2018, Kosovo had one of the lowest differences of results between top performers and bottom performers in math, science, reading among PISA countries. For example, in terms of reading performance, Kosovo students in the bottom international decile of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) ranked among the worst (72 out of 75 countries), whereas students in the top decile of ESCS ranked last (76/76) in their group. Moreover, the percentage of students classified as 'resilient' (students in the bottom quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status [ESCS] who perform among the top quarter of students internationally) in reading is one of the highest among PISA-participating countries and economies (17.3%, rank 2/76 in 2018).

<sup>27</sup> 27% and 25% of the students didn't reach the low international benchmark in mathematics and science respectively. The indicator is the percentage of students with achievements too low for appraisal using TIMSS and TIMSS Numeracy combined. Students' achievements were considered to be too low for appraisal if their performance was no better than could be achieved by simply guessing on the multiple-choice assessment items (World Bank database).

<sup>28</sup> The number of persons with disabilities in Kosovo is unknown. While data has been gathered in the last few years, both in the Census and through administrative means, there is no accurate number that can support data-driven decision-making because multiple definitions of disability are in use by multiple institutions and stakeholders: <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/216/file/KOS-SITAN-ENG.pdf>, p.15. Some sources put forward the figures of 13-15%, which seems a lot. The census of 2011 proposed a classification of people with 'long-lasting difficulties' (classified as deafness, blindness, physical disability, intellectual disability, psychological disability, other disability), but these disability criteria would probably deserve to be clarified in line with international definitions.

<sup>29</sup> <https://unmik.unmissions.org/38000-children-disabilities-not-attending-school-srsg-tanin-hears-during-visit-unicef>

## The rural-urban divide... a paradox

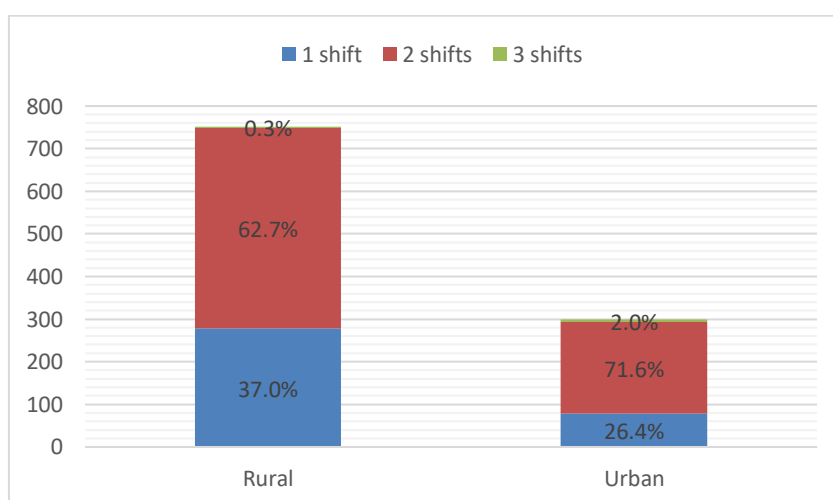
Where is it best to live and go to school in order to receive a good quality education? Considering the various determining factors listed above, this question has no easy answer, as there are pros and cons in each situation. What is clear is that there are important disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of teaching and learning conditions, but we do not have sufficiently disaggregated data to measure the impact on respective learning outcomes.

Building on the field visits carried out in September to Fushe Kosova and Podujeva, these two municipalities were taken as case studies to analyse the available data (see data comparison in *Figure 5*) and to draw up proposals to use **the municipality level as the analytical unit** to explore, document and address inequalities based on geographic location, **grounding policy measures from this level of observation**.

**The most visible inequality issues relate to the geographic location of the schools, with a strong divide between rural and urban areas**, in accordance with the definition retained by the MESTI in the data management system<sup>30</sup>.

**The paradox is that the indicators mentioned as determining factors above are moving in opposite directions:** the advantage of studying in rural areas lies with the low number of students in the class, which allows them better one-to-one interaction with teachers, more extracurricular activities, as well as a stronger sense of community as compared to schools in urban areas. **However, the data yield counterintuitive results**, casting doubt on the reliability or at least the precision of the data. For example, **almost two thirds of the schools in rural areas (63%) operate with multiple shifts, whereas this percentage is fairly similar for schools in urban areas (73.6%)** (see also following paragraph on school resources). Unfortunately, disaggregated data is not easily available to further document the magnitude of this issue<sup>31</sup>, and the lack of premises (and budget) is an obstacle to expect short-term improvement in this regard.

Figure 5: Distribution of public schools by shift in rural and urban areas, 2021/22



Source: ETF calculations on MESTI/SMIA data extraction

**Finally, geographical disparities need to be considered from the angle of the ethnic belonging of the municipality. There is a coexistence of two parallel systems at least in the Serb-majority municipalities (10 out of 38), where Serb and Kosovo-Albanian schools operate, without children having choice to go to the**

<sup>30</sup> From the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2022-2028: 'As per the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) for the Kosovo 2011 Population and Housing Census, the rural areas are defined based on the level of settlements, characterised by low population density and usually where most of the land is agricultural compared to the surrounding area. In the 2011 Kosovo Census, the place of residence was defined as rural by an administrative decision of the relevant municipality. Using this method of distinction (boundary delimitation), KAS has recognised 1 028 963 ha (94.3%) as rural areas, where 62.0% of the population is located (or 1 078 239 inhabitants, according to the 2011 Census).

<sup>31</sup> As schools with one class or ten classes in multiple shifts report this fact in the same way (as "this school provides multiple shift education"), it could explain this apparent paradox; in other words, it could be that, in reality, there are not more students in multiple shifts in rural areas than in urban ones; but the way this information is asked in SMIA does not ensure what is the correct answer.

closest from their homes, but choosing upon their ethnic origin, with some heavy consequences on the room for manoeuvre for school network rationalisation, as well as for governance and financing arrangements : they cannot be improved only based on data and efficiency considerations.

N.B. Schools of Serb-majority municipalities do not share any data or reliable data with MESTI, so it is very complicated to estimate the access and quality of education in these areas.

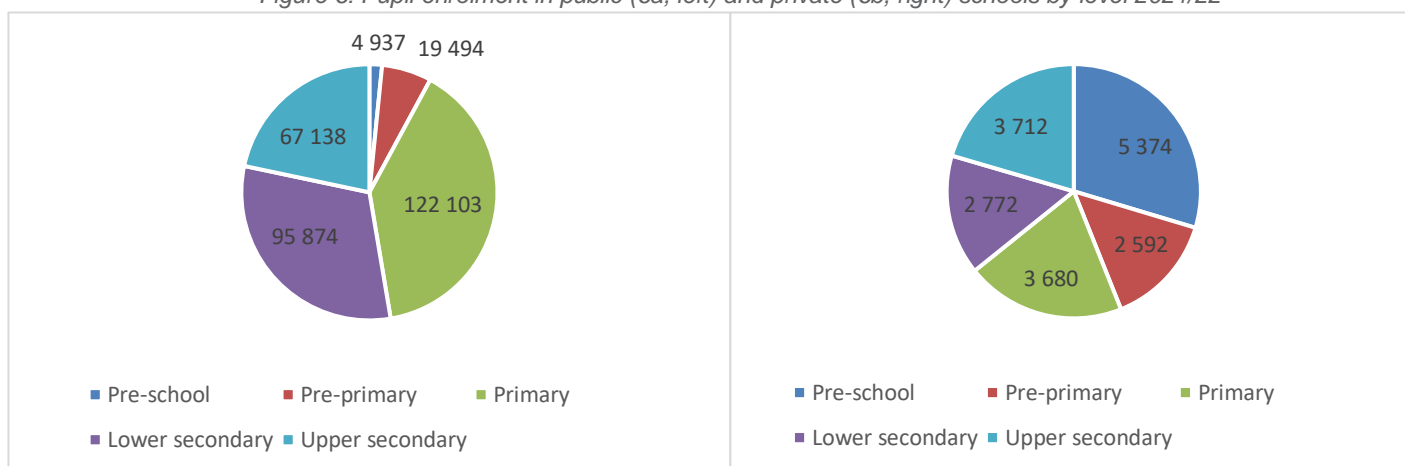
### The public – private education offer: some worrying recent patterns

Although the overall decrease in student enrolments<sup>32</sup> (from pre-school to upper secondary) is mainly due to slow population decline, the counter-trend of private education enrolments should not be overlooked: in six years, the number of pupils enrolled in private pre-university education (from pre-school to upper secondary) almost tripled: between 2015/16 and 2021/22, their number went from 6 467 to 18 130, i.e. from 1.7% to 5.5% of the total enrolments (KAS data).

This increase occurred at all levels, but particularly at pre-school level: 144 out of 177 private schools are ECE/pre-schools (see next paragraph). Moreover, 94% of private schools (main and satellites) are located in urban areas<sup>33</sup> (against only 28% of public schools). The two features are certainly closely linked: 96% of private pre-schools are in an urban area, similarly to the disproportionate share of public pre-schools in urban areas (85%).

This increasing demand for private education in a context of demographic decline not only calls into question the quality of public education, but also raises the issue of equality. In the opinion of many parents, the level of quality offered in private education, which is available only in certain areas and is contingent on the payment of private school fees, is better than in public education. In the Kosovo survey sample of PISA 2018, only 1% of private school students were included; the next round will probably include more private students, making it possible to better assess potential public/private disparities.

Figure 6: Pupil enrolment in public (6a, left) and private (6b, right) schools by level 2021/22



Source: MESTI

### The uneven distribution of resources at school level

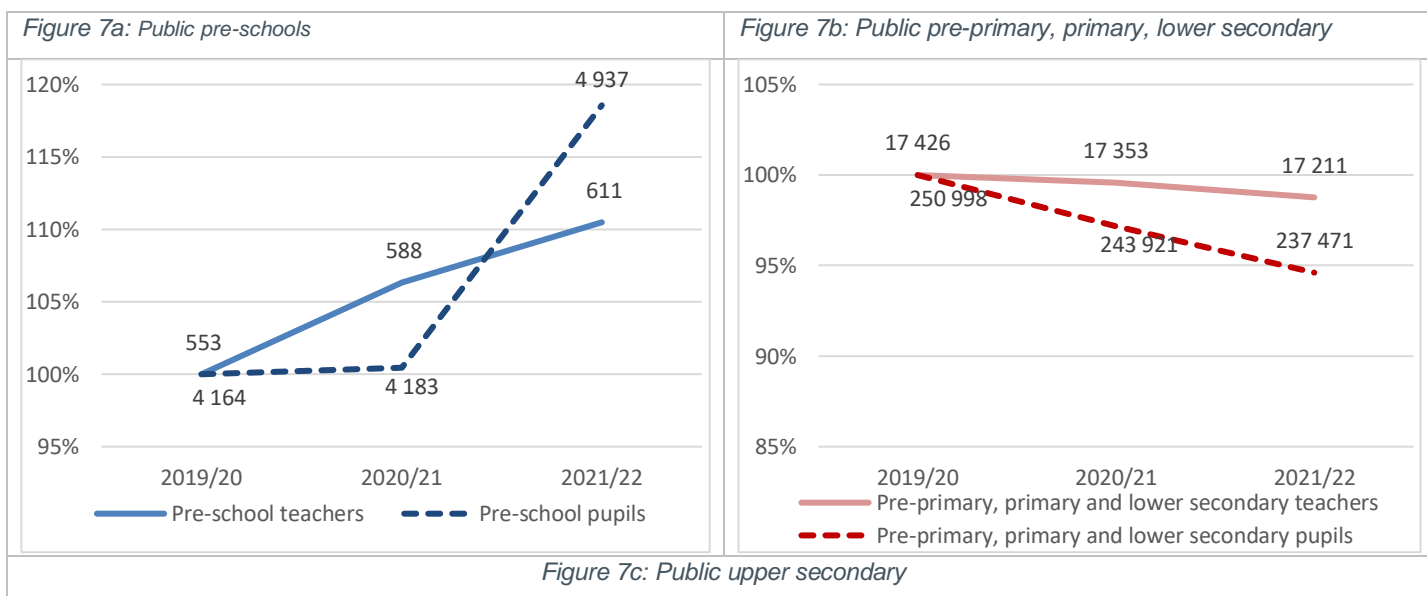
**Teachers.** The MESTI is well aware of the equity (and efficiency) problem that results from uneven use of resources, including school premises, teachers or digital equipment. The uneven occupation of schools is evidenced by indicators such as the number of students enrolled per school and the pupil-teacher

<sup>32</sup> A 12% decline in enrolled student numbers was observed between 2015/16 and 2021/22 (pre-school to upper secondary, private and public education).

<sup>33</sup> As per MESTI's definition.

**ratios**, which vary greatly from one school to the other, even within the same municipality<sup>34</sup>. While, as previously explained, the average pupil-teacher ratio is already very low compared to international recommendations, analyses conducted by MESTI in 2022 have shown in addition that **200 schools operate with less than 150 pupils, while more than 2 000 ‘surplus’ teachers are on the pay-roll without meeting the legal requirements of their position** (in terms of clearly identified teaching functions and/or standard number of teaching hours). Drawing from these data, a working group has been set up to reflect on the rationalisation of the school network, with conclusions tentatively expected by the end of 2022. However, this is also a political issue moreover hampered by various legal barriers, making it difficult to ascertain concrete changes in the short term: teachers abide by the Law on public officials<sup>35</sup>, and are hired by municipalities. The latter means that they cannot move from one municipality to other on the only basis of teaching needs, as it would require them to go through recruitment procedures again, at the level of the target Municipality<sup>36</sup>. Also, in these recruitment procedures, it seems that social capital and political acquaintances play an important part (see *Governance section*). On the other hand, their legal status prevents them from being assigned to other functions or institutions, for instance in Municipality education directorates, or at central level. Data on teachers fail to provide a proper analysis of inequalities in this domain, such as the number of teaching hours, continuous professional development, status, salary, as well as age and expected retirement age, which would give a sense of the room for manoeuvre in the coming years. This would be a crucial area for MESTI to improve (see *Recommendations chapter*).

Figure 7: Trends in teacher numbers and pupil enrolments in public education, 2019/20 to 2021/22 [2019/20 is the baseline value = 100%]

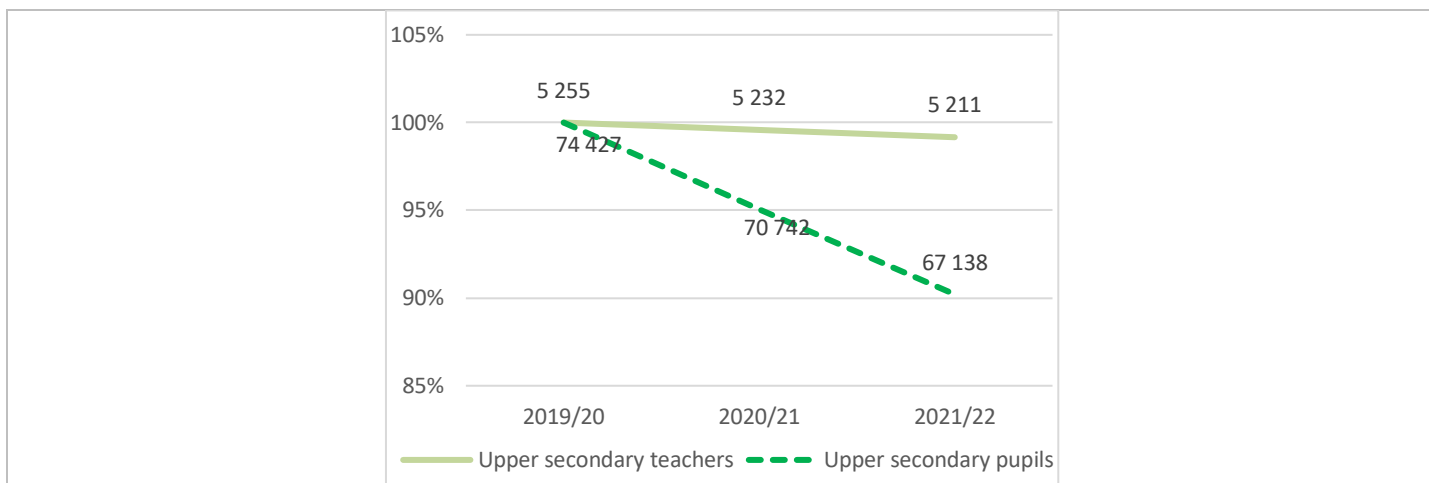


<sup>34</sup> For instance, Podujeva municipality is witnessing a rapid decrease in student numbers (22 000 in 2008, 16 000 in 2021/22), with seven schools comprising fewer than 50 pupils, but one overcrowded school with classes of 30 students and lessons organised in three shifts.

<sup>35</sup> This law is currently under revision.

<sup>36</sup> During field visits, it was reported that many teachers have moved to live in Fushe Kosova, but they still teach in Podujeva and have to travel there every day. If they want to teach in Fushe Kosova, they must wait for a vacancy there and apply for a position. At the same time, Fushe Kosova suffers from a lack of teachers, while Podujeva has a surplus of teachers.





*‘(In my school) MED hired a teacher with 0 years’ experience, instead of a teacher with 20 years’ experience. And I couldn’t do anything but to say welcome to my school.’ (School director)*

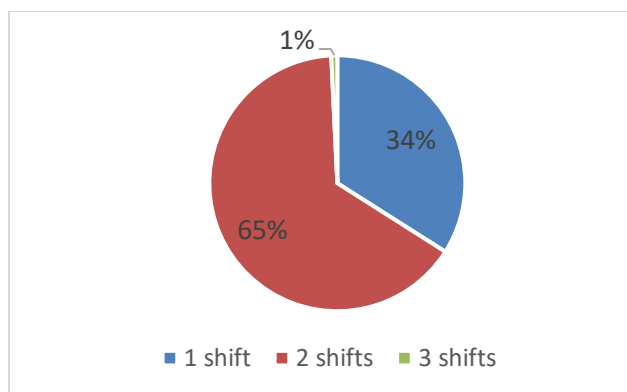
**Teaching and learning conditions. Multiple shifts.** In view of the lack of premises in certain areas (which makes it impossible to open an adequate number of classes for the number of students enrolled), a solution brought forward by MESTI and municipality education directorates (MED) is to organise multiple shifts: usually double shifts, but sometimes triple shifts. Given the possible impact of multiple shifts on learning quality (due to the reduced number of learning hours, but also the lack of teachers’ pedagogical skills that would enable to complement these with (self)learning outside the classroom), an analysis was conducted on where these multi shifts occur. Of course, this should then be related to an analysis of learning outcomes, either using the results of the upcoming PISA study (the previous ones were not disaggregated by municipality or school) or using the results of national examinations.

**Two thirds of schools use multiple shift education as one of their teaching modalities**, as shown in *Figure 8* (65% use double shifts, and 1% triple shifts). In other words, **only one third of public schools operate in single shifts (34%)**. The direct consequence is that **pupils in multiple-shift schools receive an insufficient number of teaching hours**: 4 to 5 daily hours in double shifts (sometimes as few as 2.5 hours in pre-school), or hardly 3 hours in triple shifts, against approximately 7-8 hours daily as provided by law. As mentioned above, in urban areas the proportion of public schools operating under multiple shifts is even higher: 72% with two shifts and 2% with three shifts. Moreover, in terms of student numbers, **82% of pupils attending public education are in a school** which operates in *some* double shifts (1% of pupils attend schools with three shifts, while 17% of pupils have only one shift – see *Figure 5*).

While the OECD average for compulsory instruction in 2021 was 807 hours/year for primary education (766 for the 22 EU members in the OECD), in Kosovo some students might receive only 525 hours/year<sup>37</sup>.

*Figure 8: Distribution of public schools by types of shift, 2021/22*

<sup>37</sup> For lower secondary, the figures are 923 hours/year (and 886 for the 22 EU members in the OECD). Source: [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG\\_IT\\_ALL](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG_IT_ALL)



Source: ETF calculations based on SMIA data extraction

However, schools do not indicate which levels are concerned, and/or how many classes are delivered and/or how many students are enrolled in multiple shifts, which greatly hampers the analysis of the phenomenon.

For this reason, it is **impossible to calculate the exact proportion of students enrolled in each type of shift**. However, the data on students enrolled in schools operating under different shifts can be used to make a rough assessment of disparities between municipalities. Once it has been disaggregated according to the gap to be analysed, this information can be used by MESTI to identify municipalities with priority needs (in terms of premises or teachers – the reasons for multiple shifts would need to be explored to choose the appropriate measures). For example, *Figure 9* shows that in Obiliq, just over half of students receive education in double shift, while in Kacanik, Lipjan, Glogoc, Viti or Vushtri, more than 9 out of 10 students could be attending school in double shifts<sup>38</sup>.

*'I am happy with my teachers, with my friends, with everything. But it's so difficult to study in two shifts. My classes are in the afternoon and now there are energy cuts. This is no schooling.'* (Student 12th grade, general high school)

Figure 9: Distribution of pupils according to the type of shifts operated in their schools, by municipality, 2021/22

<sup>38</sup> The use of 'could' is due to the uncertainty explained above on how many classes are run in double shift in each school reporting that it operates with some degree of double shifts.

	1 shift	2 shifts	3 shifts
Deçan	28%	72%	0%
Dragash	11%	87%	2%
Ferizaj	10%	90%	0%
Fushë Kosovë	18%	82%	0%
Gjakovë	12%	88%	0%
Gjilan	13%	83%	3%
Glllogoc	5%	95%	0%
Hani i Elezit	38%	62%	0%
Istog	33%	67%	0%
Junik	27%	73%	0%
Kaçanik	4%	96%	0%
Kamenicë	50%	50%	0%
Klinë	37%	63%	0%
Klllokot*	0%	100%	0%
Leposaviq*	100%	0%	0%
Lipjan	3%	96%	0%
Malishevë	26%	74%	0%
Mamushë	24%	76%	0%
Mitrovicë Jugore	13%	87%	0%
Mitrovicë Veriore*	0%	100%	0%
Novobërdë*	100%	0%	0%
Obiliq	48%	52%	0%
Pejë	17%	83%	0%
Podujevë	6%	88%	7%
Prishtinë	15%	82%	4%
Prizren	13%	85%	2%
Rahovec	19%	81%	0%
Shtërpcë*	21%	79%	0%
Shtime	33%	67%	0%
Skënderaj	29%	71%	0%
Suharekë	52%	48%	0%
Viti	9%	91%	0%
Vushtrri	5%	95%	0%
Zubin Potok*	100%	0%	0%
Zveçan*	100%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>1%</b>

Source: ETF calculations on SMIA data extraction

Note: \* Serb majority municipalities with incomplete or unreliable data

**Teaching and learning conditions. Textbooks and pedagogical resources.** Only limited information could be gathered on this aspect. The collection of qualitative data casts doubt on the quality of textbooks, especially in VET, and on the transparency and quality of textbook selection procedures. Issues were noted regarding minority-language textbooks. Some improvements in the distribution of textbooks seem to have occurred thanks to the digitalisation of the process, which improves fairness and transparency.

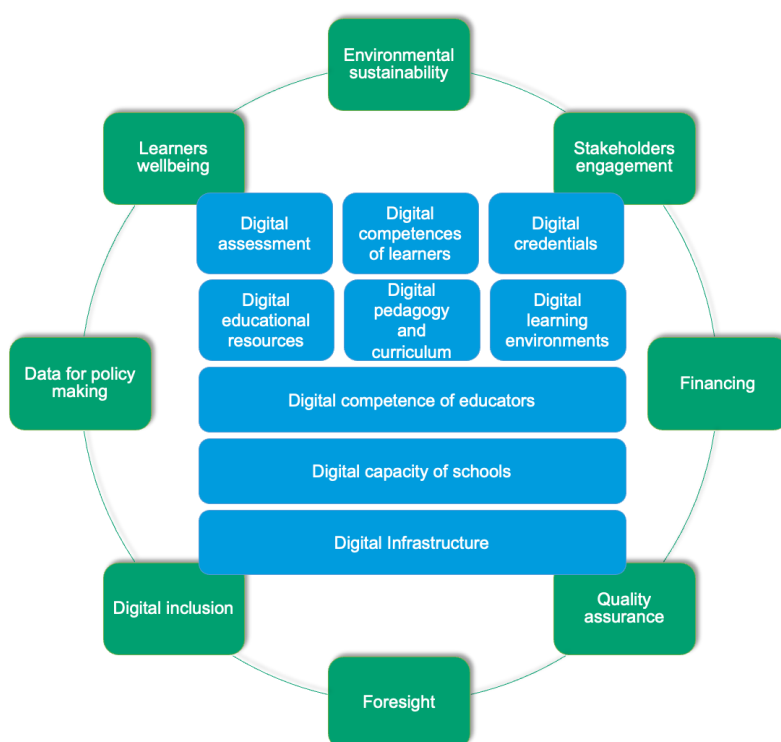
*'When I complained about the quality of the books, the teachers explained to me that they chose it because that publishing house was the only one that had published ready-made plans. I don't think this should be the reason why certain textbooks are chosen.'* (Student 11th grade)

**Special staff and support.** Regarding **special support provided by schools to children with special needs**, qualitative findings evidence **weaknesses in the inclusive enrolment planning process as well in the provision of adequate support**. For instance, as explained by MEDs, when a child with disabilities applies for a place in public pre-school, s/he is guaranteed to access it, even when registrations are closed. However, this leads to overcrowded classes, as it is not possible to reduce the number of accepted children per class. This may lead to resentment on the part of other children's parents and teachers (based on interviews with parents and teachers). In addition, regardless of the education level, there is a limited number of auxiliary teachers, which is not based on needs but planned in a standardised, inappropriate manner (one auxiliary teacher planned to be recruited per school<sup>39</sup>). These shortages make access and integration of children with special needs more difficult, especially as they also jeopardise acceptance by the other pupils.

### Digitalisation and inequalities? Less a dividing factor across students or schools than a national challenge

The harmonious digitalisation of the Kosovo education system presents a number of challenges, despite the high political priority granted to it<sup>40</sup>, attested by the dedicated fifth pillar of the education strategy and the budget mobilised. Indeed, the digitalisation of education entails many dimensions, which have been synthesised in the ETF digital education reform framework presented below in *Figure 10* (in which the blue rectangles represent the policy areas and the green ones transversal factors)<sup>41</sup>.

Figure 10: ETF Digital education reform framework




The application of this analytical framework leads to the identification of the following digital education areas as the most problematic ones.

**Digital infrastructure and digital capacity of schools.** Internet connectivity and equipment is another source of concern. The Kosovo education Strategy 2022-26 indicates digital infrastructure as a priority. However, according to the data provided by MESTI/SMIA (September 21), **one out of six public schools**

<sup>39</sup> No data was gathered on the number of auxiliary teachers already recruited.

<sup>40</sup> This is the fifth chapter of the education strategy 2026.

<sup>41</sup> For more detail on the methodology, please consult [Annex 4c](#)



**does not have access to the internet** (i.e. 15.1%, or 118 out of 786 educational and training institutions in total<sup>42</sup>). Equipment is also very weak, with **1 computer for 35 learners on average and two thirds of schools declaring that they do not have an IT laboratory** (same source). Even when computer labs are available, access to them is often restricted (see quote below). Infrastructure and equipment are mainly exogenous factors, relying on decision and funds from other Ministries, which makes these shortages difficult to overcome.

In terms of possible inequalities across municipalities, the comparison of figures at aggregated levels and the illustrative comparison between Fushe Kosova and Podujeva schools do not demonstrate huge differences in digital resource allocation: **the lack of IT equipment seems to be equally distributed** (e.g. the absence of an IT laboratory concerns 62.5% of public schools in Fushe Kosova, 70.7% in Podujeva).

However, some case studies evidence a gender gap in this regard<sup>43</sup>.

*'We have a skewed concept of digitalisation in Kosovo. Many think that a school having access to the internet, or having a computer lab is fully digitalised. But internet access is only available next to the director's office, and the computer lab is under lock and key.'* (School director)

**Digital competence of educators.** On the basis of the information gathered, among the digital education policy areas and cross-factors analysed, **the main challenge for an equitable digitalisation of the education sector is linked to the lack of digital competences of educators** in designing and delivering lessons where traditional, digital and online learning methods are combined and mastered. A relevant and promising initiative to reduce the gap of digital competences of educators is the recruitment of the ICT coordinators, expected to offer support to educators and schools in identifying needs and related solutions for digital education (see *governance section*).

*'Teachers dither with the digital reform. They are aware that their students know more than what they know on digitalisation.'* (a parent)

**Digital educational resources.** The production of digital educational resources (ES objective 5.2) suffers similar weaknesses to traditional teaching and learning material, including the lack of alignment with modern curricula, the pedagogical use of ICT and the provision of digital skills and competences; a narrow understanding of digital resources (pdf) seems evident. The reforming momentum should be conducive to a shift in investment from textbooks to e-textbooks.

In the end, **the digital capacity of schools (ES obj 5.3) will very much depend on the human capital dimension. The planned recruitment of ICT coordinators, starting in 2023, can support the overall digital capacity of schools and support the development of digital competences of teachers**, but also the **steering role of municipalities** for good digital governance at all levels (see *governance section*).

**Equipment of households** is also a key consideration, as it could compensate, at least in the short run, the shortages in schools, and be an alternative in case of other events like Covid-19 impeding face-to-face teaching. More data would be needed in this regard to assess 'readiness' of households.

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<sup>42</sup> Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Education Strategy 2022-2026, June 2022: Public ETIs include all public pre-university educational and training institutions, including pre-school institutions, primary and lower secondary schools, upper secondary schools (gymnasiums, vocational schools and competence centres) and resource centres/special schools.

<sup>43</sup> See in particular 'The gender gap in distance education in Kosovo': <http://kcde-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Copy-of-The-Gender-Gap-in-Distance-Education-in-Kosova-1.pdf>.



## Pre-school education and inequalities: an insufficient, multi-form provision that combines rural-urban and public-private, but also work-related inequalities

International literature attests that quality early childhood education can contribute to reducing learning gaps due to disadvantaged background and improve school attendance later on<sup>44</sup>. Unfortunately, as UNICEF MICS demonstrates, disparities in pre-primary attendance by first-graders are noticeable when considering specific characteristics including ethnic background, the urban-rural divide, poorest versus richest wealth index quintiles and the mothers' level of education<sup>45</sup>.

**Provision. Public pre-school provision. Public institutions are located in 28 out of 38 municipalities, with a total of 49 public pre-schools<sup>46</sup>, a totally inadequate number to fulfil needs.** Where public expenditure is strong, equity, inclusiveness and the general quality of education and training are increased (OECD, *Education at a Glance 2021*). Public early childhood education and care (ECEC) services are geared towards social assistance beneficiaries, children with disabilities, children placed under the care of relatives or the community due to the loss of biological parents or their care, children of (disabled) war veterans, and children of single working mothers (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2016). Low-income parents (living together in one family) are also targeted by more recent enrolment calls, however, they are ranked lower in priority scores than other target groups. Moreover, when both parents work, the families receive lower scores than families where one of the parents does not work.

As for other education levels, and confirmed by a report of the Save the Children organisation<sup>47</sup>, Kosovo's official administrative data do not report pre-school enrolment rates in all Serbian-run ECD facilities, which usually also follow the policy of the Government of Serbia and are therefore public facilities.

**Alternative pre-school provision.** There are **124 private licensed early childhood centres**. Most of the children are enrolled in private early childhood education and care facilities. Among them, community-based centres operate with funds for the building being allocated by the municipality or foreign donors, while the parent community manages and finances the delivery of services. In these cases, the municipality subsidises pre-school fees based on parents' income levels up to a maximum of 50% of the market price. However, children with divorced parents, from the lower-income households, with lower education status and from rural areas are less likely to attend private pre-schools<sup>48</sup>.

**Unlicensed pre-school provision.** The number of unlicensed private pre-schools is uncertain, due to a process of pre-school registration that is not well aligned between registering institutions, but is considerably high. According to SABER<sup>49</sup>, there are twice as many unlicensed private institutions as licensed private institutions (which already exceed the number of public pre-schools). The registration of a pre-school as a commercial enterprise is administered by the Ministry of Trade. Upon registration with the Ministry of Trade, pre-schools are required to apply for a licence from the Ministry of Education. **Issuance of work permits by the Ministry of Trade is not contingent upon the licence issued by MESTI, which allows for pre-schools to continue working without applying for a licence from MESTI, which presents obvious risks in terms of quality of teaching, among others.** Due to the low number of inspectors, the licensing process may take years<sup>50</sup> and there are currently no formal incentives offered to private ECD businesses to become licensed. The draft law on early childhood, which is not yet in force, is expected to address this issue and increase monitoring capacities to identify and monitor unlicensed pre-schools.

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<sup>44</sup> García, E., & Weiss, E. (2017). Education Inequalities at the School Starting Gate: Gaps, Trends, and Strategies to Address Them. *Economic Policy Institute*; Bassok, D., & Galdo, E. (2016). Inequality in pre-school quality? Community-level disparities in access to high-quality learning environments. *Early Education and Development*, 27(1), 128-144.

<sup>45</sup> <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5726/kosovo-2019-2020-mics-snapshot-education.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Source: MESTI. In 2021/22, the 49 public pre-schools are reported as follows: 37 municipality schools, 9 community-based schools, 3 schools run through public-private partnerships.

<sup>47</sup> Petrović, M., Banić, M., & Golić Ružić, M. (2016). Analysis of the child rights situation in Kosovo (Northern Mitrovica, Zubin Potok, Leposavic, Zvečan). Available at

[https://kosovo.savethechildren.net/sites/kosovo.savethechildren.net/files/library/CRSA\\_Kosovo\\_northern%20municipalities\\_%202013.pdf](https://kosovo.savethechildren.net/sites/kosovo.savethechildren.net/files/library/CRSA_Kosovo_northern%20municipalities_%202013.pdf)

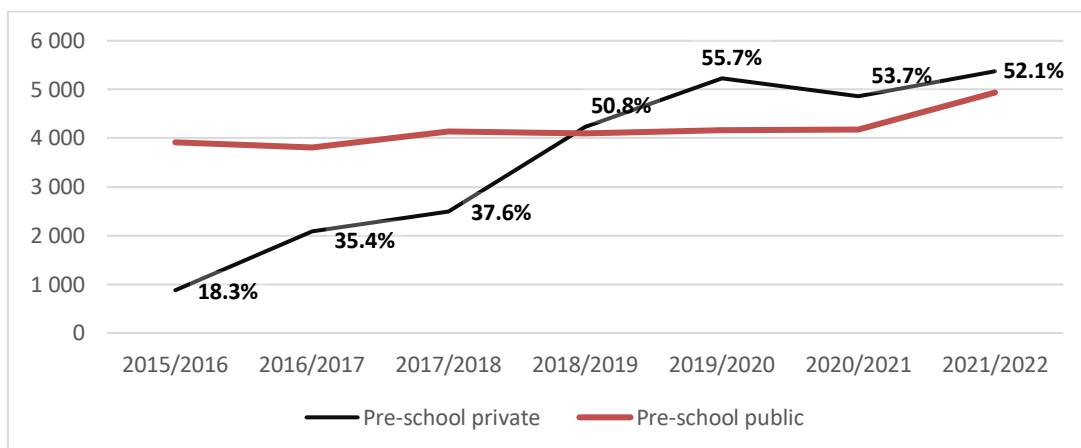
<sup>48</sup> [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/kosovo\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/kosovo_report_2020.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> World Bank. 2021. Available at: [Kosovo Early Childhood Development : SABER Country Report 2021 \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kosovo/education/saber)

<sup>50</sup> Source: interviews of MESTI officials.

**Public and private education offer.** As shown in *Figure 11*, enrolment has increased considerably, but mainly in private education<sup>51</sup>, which is mostly available in urban areas. According to SMIA data, **out of 188 pre-schools (public and private, main and satellite schools), only 14 are in rural areas. Among the 174 pre-schools in urban areas, 129 are private.** In 2019, 11 municipalities did not have a single public pre-school institution<sup>52</sup>. This means that, over the last 3 years, only one municipality opened new public pre-schools (Prizren, which opened one public and one public/private partnership institution).

Figure 11: Pre-school enrolments public vs private (with % of private share)



Source: MESTI

Note: enrolments in 'Group 5-6 pre-school' have been considered part of pre-primary enrolments and then excluded from this graph

While the **average pre-school attendance rate was around 37%**, it fell to 14% for children in rural areas, and 19% for children amongst the poorest households<sup>53</sup>. This number is much lower for vulnerable groups, with just 1 in 10 children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, especially from rural areas, attending an early education programme. Although enrolment in pre-primary classes dramatically increased to 92% in 2019, this rate stood at only 45% for children in Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities<sup>54</sup>.

**The teaching language** could be another exclusion factor for ethnic minorities: as per MESTI (SMIA) data, out of these 184 schools, only one in Peja has Bosnian as a teaching language; in only one school in Pristina Turkish is included as teaching language; and Serbian is the teaching language only in 5 pre-schools in Kamenica (this last data is probably underestimated due to the data gap in Serb-majority municipalities). Reversely, when only one language is used for teaching, it excludes de facto children from other communities that would live close-by.

According to research, having a low-income background significantly reduces the likelihood of attending private pre-schools, compared to the wealthiest income class (with a household income of more than EUR 750)<sup>55</sup>. In the absence of publicly funded options, the high cost of private facilities limits participation in pre-school education, particularly for children from low-income families (UNICEF, 2021).

**Pre-school education and female employment.** In a nutshell, **lower income, lower status, rural and other more fragile social groups** are less likely than wealthier households to participate in pre-school and implicitly must seek care within the family. As such, the model also leads to significant implicit familialism and maintenance of gendered care, which could be one of the reasons behind the **extremely low female**

<sup>51</sup> The increase was mostly concentrated in private pre-schools: from 877 pupils in 2015/16 to 5 374 in 2021/22 (52.1% of total enrolments in pre-schools). In the same period, public pre-schools increased enrolments only by 1 000 pupils, but a positive element to underline is that most of this increase is concentrated in the last year.


<sup>52</sup> Gjelaj, M. (2019), Pre-school Education in Kosovo, Kosovo Education and Employment

Network, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334896051\\_PRE-SCHOOL\\_EDUCATION\\_IN\\_KOSOVO](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334896051_PRE-SCHOOL_EDUCATION_IN_KOSOVO)

<sup>53</sup> WORLD BANK GROUP, A Situational Analysis of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Services in Kosovo, June 2021.

<sup>54</sup> <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5726/kosovo-2019-2020-mics-snapshot-education.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Mustafa, A (2021) Early Childhood Education and Care in Kosovo: A Targeted Educational Approach Producing and Maintaining Social and Gender Inequalities, *Revija Za Socijalnu Politiku* 28(3):367-390, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3935/rsp.v28i3.1808>



**presence in the labour market**<sup>56</sup>. The high unemployment rate among women (32.3% in 2020 compared to 23.5% among men) and especially **very high inactivity rate (79.2%** compared to 44%) also derives from women's involvement in unpaid and normatively expected household work and roles, including childcare. Unfortunately, the current pre-school model, offering only 2.5 hours at school per day for children, is not expected to solve the latter problem<sup>57</sup>.

**An uncertain and unassured quality of pre-school education.** For the record, Another question raised before and that needs to be addressed relates to the **quality of this pre-school education**: PISA 2018 results show that pupils who had attended institutionalised early childhood education programmes performed worse (in reading in particular) than their peers without ECE exposure. This trend is unusual in the region and in other OECD countries. These assessments are concerning, but need to be confirmed using more updated results.

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<sup>56</sup> Boussein, A. Access to universal childcare and its effect on maternal employment. *Rev Econ Household* **20**, 497–532 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-021-09572-9>

<sup>57</sup> Families where one parent does not work receive higher scores than those with two parents working; this may be designed by the government as an incentive for women's employment, but interviews conducted question the efficacy of this measure because of the limited time spent by children at school.



## FINANCING (of the education system)

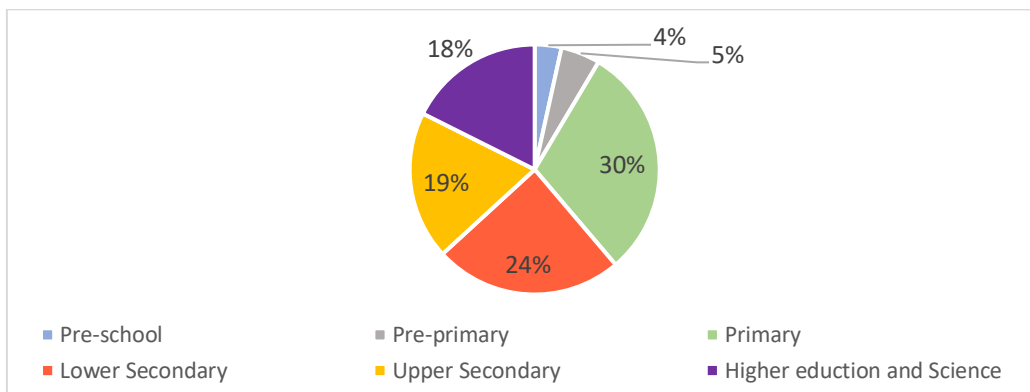
### Education budget: the fair priority to the sector unveils some discrepancies but grants room for quality and offer improvement

*Disclaimer: The budget analysis is based on figures from the Budget law (planned amounts) or from the MESTI and MFTL Report (Budget spending/expenses), where available. As the differences between budget planning and execution are limited (0.22%), we have considered this was methodologically acceptable. But the MESTI could further explore this issue and harmonise data.*

**Public expenditure on the education sector in 2021 stood at 4.1% of gross domestic product (GDP)** (all education levels from pre-school to higher education, only pre-university stood at 3.3%) **or 13.3% of total Government spending** (only pre-university stood at 11.6%)<sup>58</sup>. Although the amount as a percentage of GDP is comparable to EU countries and higher than in Albania and Serbia for instance<sup>59</sup>, **per capita spending** is considerably lower: this is the result of a low level of GDP base and government budget, and, despite the demographic decline, of a still significantly large share of pupils in the total population as compared to other EU countries: Kosovo currently has around **24% of its population aged 0-14**<sup>60</sup> (EU average is around 15%, Serbia 15%, Albania 17%<sup>61</sup>).

The distribution of budget<sup>62</sup> spending by education level for 2021 is presented in *Figure 12* below. At first sight, it shows a rather balanced allocation of financial resources across levels, except for pre-school and pre-primary, which in total represent only 9% of the budget. However, what does not appear in the graph is the **low level of funding for VET**: only 9.6% of the total education budget is allocated to VET, whereas the sub-sector receives more than half of secondary students.

Figure 12: Budget spending by education level, 2021



Source: MESTI

**Budget for digitalisation.** The financing of Kosovo's digital agenda for education is included in the budget plan 2023 as projects under different budget sub-programmes developed by budget organisations, including MESTI and municipalities under their respective remits. **Digitalisation of education was increased to the government priority through the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2023-2025** by referring to the 'Digitalisation of educational services for better quality and access' (MTEF p. 10). As a result, a 3-year project, budgeted at **EUR 6.5 million for 2023 and an estimated EUR 6 million per year** for 2024 and 2025, was included in the budget plan under 'digitisation, computer equipment, smart board and projectors. The project is structured under the sub-programme for capital expenditures for pre-university education. It foresees the

58. Source: Annual Statistical Report with Education Indicators 2021-2022. The total budget planned for 2021 was EUR 2 454 209 105. Of this, EUR 322 149 718 or **13.13% were allocated for the education** sector at all levels, while the budget for the education sector during 2021 stood at EUR 322 890 683 – hence the difference between the planned and executed budget of +0.22%.

59. UNESCO Institute for statistics: 3.1% of GDP in Albania in 2020 and 3.6% of GDP in Serbia in 2019.

60. ETF calculations on KAS Kosovo population projection 2017-2061 (medium variant).

61. KAS estimates for Kosovo, World bank data for the other countries.

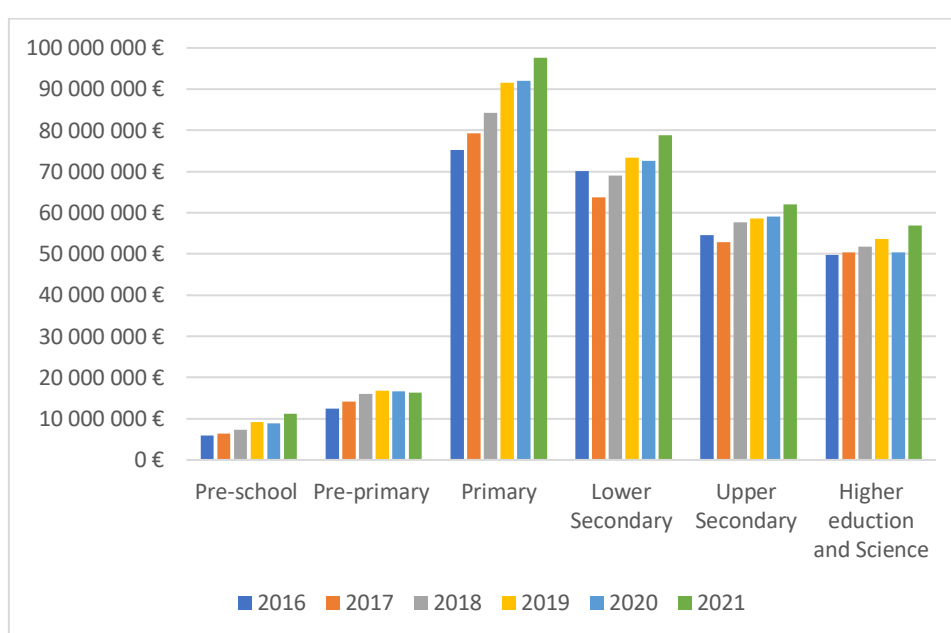
62. Education budget reconciliation is a difficult exercise due to the way in which the budget law is presented: resources allocated to the sector appear not only under MESTI, but also under other ministries. In 2021, the Ministry of Internal Affairs planned a budget of EUR 5 075 000 for school infrastructure at municipal level, or the budget expenditure for the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety is not included in the budget figures for the education sector by MESTI, although it offers higher education programmes (Bachelor degree) for police staff.

**recruitment of 30 IT specialists** as part of the special education fund<sup>63</sup>. Projects for **school digitalisation and the purchase of IT equipment fall under the budget lines of 11 municipalities**<sup>64</sup>, financed mostly by the government budget as well as by their own revenues.

Furthermore, the Kosovo digital agenda is included in the horizontal priorities that affect more than one sectoral field (MTEF 2023-2025, p. 13). Projects aimed to improve overall service delivery and digital governance through the activities of the **Agency for Information Society**<sup>65</sup> may reach out to the education sector as well, e.g. projects for online service delivery through the **e-Kosova platform** (<https://ekosova.rks-gov.net>). However, at this stage it would not be feasible to assess the level of financing and the impact of such projects on the digital education agenda.

**Assessing budget against needs (enrolments).** Two aspects were analysed to assess the appropriateness of this allocation: i) the evolution of these respective shares over time (bar chart); ii) this evolution compared to the evolution of enrolments (line chart) (figures available until 2021).

Figure 13: Evolution of budget spending by education level, 2016-2021



Source: Assessment Report on the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 for data until 2019. MESTI for spending data 2020 and 2021

- i) From Figure 13 above, it clearly appears that the lower cycles have slightly but regularly increasing budgets; from secondary level, budget trends are less linear, but are still increasing despite the demographic decline (see Figure 1). From the data on expenditure, an increasing trend in budget amounts can be seen in higher education, and a slight increase in the number of academic staff, which is not logical if one considers the decrease in the number of students.
- ii) Beyond the respective shares, it is important to **check the consistency of this allocation with enrolment numbers<sup>66</sup>, including over time**. Primary and lower secondary, which correspond to compulsory education, represent 55% of the budget and 60% of enrolments. Higher education accounts for 17% of the budget and 15% of enrolments; etc. Generally, the allocation appears rather consistent.

<sup>63</sup> MTEF 2023-2025, p. 5-6 of the Annex called Municipal Level: IT coordinators' salaries and allowances cost of EUR 360 000 planned for 2023

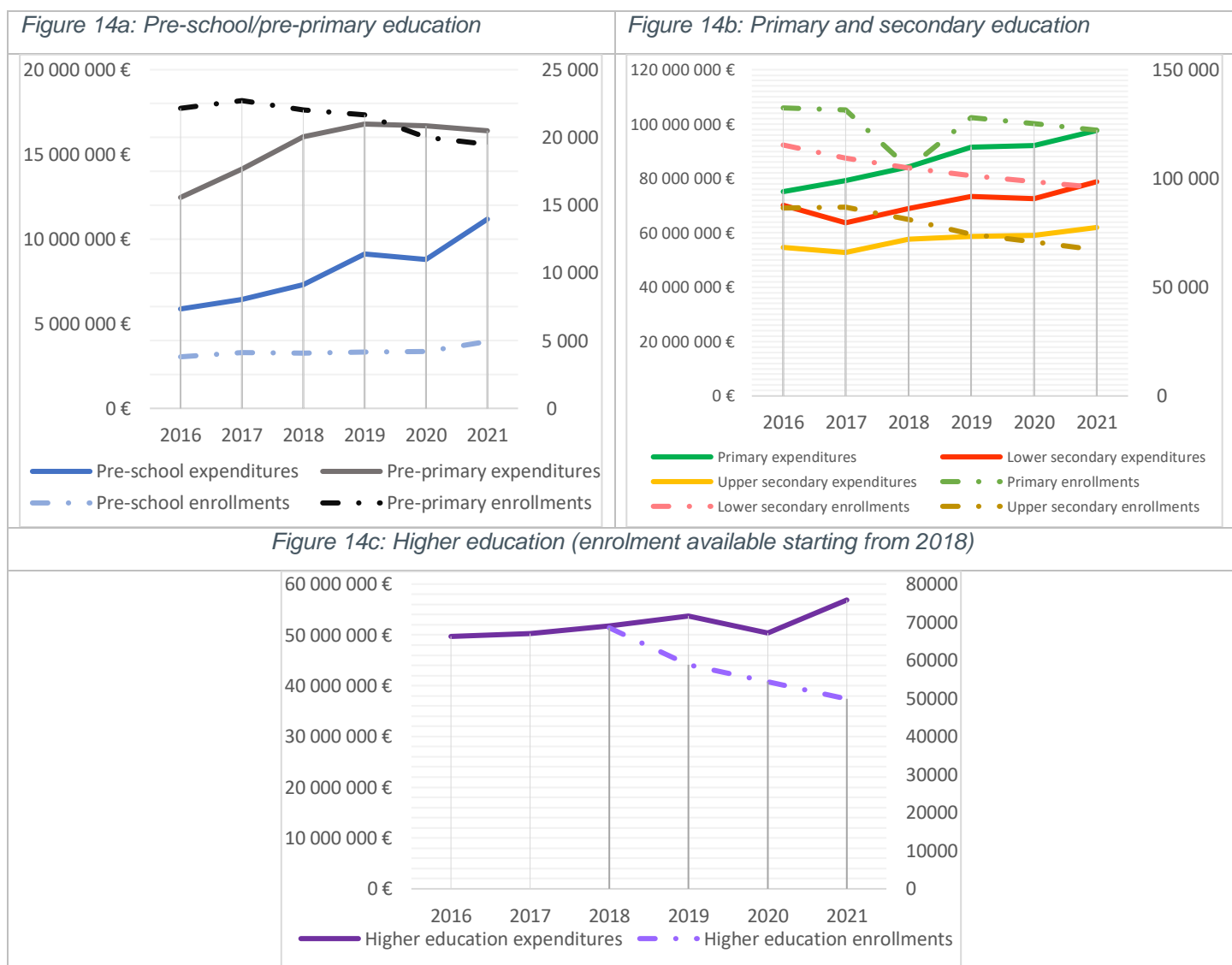
<sup>64</sup> Planned budget to municipalities for school digitalisation: EUR 1 196 111 foreseen in budget plan 2023.

<sup>65</sup> Planned budget for the Agency for information society: EUR 9 933 768 for 2023.

<sup>66</sup> This should be nuanced by the fact that schooling a pupil does not have same unit price at all levels, which is why it is important to also consider the evolution.

However, **discrepancies are evident when considering trend data**. Figures 14a to 14c present the evolution of budget spending and enrolment by sector <sup>67</sup>. The most obvious discrepancy lies with **higher education, where the budgets are increasing slightly while enrolments are decreasing**. One can also notice the increasing budget in pre-school and pre-primary, which was, until 2020, not reflected in enrolment rates. However, this can be considered normal, given the recent priority placed on these levels and the time needed for policies to have impact.

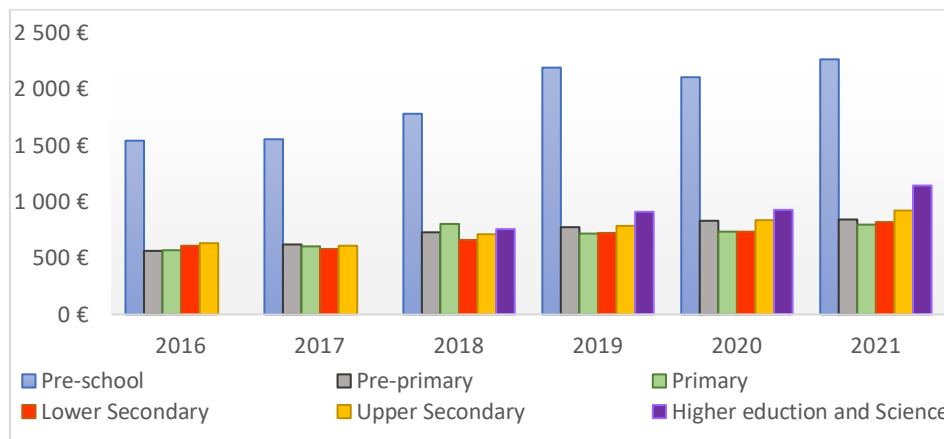
Figure 14 (a to c): Evolution of budget spending and enrolments by education level, 2016-21



In terms of **per capita spending**, as shown in Figure 15, the high level of pre-school per capita spending is striking, but this can easily be explained by the policy priority and related investments recently made, meaning that increases in enrolments should follow shortly.

<sup>67</sup> For readability purpose, data has been spread over 3 different graphs.

Figure 15: Per capita spending by education level

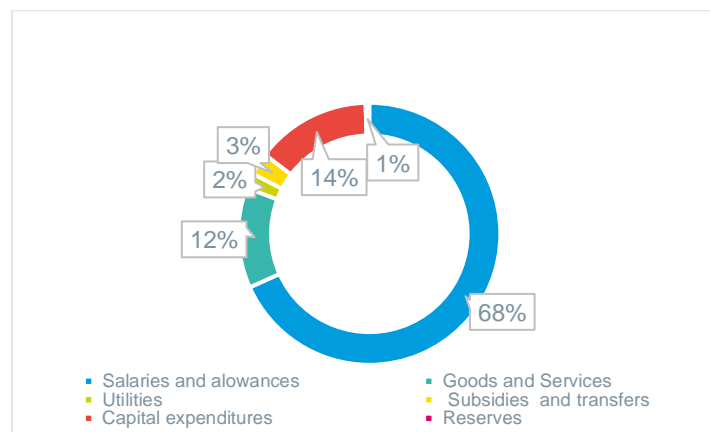


Source: ETF calculation based on MESTI and MFLT

Note: The calculations were made by dividing public expenditure on education by the number of students enrolled in public schools for each education level. Enrolment data on higher education available starting from 2018.

**The analysis of the budget by economic item shows room for policy measures in favour of quality improvement and public provision expansion.** The most striking element from the analysis of *Figure 16* below, which presents the respective shares of the economic categories in the education budget, is the **limited share of salaries and allowances**, compared to other countries: it lies at little more than **two thirds of the budget** (68%), while it is not unusual to have this represent up to 90%. This means that **there is room for manoeuvre for improving the system**, qualitatively (goods and services, which include textbooks or other pedagogical resources, are as high as 12.4%) or quantitatively (with capital expenditure standing at 14%, that means that new classrooms could be created, for instance, to solve the double shift issue).

Figure 16: Education budget by economic category<sup>68</sup>

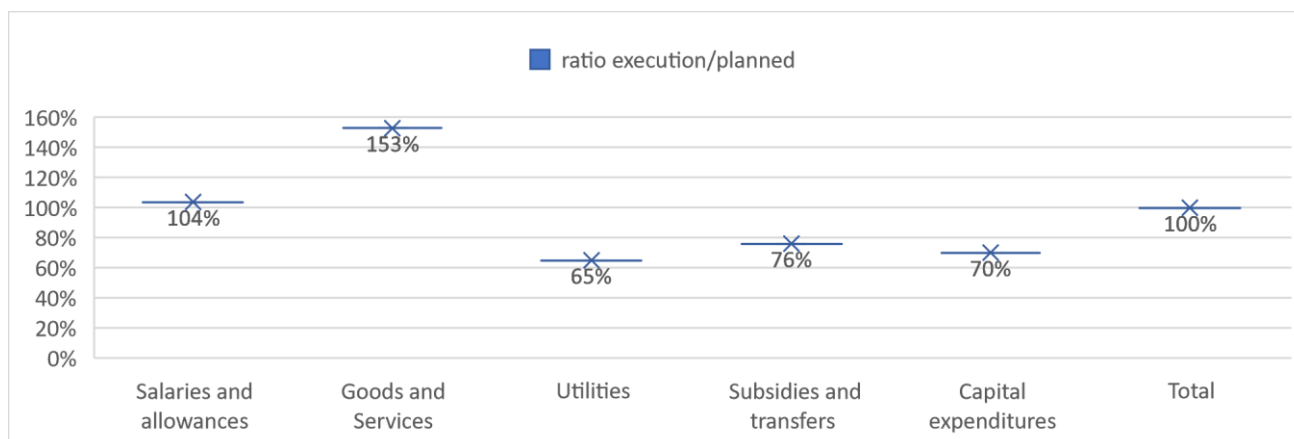


Source: Budget plan 2021

<sup>68</sup> NB: The legal framework of Kosovo does not provide definitions for the economic classification of government expenses. However, the classification is defined based on the IMF Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014 (GFS). If needed, see amounts in *Annex 2*.

\* The list of items for some categories, such as goods and services, but also capital expenditures, is long and not included in the budget plan, nor in the expenditure reports. It also differs depending on the case, e.g. textbooks bought for primary schools are categorised under the goods and services category. In other cases, such as books bought for libraries under the budget of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports are categorised as capital expenditure.

Figure 17: Comparison between planned and executed budget, Budget 2021



Source: MFLT and MESTI

**The comparison between planned and executed budgets** (see Figure 17 above) points to a **need for enhancing the budget planning capacity, but also for exploring the reasons behind the discrepancies.** The total execution rate of 100% attests a high execution capacity overall; however, there are many discrepancies regarding the type of spending compared to the plans: overconsumption of the budget line on goods and services (153%), underconsumption of that for capital expenditures (only 70%); the reasons for these discrepancies should certainly be explored, namely given the high need for improving the infrastructure. Last but not least, the planning for salaries and allowances is realistic (104%) but this is quite normal as estimates are more mechanical than for the other budget lines to be planned.

### Decentralisation and financing: a priority work area for appropriate and transparent school financing via the municipality education directorates

**Sources of funds: the State remains the main funder despite the decentralised system.** As a decentralised country, Kosovo funds its education system both from State and municipality revenues. **Donor support is not included in the budget planning, which hampers sound and integrated policy planning aligned with the global budget available.** Figure 18 shows that **the State budget (called Government grant in the budget law) represent 92.5% of the budget, while the contribution of municipalities via their own revenues represents only 5.3% on average of the overall education budget. At municipal level, around one sixth of total revenue goes to education (14.9%)<sup>69</sup>.**


Let us finally note that the budget spent at micro level (in other terms, through municipalities' budget, including school funding) represents more than two thirds of the overall budget (68.9%).

Figure 18: Funding sources by 'budget organisation' in %<sup>70</sup>

Sources	MESTI	Municipality	UP	MIA	Total
Government Grant/budget*	87.0%	94.7%	87.1%	100%	92.5%
Own income*	4.4%	5.3%	12.9%	0	5.7%
Borrowing	0.8%	0	0	0	0.2%
Privatisation Agency of Kosovo (PAK)**	7.8%	0	0	0	1.6%
<b>Total (in €)</b>	64 116 454	221 945 740	31 012 524	5 075 000	<b>322 149 718</b>

<sup>69</sup> In 2021, EUR 11 658 532 out of the EUR 78 164 118 total own income of municipalities were planned to cover education expenditures in education.

<sup>70</sup> See [Annex 2](#) for the corresponding amounts if need be.



\* Data includes all sources at the municipal level (including Special Education Grant and municipal revenues) and government level (which are financed by the government budget, revenues, and borrowing). \*\*An amount was used in 2021 from the fund of the Privatisation Agency of Kosovo, as the government decided to grant EUR 5 million to buy textbooks for the primary level.  
Source: *Budget Planned 2021, MFLT*.

### **Municipalities' differing levels of priority for education... a matter of differing needs?**

When exploring what municipalities dedicate funds to, it appears that the vast majority of the special budget (85% of the EUR 210 million), 85% goes to salaries and allowances; on the other hand, municipalities devote only 3.7% of their own revenues to salaries and allowances, but 27.7% to goods and services and 54.7% to capital investments. In other words, municipalities compensate in priority, as per their possibilities, for quality and access shortages.

Looking again beyond averages, the analysis of municipal budgets reveals important **disparities across municipalities in terms of education priorities**, as illustrated in *Figure 19* below. First, the effort that Pristina municipality devotes to the sector is noticeable compared to other municipalities (5.3% on average): **Pristina's own budget represents more than one fifth (20.5%) of its total education budget**, and a similar proportion of its own budget (20.6%) goes to education – which is of course easy to explain by the demographic pressure in the capital, but still confirms the sense of responsibility of the elected municipality. Second, it is also remarkable that rural municipalities, such as **Peja or Kacanik, devote a quarter of their own budget to the sector** (while Podujeva, also a remote area, dedicates for instance only 8% of its own resources to the sector). Without further elements, it is hard to assess the rationale behind the municipal decisions on the allocation of their income. What can be noticed (and would be worth further analysing) is the co-existence of uneven trends by municipalities with similar characteristics (e.g. in remote areas). For Pristina and Fushe Kosova, whose levels of own income are much higher, it is more obvious that their higher needs (reflected by a high number of students per classroom) probably lead to more direct pressure from citizens for them to allocate funds to the sector.

**Such analysis could be particularly interesting to systematise, in a policy perspective, in order to 'reward' the most voluntary municipalities, or to 'target' lagging municipalities through incentives...**

Figure 19: Sample municipalities' budget analysis and respective shares of own income in education

	total budget education	Government Grant for education	Municipality own income for education	Municipality total own income	% govt grant of total education budget	Share of municipality own income for education in its total education budget	% of Municipality own income allocated for education
Podujeva	9 857 114	9 749 114	108 000	1 342 559	98.9%	1.10%	8.04%
Fushe Kosova	4 011 877	3 703 058	308 819	2 689 654	92.3%	7.7%	11.5%
Prishtina	28 458 000	22 628 000	5 830 000	28 271 947	79.5%	20.5%	20.6%
Suhareka	7 421 559	7 082 559	339 000	1 812 956	95.4%	4.6%	18.7%
Peja	11 989 619	11 045 119	944 500	...3 917 465	92.1%	7.9%	24.1%
Kacanik	4 121 762	3 965 222	156 540	...646 655	96.2%	3.8%	24.2%

Source: Annual Budget Plan for 2021

Also, the **destination of these own resources is key to analyse**: do municipalities fund education because they are obliged to compensate, for instance, the shortages of the State (paying for teachers' salaries for instance) or do they make an additional effort to improve quality (putting resources on goods and services, for instance) or even to expand or improve the offer (through capital investment)?

In reality, when it comes to the budget plan by economic category, allocations vary from municipality to municipality. **The majority of municipalities allocate their own income in the category of capital expenditures, but also to goods and services. Most of them do not plan any budget for salaries and allowances.** Those which do are the following 13 municipalities: Podujeva 64.8%; Mitrovica 20.3%; Klina 18.5%; Kamenica 17.5%; Gjilan 16.8%; Obiliq, 14.2%; Prizren 10%; Vushtrri 9.9%; Istog 6.6%; Lipjan, 6.4%; Peja 5.8%; Ferizaji 4.1% and Gjakova 2.4%.

**Families' financial contribution.** Public education is in theory free of charge. In early childhood education, for example, the public services do not charge pre-school fees (covering food) for children from families on social benefits, children of disabled war veterans, children without (or with only one) living parents, and children with disabilities. Parents who are charged fees and have more than one child in the public pre-school facilities pay reduced fees for the second and the third child. However, data is missing, which impedes an accurate analysis (e.g. municipality reports do not provide information on the resources they collect from households).

**Funding formula.** The budget allocated to each municipality to operate the education system under its geographic remit<sup>71</sup> is defined according to an allocation formula (established by the Grants Commission), which needs urgent revision. The administrative data aggregated at schools and municipal level is used as a source for the calculation; the budget is then allocated within the municipality block grant, but it is currently based on an outdated and inappropriate funding formula. Unchanged since 2008, it mainly takes into account the number of students and of teachers, special education needs and non-wage operating expenses (see [Annex 3](#) for details). This raises a number of issues, among which: it **does not take into account the occupancy rate of the schools** (hence the efficiency) **or the specific needs of VET schools** (resourced as general secondary schools -Gymnasiums-); it is not always based on accurate data, as in some cases, like in North Mitrovica and other Serb-majority municipalities, data have not been provided for several years, so budget allocations are made on the basis of estimates (using the 11-year old census of 2011 as a baseline for these).

The **issue of the funding formula is also relevant to higher education**, where there is no formula yet, and where the funding **does not integrate any performance criteria**. The budget is prepared, for each university, on a historic incremental basis. 67.4% of the 2021 total budget for public institutions of higher education is dedicated to the University of Pristina (although this budget was based on only 61.1% of higher education students). Furthermore, the specific cost of corresponding sub-programmes has not been possible to

<sup>71</sup> The education envelope is then inserted into the municipality block grant that covers all needs and sectors.

calculate so far due to the lack of an agreement on how to structure university branches and faculties, and how to limit the total number of students in these universities (required due to limited financial resources allocated to higher education, but also to fit the labour market needs, hence ensure employability of graduates). The law on Higher Education sets out the development of effective performance-based funding mechanisms to be regulated by secondary legislation. So far, the universities lack the basic data needed to develop a system based on a formula. This is also one of the main obstacles to decentralising the budget execution<sup>72</sup>.

There is **little chance that education financing will improve in the short term, hence creating the conditions for enhancing equity and encouraging efficiency**. The MESTI is well aware of the problem regarding the inappropriate formula, and has set up a working group for its revision, the outcomes of which are not expected until the end of 2022. In any case, such a reform would take a long time to come to implementation, as it would then require a **change in the law on local government financing** (which recently returned from Assembly to Government for revision, while the budget appropriation process for the next year is being finalised), meaning that, in the best case, new changes would not be effective before the budget law for 2024.

**Type of expenses incurred by municipalities.** When looking at municipalities' types of expenses (see row in bold in *Figure 20* below), we see that **municipal resources mainly fund capital expenditure (55%) and goods and services (27%)**: this means that they do not often hire new teachers on their own budget (which is positive from a sustainability viewpoint) and rather **concentrate on the improvement of school premises, equipment and supplies, or running costs**.

*Textbox 1 The institutional organisation of the budget*

The basis for budget planning, allocation and spending are budget organisations as well as programmes and sub-programmes within the scope and responsibilities of budgetary organisations. Due to the decentralised nature of the Kosovo education system, responsibilities regarding the provision of education are divided between the MESTI and municipalities. These responsibilities are regulated via the Law on Education in the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo. Some responsibilities held by municipalities, rather than MESTI, include: building educational facilities; student registration and admission related activities; employment procedures in schools, licensing of teachers, etc. All municipal responsibilities pertaining to wages and salaries of teachers and administrative personnel are funded through the governmental 'Specific Grant for Education' provided directly to municipalities as part of their annual budget. A fixed amount for 'Goods and Services' and EUR 7 annually per student in Capital Expenditures also is allocated. Higher education institutions also receive funds directly or through the Ministry of Education. Public universities, except for the University of Pristina (an independent budget organisation) are funded by the MESTI. This includes the University of Gjakova, the University of Gjilan, the University of Prizren, the University of Peja, and the University of Mitrovica. The following sections focus on these budgets.


*Figure 20: Distribution of budget by source of funds and economic items*

	Salaries and allowances	Goods and Services	Utilities	Subsidies and transfers	Capital expenditures	Reserve	Total
Budget MESTI	30.7%	23.0%	2.5%	9.4%	34.4%	-	64,116,454
Budget Education Grant	85.0%	8.9%	1.5%	0.1%	3.9%	0.001%	210,287,208
Own income municipalities	3.7%	27.2%	1.2%	10.4%	54.7%	2.7%	11,658,532

Source: Medium Term Expenditure Framework 2023-2025

<sup>72</sup> Source: Report on Implementation of KESP 2017-2021.





**Schools lack financial autonomy.** Schools do not own bank accounts nor do they have direct financial resources at their disposal. Upon request to MEDs, schools can purchase goods and services for an amount of EUR 90 per month, and submit the invoice to the MEDs. MEDs will process the payment through the budget expenditure procedures to the economic operator.

**Regarding income-generating activities at school level, there is probably room for improvement,** although precise data could not be obtained. A number of **public vocational schools** generate their own revenues<sup>73</sup>, going up to several thousand euros (EUR 5 000- EUR 6 000), effectively supplementing their budget, for both salaries and goods and services. They also generate income from fees for adult education qualification programmes (interview, MED Podujeva): employment agencies sign a contract with them, and adult learners may contribute approximately EUR 130 per year. However, the current rules are not as supportive as they could be, because the resources raised are first centralised before being partly paid out to schools.

### **Monitoring, accountability and institutional capacity building for financing: a critical issue to improve quality of education and efficiency in public money use**

**Accountability and monitoring of spending is a critical issue.** It appears that neither the ministry of finance (MFLT) nor the ministry of education (MESTI) have information about the spending of the education block grant by the municipalities, and there is a disconnect between the education management information system (EMIS) and financing. The absence of a coordination mechanism between the two ministries (MESTI/MFLT) does not help in addressing this gap.

**The abovementioned problem of efficiency in spending** reflects the difficulty in meeting the standards. This is partially due to the need, namely due to political<sup>74</sup> but also social<sup>75</sup> sensitivities, to finance schools with a limited number of students in remote areas (sometimes 2-3 students per classroom) and an increasing number of superfluous teachers. On the other hand, schools with high numbers of students in towns (up to 40 students per classroom<sup>76</sup>) – commonly work in multiple (two, or even three) shifts (Fushe Kosova, Pristina), which from a financial/efficiency point of view could be an asset, but which in reality jeopardises quality.

This low pupil-teacher ratio, as explained above (*see Inequalities, footnote*) raises a problem of efficiency in resource management and prompts suggestions for alternatives, including in terms of classes or schools merging in remote areas: the fixed cost of teachers' salaries would need to be divided among an optimal number of pupils, which in theory is as a minimum defined in the standards. This concern should guide a thorough analysis to be made by MESTI, school by school, and municipality by municipality, to identify where PTR should be increased for more efficiency (with a possible merging of classes, or even of schools, especially in remote areas), and up to which level it could be done without hampering learning quality and where it should be decreased to make sure that there are no overpopulated classes where learning is at risk. Conversely, this data-based reflection should also help identify where multiple shifts, which are detrimental to learning hours and quality, could be replaced by single shifts thanks to a reorganisation of the school network in urban areas.

In all instances, such data should be made available for discussion and assessment of the overall efficiency of the system, as well as for **identifying niches for efficiency gains**.

In higher education, for instance, moving to a performance plan (as mentioned above) would enable a monitoring of universities' work and would **foster a culture of responsibility and accountability**.

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<sup>73</sup> By, for instance, selling their products, for instance in agriculture, their services for adult education programmes, or renting their premises.

<sup>74</sup> Political sensitivity refers to the double school system of Kosovar and Serb-majority municipalities.

<sup>75</sup> Schools in Kosovo are often socialisation hubs for the surrounding population.

<sup>76</sup> Data on pupil-teacher ratios have been calculated for each municipality. They cover pre-school to lower secondary education (no disaggregation was possible).

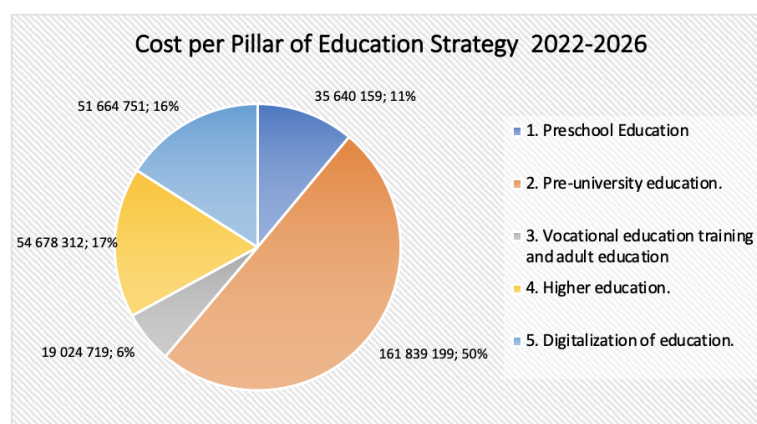
## Policy costing and donor funding: the lack of consolidated information on donor funding hampers predictability and sustainability of the costed strategy

**Strategy costing.** The new education strategy 2022-26 is, remarkably so, accompanied by a **cost estimate**. However, four main concerns can be highlighted in this regard.

- This cost estimate **plans ambitious development, with the figures almost doubling over five years**. With a total cost of EUR 322 million over 5 years, it starts from EUR 40 million in 2022, rising to EUR 70 million in 2026<sup>77</sup>. This poses the question of absorption capacity over such a limited period, and of sustainability from a national budget point of view. One can assume that it therefore aims to integrate donor funding, to allow for such an important increase in resources.
- Although the strategy provides a useful roadmap and clarifies national policy objectives, it should not be expected to achieve everything, as it represents a **limited part of the current system operations**. If it were fully funded by domestic funds, **the education strategy would in any case amount to (only) 12% to 20% of the yearly financial envelope for the sector** (budget spending on education amounted to EUR 322 million in 2021, which is also the total cost of the strategy over five years, including the abovementioned gradual increase). However, this is a significant effort towards reform.
- Within this limitation in scope, another matter of concern concerns **the financial feasibility of the strategy**, due to the importance of the **funding gap, which represents 32%** of the entire cost for ES 2026, while the State budget and donor support are expected to cover respectively 57% and 10%<sup>78</sup>.
- The pillar most at risk seems to be the fifth one: **49% of the funding gap<sup>79</sup> concerns this digitalisation pillar**. **The gradual increase in the funding gap** (expected to rise from 21.7% in 2023 to 46% of this pillar's financial needs in 2026<sup>80</sup>) may be explained by the likeliness to have more time to mobilise, as time goes, external financial support and to obtain a reprioritisation of the state budget. Still, this poses a risk for the implementation of the digitalisation strategy.

Regarding the amount of EUR 46 496 135 that was planned for 2022, at this stage there is no assessment on the level of implementation of the activities foreseen to be covered by this budget.

Figure 21: Cost of the education strategy by pillar



Source: MESTI

<sup>77</sup> Education strategy cost 2026:

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Education Strategy	46 496 135	66 886 746	69 842 889	68 838 014	70 783 355	322 847 139

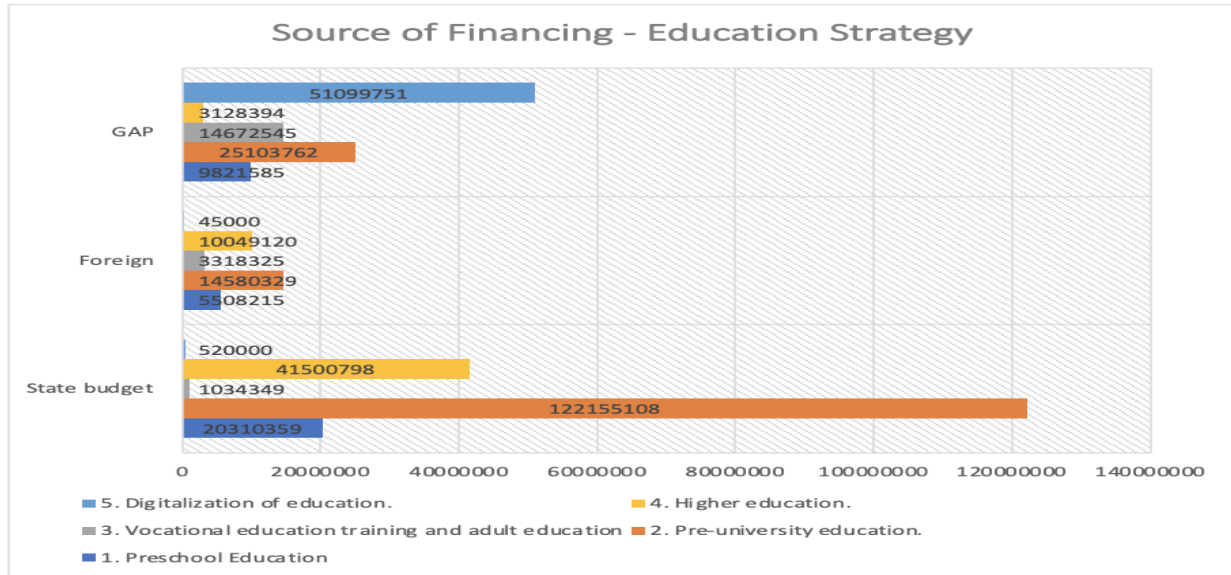
<sup>78</sup> 32% or EUR 103 826 036 are uncovered, while 57% (EUR 185 520 615) will be covered by the State Budget, and 10% (EUR 33 500 989) will be provided by foreign financing (supposedly confirmed commitments).

<sup>79</sup> EUR 51 099 751.

<sup>80</sup> The financial gap in the digitalisation pillar increases gradually by: EUR 14 516 262 or 21.70% of the indicative cost for the year 2023; EUR 25 601 414 or 36.66% of the indicative cost for 2024; EUR 30 619 997 or 44.48% of the indicative cost for 2025; and EUR 32 680 178 or 46.17% of the indicative cost for 2026.



Figure 22: Planned funding sources of the education strategy 2022-26



Source: MESTI

**Donor funding.** Kosovo's current budgetary framework for the education sector (as well as for other sectors), as introduced through a **Medium-term Budget Framework** and the annual budget plan, **does not contain information on financial support provided by external donors**. Nevertheless, the education sector in Kosovo is supported by many donors at all levels of the education system (central, municipal, school) and in all areas of education (pre-university, higher education, VET, etc.). In some ways, the **MESTI is one of the most 'condensed' agencies in terms of the support available** from various development partners, although there is no clear data on the total amount (the OECD DAC database only provides the contribution of bilateral partners to the sector, which amount seems limited, standing at EUR 20 million (or 9.3% of their bilateral contributions), see *Figure 3*). While this benefits the sector, it also highlights the need to effectively coordinate the efforts of key development partners (see *Governance section*). Currently, there is no record of all donor activities<sup>81</sup>, nor an inventory of the comprehensive financial support provided by donors or other alternative sources of financing.

### Institutional capacity for financial management

**The widespread issue of institutional capacity (see *Governance section*) equally applies to the financial management function.** It is largely derived from the lack of easily available financial data and of inter-institutional coordination that are required to master the financing chain, from budget planning to expenditure review and efficiency assessment. The lack of human resources exacerbates the problem, which concerns macro (MESTI), meso (MEDs) but also micro (school) levels, includes procurement and auditing competences, and should be addressed specifically, although as part of a broader effort. For example, the MESTI is in charge of auditing and procuring approximately EUR 74 million out of approximately EUR 300

81 Assessment Report for 2019 on the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021. p. 77. available at: <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/raporti-psak-2019-eng-1.pdf>



million spent in the education sector. The MESTI conducted only eight internal audits last year due to the lack of internal audit capacity, accounting for roughly a quarter of the budget it was requested to audit<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup>The meeting with the Heads of MESTI's Budget, Procurement and Audit department on 06.09.2022.

Textbox 2: Responsibility of Actors in Financing Education (Source: ETF reconciliation of information gathered, 2022)

Actors	Short summary of responsibilities
<b>Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MESTI)</b>	<p><b>Budget planning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on the budget ceilings decided by the MFLT, the MESTI coordinate the budget preparation with universities (except UP), agencies and other institutions subordinated to MESTI.</li> <li>- Based on the MFLT guidelines and calendar the MESTI submits the budget proposal to the MFLT for itself and its subordinated agencies, including universities (except the University of Pristina).</li> <li>- Represents and defends its budget proposal in the budget hearings conducted by the MFLT.</li> <li>- The MESTI receives and approves capital investments for the construction and renovation of facilities financed by the Kosovo budget and donors (Law on pre-university Education art 5.7.5); if selected, such projects are included within the MESTI budget proposal and submitted to the MFLT.</li> <li>- The MESTI is a member of the Government Grant Commission, to which it transmits data received from SMIA.</li> </ul> <p><b>Budget Execution:</b></p> <p>The MESTI conduct all procedures for budget expenditures for all programmes. More information is needed about the extent to which MESTI conducts procedures for Agencies subordinated to MESTI and Universities.</p> <p>Internal Audit: Conducts internal auditing for all organisations subordinated to the MESTI. It also audits universities budgeted through the MESTI budget line.</p>
<b>Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers (MFLT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The MFLT is responsible for preparing the Kosovo Consolidated budget and for submitting it to the government for approval</li> <li>- Based on government priorities and budget needs (historic budget, etc.), the MFLT decides on the budget ceilings for budget organisations, including ceilings for the MESTI, municipalities and the University of Pristina. The budget ceilings for municipalities include the budget amounts based on the education formula and decided in the Special Grant for Education, own income of municipalities and other budget sources.</li> <li>- The MFLT coordinates work with the MESTI regarding budget preparation for the MESTI and its subordinated agencies.</li> <li>- It coordinates work with municipalities on budget preparation for the municipal level, including pre-university education.</li> <li>- Upon confirmation by Chief Financial Officers of the budget organisations, the MFLT transfers (through Treasury) salaries directly to all public employees (education staff, management, administrative staff, support staff etc.)</li> <li>- The MFLT authorises budget organisations to make expenditures based on budget appropriations (approved budget law).</li> <li>- The MFLT prepares and the Government reviews quarterly reports covering the fiscal year on a quarterly and annual basis.</li> </ul>
<b>University of Pristina</b>	<p>The University of Pristina is an independent budget organisation. It conducts expenditure procedures for all economic categories approved for the University.</p>
<b>Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)</b>	<p>Based on the delegated responsibilities to manage the construction of schools and other education-related buildings, the MIA is still managing projects of approx. EUR 5 million going on from previous years. Based on the Budget plan 2021 no new projects were planned under the MIA budget line.</p>
<b>Municipality Education Directorate</b>	<p>Within the budget ceilings provided by the MFLT, the MED/municipality prepares the budget and submits it to the MFLT. In advance, the budget is approved by the municipal Assembly. The budget proposal for education within the limits of the education grant, general grant and own income, covers salaries and allowances, goods and services, utilities, transfers and subsidies, capital expenditure that can be covered by municipal budget sources etc.</p> <p>Own income of municipalities are transferred to the single Kosovo account and returned through expenditure procedures to the municipality.</p> <p>Requests for extra capital expenditures such as the construction of schools and other facilities are addressed to the MESTI. If approved, they will be part of the MESTI budget line (pre-university education programme). The MESTI will conduct all procedures for their execution.</p> <p>Where responsibilities are not transferred to schools, the MED manages expenditures for all schools.</p>
<b>Schools and other pre-university education institutions</b>	<p>Schools fill in data in the EMIS system. The data consists of the number of students, number of students with disabilities, number of teachers, facilities, cases of bullying and other required data.</p> <p>The Law on Pre-university education (article 29) provides that municipalities must delegate responsibility for budget and finance to education and training institutions according to the municipal formula specified in a legal act; the formula allows changes in appropriations if the number of pupils changes during a fiscal year. It provides that every governing board of education institution have, for each financial year, a budget allocation and must approve the budget plan for the educational institution. The institutional governing board may further delegate responsibility for approving expenditure in specified areas, and with specified financial limits, to the director of the institution, such arrangements being the subject of a schedule of delegation approved, and revocable by, the corresponding municipality;</p> <p>However, in practice, such responsibility is not delegated to schools (except in some municipalities, such as Prizren, Istog, Peja, Gjakova).</p>

Upon request to the MEDs, schools can purchase goods and services for an amount of EUR 90 per month, and submit the invoice to the MEDs. MEDs then make the payment to the economic operator.

## GOVERNANCE

In Kosovo, the governance of the education system is expected to rely 'vertically' on three levels : macro or central level, mainly entrusted to the ministry of education, science, technology and innovation, meso level, represented by municipality education directorates, and micro level, with the schools. However, it presents a number of weak, not to say missing links.

### Responsibilities and coordination mechanisms in a decentralised system: a missing link

**First, the roles (or functions) and responsibilities are formally defined by law based on the subsidiarity principle, but not strictly respected.** The existing legal framework that allocates the roles and responsibilities among the different actors suffers inconsistencies across legal instruments and does not foresee the needed coordination mechanisms.

**At central level, the institutional setting shows a sometimes-confusing role of MESTI and a multiplicity of institutions with an uncertain complementarity of functions.**

By law, the **MESTI is mainly responsible for the policy and regulatory framework design, as well as for quality assurance and inspection, and has a limited competence area in terms of operational management of the education provision**, as most of the latter has been transferred to Municipalities through the law on local self-government. However, in practice, the MESTI is still greatly involved in the implementation. Given its limited human resources and the strong political impetus for decentralisation, it should endeavour to re-focus on its core functions. Conversely, its leadership role is not fully recognised nor made possible by the institutional setting (for instance, no-one in MESTI is currently entrusted with leading on the digitalisation reform).

In addition, there is a multiplicity of small size institutions, with unclear roles, limited power and insufficient resources to deliver, and the duplication of functions is frequent (shadowing). An interesting example is the vocational education and training sub-sector, where the complex institutional setting (with various agencies in charge of different aspects with unclear articulation<sup>83</sup>) and the confusing processes seem to create inoperative working frameworks. Another example is proposed in *Figure 25* below, which maps the different actors involved in the resource management process.

**At meso level, the municipality education directorates (MED), which are expected to be the cornerstone of the education management process**, do not have sufficient capacity and resources to fulfil their role. Municipalities have a long list of duties (See *Textbox 3* and *Annex 4b*), but usually lack the capacity to fulfil them due to human resource limitations. As demonstrated by the interviews, they often lack the staff, be it in terms of numbers and/or competences. As the strong decentralisation process does not impose on MEDs to report on achievements (and weaknesses), it is difficult for the MESTI to be quickly informed of and possibly act on shortages. Obviously, this situation does not foster transparency, nor does it instil a culture of responsibility and accountability.

<sup>83</sup> e.g. The co-existence of the Agency for VET and adult education AVETAE and the MESTI VET department, overruling different typologies of VET providers, is confusing. The AVETAE could probably become the overarching management authority for all providers, whereas the MESTI VET department could be responsible for defining policies.

### Textbox 3: The role of municipal education directorates (MEDs) as defined by law

#### Competencies of municipalities

1. Municipal competencies are regulated by the Law on Local Government (No 03/L040) of 20 February 2008 and by the Law on Education in the Municipalities (No 03/L-068) of 21 May 2008, and by any additional competencies assigned by provisions of this Law.
2. The exercise of municipal powers and duties in this field are monitored by the Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Administration to ensure compliance with the applicable legislation.
3. Municipalities are responsible for the following additional competencies:
  - 3.1. construction of education and training facilities.
  - 3.2. maintaining and repairing the premises and equipment of educational and training institutions.
  - 3.3. ensuring a healthy environment for pupils and staff, including water, hygienic-sanitary conditions, health service, as well as a safe environment including safe utilities and effective security.
  - 3.4. through co-operation with parents, police and other public authorities taking steps to deal effectively with violent or bullying behaviour and substance abuse in or associated with the respective institution.

*'Pre-university education in Kosovo (ISCED levels 0-3) is organised in a decentralised manner, i.e. education institutions are run by local authorities. Municipalities are responsible for hiring teachers and school principals, paying staff salaries, infrastructure and school maintenance, staff training, monitoring of schools at all pre-university levels, etc. On the other hand, the central government is responsible for curricula and textbooks, school inspection and teacher licensing. The operation of schools is funded from the Special Education Grant allocated to the municipalities on a per-capita basis by the central government, whereas municipalities may allocate additional funds for goods and services to schools based on a certain municipality-to-school funding formula. Municipal administrations in Kosovo are organised into directorates. Each directorate is managed by a director who is employed and dismissed by the Mayor. Each municipality has a MED that carries out its governance functions within the scope of the responsibility of the local government.'*


*There is no unique organisational structure that applies to all MEDs in Kosovo. Each MED is structured differently. In addition to the Municipal Education Director, larger municipalities have responsible officers for all levels of education, a financial officer and possibly one or two other education officers. In such cases, there is one officer responsible for the whole upper secondary education sector, including vocational education. On the other hand, smaller municipalities may have one or two officers responsible for all levels of education. Staff shortages effectively restrict municipalities in exercising their responsibilities pursuant to the Law on Education in the Municipalities, which actually gives them full powers to administer the pre-university education institutions within their jurisdictions. For example, MEDs are responsible for training teachers in schools subordinate to them, including VET schools, but have no capacity whatsoever to exercise that responsibility. Also, MEDs have a range of other responsibilities requiring staff with specific expertise, which is missing, such as for the provision of support for curriculum implementation and quality assurance, school aids and equipment, etc. Under the current circumstances, MEDs typically focus on essential tasks related to the administration of schools, including for example: staff employment, maintenance of buildings, education budget planning, safety, etc.'*

**Source: Article 7 of Law No 04/L –032 ON PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO, 2011 and Extraction from the ETF Background review to inform policy dialogue in Kosovo on VET governance & financing, 2020)**

**At micro level, the autonomy of schools is almost inexistent, despite an enabling legal framework,** even if it were applied (as is often the case: the law is more enabling than the outcomes of its implementation).

As a basic obstacle to their autonomy, schools do not know the budget that the municipality allocates to them after receiving the government (block) grant<sup>84</sup>. In addition, some rules should be revised to encourage dynamic management of schools. For instance, the centralisation of resources after they are raised by schools, through income-generating activities, is discouraging initiatives, even if one third of these resources is then supposed to go back to them. Among the other impediments to the application of the law on school autonomy, one may put forward the appointment procedures of school headmasters, as well as the lack of managerial competences of the school management team and the limited role played by the school board,

<sup>84</sup> Consequently, this information is not reported to the central level through the EMIS system.



which often appears to be little more than a formal body. The involvement of teachers, students or parents is very limited in school decision-making processes.

*'It would be better not to invite me at all (as a parent representative on the school board) if we are just formally involved but have no decision-making power, with no significant contribution'*  
(a parent)

### The need and plea for institutional streamlining and simplification remain unheard.

The EU-funded **functional review** (implemented by GiZ in 2018) provided a detailed analysis of the weaknesses of the institutional setting, at macro level in particular, which appear to be still valid but need to be updated; its recommendations included:

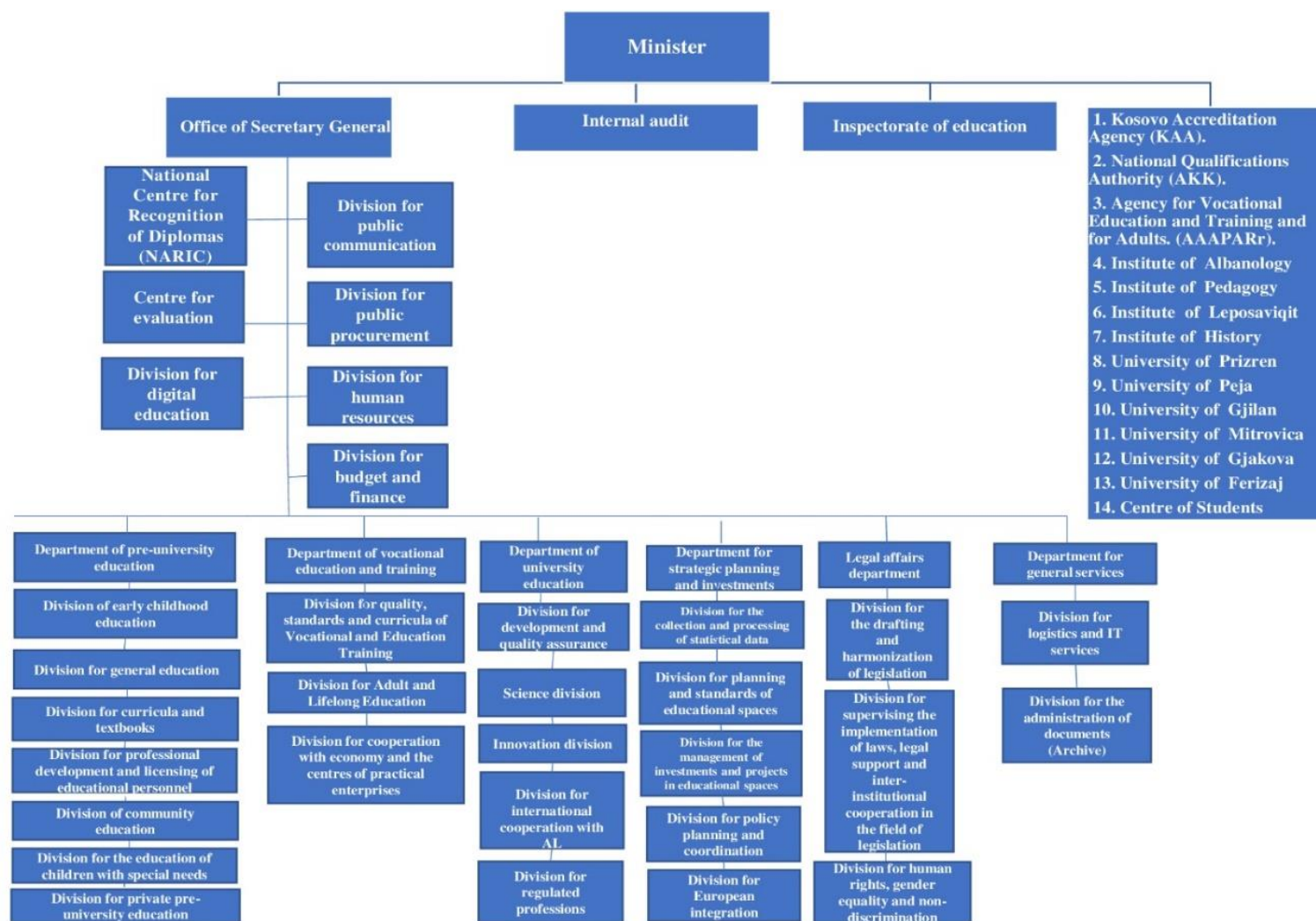
- (i) the approval of a new 'Systematisation Act', to be approved after 6 months of the review;
- (ii) the setting-up of a 'Task-force' to deal with the priority recommendations of the functional review,
- (iii) the creation of two main departments within the MESTI (one for pre-university education and the other for higher education) to better cope with the lack of available human resources at central level;
- (iv) the revision of the role of the European Integration and Policy Coordination Department in order to have a central role on intra-ministerial coordination for policy development and legislative drafting;
- (v) the elaboration and implementation of a comprehensive and specific 'Capacity Development Programme' for MESTI;
- (vi) the development of a human resource management strategy with annual implementation plans;
- (vii) the development of joint annual plans, one year in advance, with the ministry of finance to address workforce shortages; the establishment of a project implementation unit to deal with donors' projects and strengthen the ownership of the reforms and the alignment of the interventions with the government education policy priorities; and
- (viii) the adoption of a new 'Law on Inspections'. These recommendations have been presented and discussed, but most of them are not implemented yet, nor is there any formal monitoring and reporting – a specific discussion led by the EU Office which requested the review under the policy dialogue mechanism could be every effective in steering progress in this area.

Unfortunately, no explicit and clear follow up in terms of decision or structured dialogue seems to have been ensured on this insightful piece of analysis.

To date (December 2022), a **new organisation chart** for the MESTI is awaited and expected to solve many issues; however, as shown in *Figure 23* below, it does not follow the recommendation for simplification made in the functional review, by reducing to two the number of main operations departments or by decreasing the number of small divisions. Its implementation remains to be clarified, as it has not been officially adopted and is hence not applied, whereas it may provide positive impetus towards an improved ministerial setting.



Figure 23: The 'new' draft organisation chart for MESTI, to be adopted

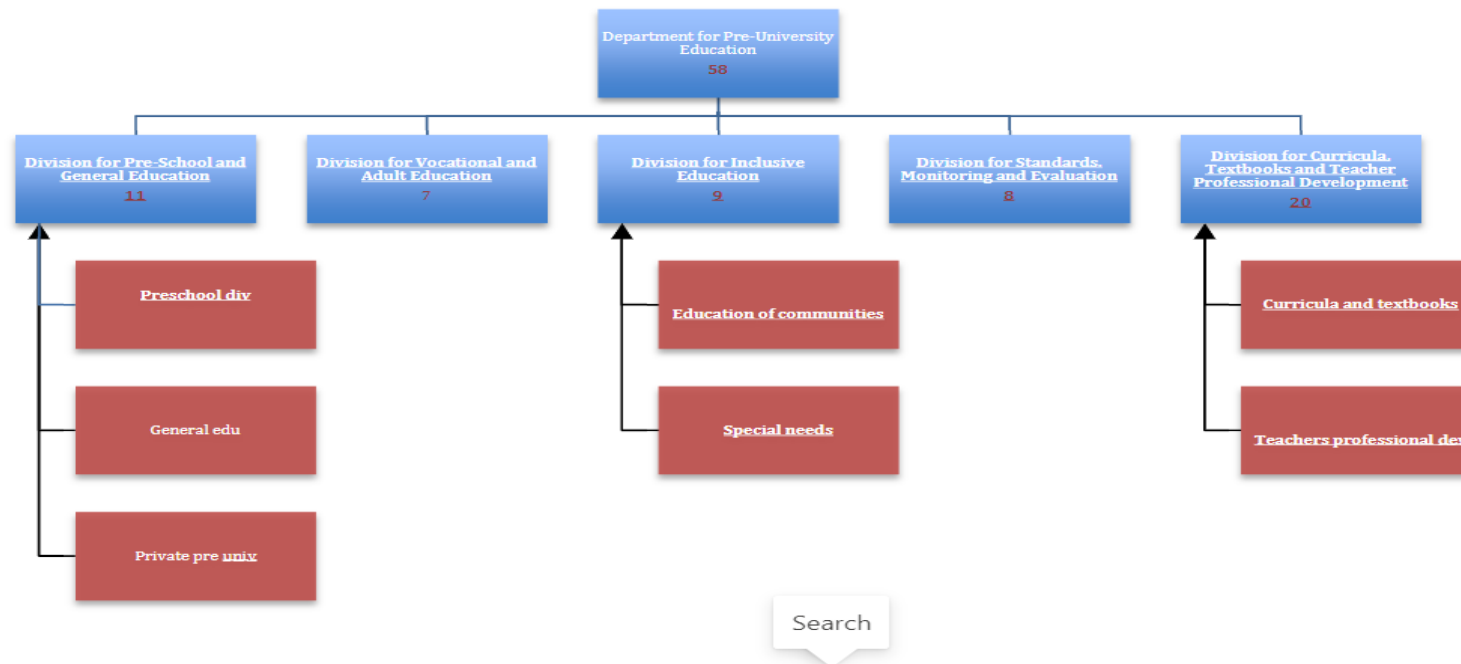


Source: ETF non-official translation extracted from the Draft Regulation of MESTI, 2022

Note: it will then repeal DCM (QRK) No 14/2018

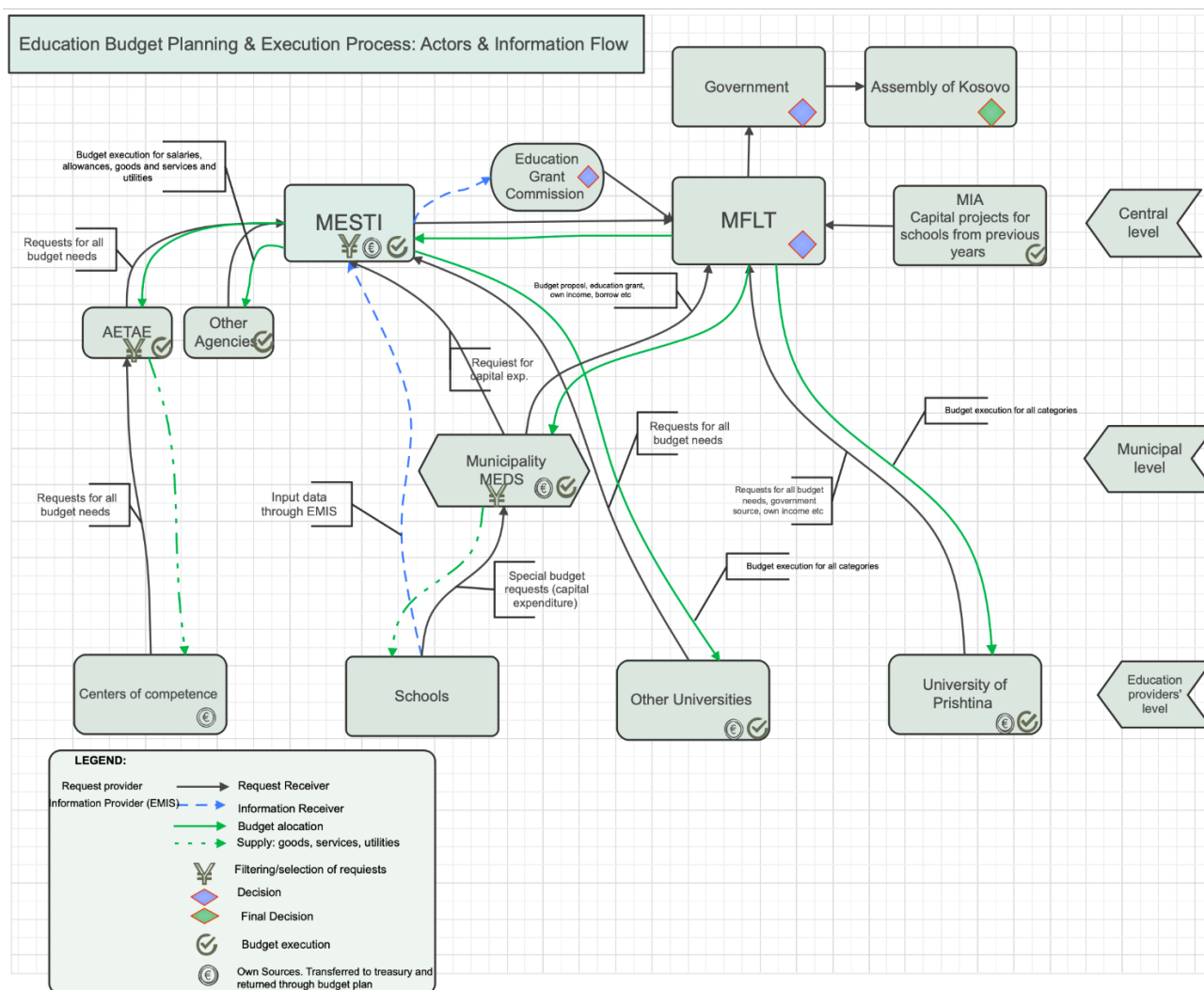
As regards the Pre-university department, by comparing this MESTI proposal with the structure suggested in the functional review (see *Figure 24*), one can notice the inconsistency in terms of areas of responsibilities and number of divisions to be created/maintained.

*Figure 24: Sample suggested structure for the Pre-university Department at MESTI*



Source: *Functional Review (GiZ; 2018)*

Figure 25: Complexity of the institutional framework: the example of budget planning and execution process




Source: ETF, based on analysis of legal arrangements and interviews with stakeholders. 2022

**Second, institutional coordination is the missing link everywhere.** This creates ‘black holes’ and does not support transparency and accountability. The need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different institutions involved and to have clear communication channels for decisions was mentioned in many meetings held with different authorities at different levels during the field mission in September, and in the targeted consultation meetings with MEDs, involving school directors and teachers<sup>85</sup>. Although the regulatory framework for decentralisation states the general distribution of responsibilities, there is no formal mechanism to ensure that it is respected. In addition, some issues would need to be addressed through inter-ministerial cooperation, but the lack of formal coordination mechanisms makes this impossible.

For instance, between the macro, ministerial level and the meso level of municipality education directorates, the lack of central coordination together with the absence of clear information, decision or reporting channels impedes a streamlined and effective decision-making process in many areas, as it is the case for the critical aspect of funding and financing management (see *Figure 25* above as an illustration).

Another example can be found in the formula funding mechanism for pre-university education, for which the lack of established information exchange channels prevents consistency checks between planned use of

<sup>85</sup> To avoid an excess number of annexes, the minutes of these bilateral meetings and TCMs have been stored in a separate file, which is available on request.



resources and effective use, as well as efficiency assessments. Another example is the lack of systematic coordination and management procedures for the training and performance assessment of public and civil servants. These examples illustrate the weaknesses at the 'horizontal' level of institutional coordination.

Conversely, many examples of decisions taken at the top-level of the education administration (MESTI) were reported in which a consultation and/or discussion step was omitted with the other levels of the administration, in particular the main authorities responsible for their implementation, such as MEDs or school principals. As a consequence, these decisions are not owned by those responsible for the implementation, and they are not included in a coordination framework that would enable smooth monitoring of their implementation. This type of missing 'vertical' level of institutional coordination, combined with the lack of a formal reporting obligation between the meso (MEDs) and macro (MESTI) levels often undermines the effectiveness of the decision-making process: many decisions are 'owned by no-one' and thus not translated into effective changes in the system.

**Third, the legislative processes are, in general in Kosovo, fragmented and lengthy, and are at odds with impeding political concerns.** This does not help the responsiveness of the education system in adopting remediation measures to address urgent needs (such as the redeployment of surplus teachers where needed) or to improve the efficiency of the system (e.g. the rationalisation of the school network to streamline inefficient or redundant small schools). However, this would require introducing, upon clear justification and possibly using temporary arrangements, **flexibility in the decentralisation framework**, which is a very sensitive issue.

### **Data and Monitoring: a key issue for greater needs-based efficacy, and actual accountability at all levels**

**At municipality level, there are no monitoring, reporting or evaluation mechanisms in place.** This means that financial resources are channelled to the municipalities according to the funding formula, but no feedback is provided to the MESTI on issues related to the performance of schools, to the quality of education results, to the distribution and use of human and financial resources. However, the joint responsibility of MESTI and municipalities regarding the evaluation of school performance, combined with the limited resources of the MESTI inspectorate in charge, hampers evaluation processes and the monitoring of quality.

**Data exists, as well as two education management information systems (as mentioned above), but they are not used for setting up an accountability and monitoring mechanism,** let alone for feeding an informed policy dialogue that would inspire reforms. The MESTI has many disaggregated data, but their use is very limited and inefficient. Although new, both education management information systems seem to encounter substantial structural and functional problems that need to be resolved<sup>21</sup>.

However, the strategic approach does appear to be data-driven. There is consistency between the education strategy 2026 and the education sector elements of the national development strategy 2030, including in terms of indicators and targets. However, the choice and formulation of these indicators should be revised, as they would be very difficult to measure as they are.

**Data is scarcely used for system management and policy making, whether at central or municipal level.** Data is not instrumental in the dimensioning of the education offer, in the prioritisation of MESTI or MED interventions, or in the timely adoption of remediation measures. Different reasons can explain this (see *Table 1* for further details):

- Data are not properly processed and analysed (e.g. EMIS data for resource monitoring) or not transmitted to the right levels (SMIA, SMIAL not fully used, not connected, etc.).
- Data are missing on many topics, including on education financing, on the quality of education provision (such data would be useful to inspectorates for supervision and would support planning) or on the digital capacity of schools (systems like the SELFIE tool, which was piloted in 2019, are not systematically used<sup>86</sup>).

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<sup>86</sup>Selfie has been translated and is ready to use; it could also be upscaled rapidly, offering data on the digital capacity of schools at different levels of granularity.

- Data are too aggregated, preventing comparisons across schools or municipalities in order to spot disparities or inconsistencies.
- The accountability chain and monitoring mechanisms have not been defined.
- There is insufficient pressure, and probably no formal request from the political level (MESTI but also MFLT) to build planning on accurate data and to comply with the standards (whether for dimensioning the education offer or for budget planning (low pupil-teacher ratios).
- The decentralisation pattern is certainly not incentivising quick progress in this regard.

*'Increasing salaries without an accountability mechanism has harmed the quality process. We did not notice any real change in the quality of teaching, even though salaries have increased (from EUR 240 in 2010 to EUR 430 in 2016)'.  
(an NGO representative)*

### **Institutional capacity: the overlooked fundamental for managing the education system**

Institutional capacity refers to the human resources (both qualitative and quantitative, i.e. sufficient staff with the expected competences) and financial resources (budget allocation) that are necessary to run the system as planned by law or by sector plans.

**The institutional capacity issue suffers no exception: it manifests at the quantitative and qualitative levels, and at central, municipality and school levels.**

**At macro/central level**, the institutional capacity challenge covers different aspects. As mentioned above, the MESTI has been waiting for a new **organisation chart** to be approved and implemented, with streamlined functions and units/departments in charge, in which positions and competences would be better aligned. In addition, there is **no digitalisation of working methods**, while it would be an important step towards a more rational management of the system, from the planning of education provision to teacher management or school performance assessments, for instance. A computerised education management information system is already in place, but under-used.

**At municipal level**, education directorates are insufficiently staffed, and/or lack adequate expert profiles, which does not allow for them to fulfil their administrative and pedagogical roles. In some cases, there is also an overload of tasks and responsibilities sent directly to the municipalities by MESTI without sufficient information on how to implement them or without steering/coaching mechanisms. Unfortunately, **data are insufficiently available to further qualify and locate the shortages**. Both the MESTI and the Ministry of Public Administration confirmed that they do not have or use data regarding MED staff.

Noteworthy is the assumption that municipality resources could be more easily mobilised for recruiting teachers than MEDs staff<sup>20</sup> with special authorisations or approvals from the Municipal Councils.

The MESTI is aware of these gaps, as it states in the Education Strategy 2026 (p.64): 'At the municipal level, a restructuring of MEDs and capacity building is needed. For this purpose, it is necessary to draft a standard guide that would contain existing and new regulations and laws that define the scope and work of MEDs and specific areas of management of the education system. Mechanisms for effective communication and coordination between different stakeholders in the system through reporting and coordination processes should also be developed and strengthened.'

**At school level**, institutional capacity is problematic in various respects: beyond the staffing issue that will be dealt with in the next section, schools face organisational problems (e.g. with multiple shifts or mixed organisation at the upper secondary level – VET/Gymnasium), social support issues and safety concerns (there was recently a series of false bomb alerts in schools<sup>87</sup>). Paradoxically, schools are seen as places for socialisation, but not as communal spaces in which civic society (including associations, parents, or businesses in the case of VET) could easily cooperate.

*'We are invited outside of the formal framework, only to be on the picture' (a parent)*

**An effective example of the four abovementioned challenges can be found in the digitalisation reform:** this policy area, which is also the fifth pillar of the education strategy 2026, lacks a needed formal governance structure for digitalisation and has very limited system-wide indicators, which are mainly limited to internet connectivity and equipment. This is provided for in MESTI's new organisation chart, which is still not in place.

<sup>87</sup> <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/18/wave-of-false-bomb-threats-in-region-again-hits-kosovo/>

## The challenge of managing teachers and headmasters: preparing, recruiting, deploying and accompanying staff

As a preliminary remark, it is essential to mention that the lack of data related to teachers and staff in general makes it difficult to draw a comprehensive picture of teacher management.

**Teachers.** According to the available data, despite an already very low level, the pupil-teacher ratio has decreased over the past years. This is because the number of teachers is decreasing more slowly than the number of pupils enrolled. The only exception concerns public pre-schools, where both teachers and pupils are increasing, but with a significant increase in pupil numbers in 2021/22 (see *Figure 14a-c*). This basic figure can be used as a starting point to approach the challenge of managing teachers efficiently.

Based on qualitative evidence derived from interviews and the targeted consultation meetings with school heads and teachers, the analysis reveals a number of urgent problems to be addressed, namely in terms of:

- **Recruitments:** the recruitment of teachers suffer from a lack of candidates meeting the requirements and with the appropriate profiles, especially in early childhood education. In addition, despite the existence of surplus teachers, and the decreasing needs, faculties of education keep training teachers without clear link with needs; out of the five universities, only the university of Pristina is decreasing the number of teacher students (and future applicants)<sup>88</sup>. Hopefully, some progress should soon be recorded, as the agency for higher education is actively working to reduce this number.
- **Working (teaching) hours versus salaries:** because of the small size of schools in many municipalities, it is not unusual for teachers to teach in several schools (with corresponding transport costs that are often not paid by the employer); conversely, they sometimes receive their salary without completing the number of teaching hours they should.

*‘The allocation of subjects to teachers is done in an irresponsible and inappropriate way; such as a biology teacher teaching physical education or art just to take the salary’ (a school director)*
- **Competences, including digital competences:** the competence level of teachers depends not only on the quality of the initial training, but also, as mentioned by various interviewees, on the initial competences of incoming teacher students. These remain to be precisely assessed, and a tool such as Selfie could help in this regard<sup>89</sup>. In addition, efforts in terms of continuous professional development (CPD) still do not cover the requirements needed to implement the new, competence-based curricula.
- **Management of absences and temporary replacements:** under the current rules, headmasters need to offer at least 20 teaching hours per week to be able to open a replacement position for temporary teachers. Given the abovementioned issue of insufficient teaching hours, headmasters are often unable to replace teachers, even if they are sick or on maternity leave for instance.

**School headmasters.** In Kosovo, school headmasters are appointed by mayors, based on the criteria set by the MESTI<sup>90</sup>, with frequent problems of transparency and competences. In response to concerns related to the fairness of appointments, in 2019 the MESTI issued a new bylaw establishing procedures and

### *Textbox 4: A case study on the appointment of school headmasters*


AB is a school director in one of the smallest Kosovo municipalities where one political party had always decisively won local elections for the municipal assembly and the position of mayor. A few years ago, early elections for the position of mayor were held, and due to aggressive campaigning by opposition parties and factions within the ruling party that came up with their own candidates, for the first time in the post-war period the outcome of the elections was highly uncertain.

For the first time, AB had to take sides. He decided that the official candidate of the ruling party had better chances and launched his personal campaign in social media. In the following weeks, he published at least three posts each day campaigning for his preferred candidate. Most posts show AB participating in electoral meetings alongside the future mayor, who was elected in the second round. We were told that AB is one of the best performing school principals in the Municipality, and that he would never have abandoned his school for a few weeks if his contract had not expired only two months after the new mayor was to take over, and if the extension had not been at the mayor's discretion. However, he was right in predicting the election outcome and was appointed for a new term of 4 years.

<sup>88</sup> Source: interview with the Dean of the faculty of education of Pristina.

<sup>89</sup> The use of tools, such as the EU self-reflection tool ‘SELFIE for Teachers’, helps to identify digital skills needs of educators, at different levels (school, municipality, system level) and to better respond to needs through the design of corresponding CPD initiatives based on the reference framework DigCompEdu, in line with the Education Reform 2026.

<sup>90</sup> Criteria included in a bylaw (Law No. 04/L-032 on Pre-University Education)



criteria for the selection of school directors<sup>91</sup>, which aims to improve the credibility and transparency of the selection process (MESTI, 2019). However, the actual impact on transparency and competences still remains to be ascertained, as should be checked the thorough application of the new rules.

In addition, once appointed, headmasters do not benefit from the training and CPD they should receive in order to become effective ‘managers’ of their schools.

Last, they are not empowered to ensure internal supervision of teachers’ performance, whereas this could become a step within the coaching process (rather than a constraint related to inspection).

*‘We do not know what is our authority with regard to the monitoring of teachers’ (A school principal)*

*‘The entire procedure for teacher monitoring should be simplified so that the principal, together with the quality coordinator, could visit and advise each teacher at least once a year’ (A school principal)*

### **Leadership over the sector and role of education partners: the strategic vision lacks an incentivising environment of public debate and a supportive, cohesive donor community**

#### **The leadership capacity of the MESTI on the sector is limited, and does not compensate the ownership risk due to the multiplicity of donors’ interventions.**

Although it is true that decentralisation limits by definition the Ministry’s role, it seems that there is also a lack of political strength in the balance of powers at cross ministerial levels, which also prevents from designing cross-ministerial policies that would be under MESTI’s leadership<sup>92</sup>. There is a **conceptually good strategic vision** of what the system should look like, which is adequately reflected in the education strategy 2026, but the fundamentals are insufficient to enable and secure its implementation.

On the other side of the leadership coin, there is **hardly any space for public debate**, whether at local or national levels, on education issues. The role of civil society and NGOs is often limited to activity or project implementation that make up for the shortcomings of the public system, instead of contributing to rethinking the system. Parents’ associations and local communities do not seem to fully play their role as ‘watchdogs’ for school transparency, or as a driving force for reforms. As a consequence, the MESTI vision for education is not owned and supported to the extent it could be, with a more participatory approach.


**The role of donors is rather ambivalent or ambiguous** in Kosovo. On the one hand, they provide huge support, which helps build the education system of this young country. However, it is largely uncoordinated and leads to a risk of overlap in interventions or of advancing respective agendas until influencing heavily the national policy choices. The lack of effective coordination exacerbates the situation. The weak, mainly formal donor coordination does help address these inconsistencies. So-called ‘donor coordination meetings’ are organised under the leadership and on the initiative of the MESTI, mainly based on ad hoc needs. There is no clear coordination framework that would specify periodicity, processes (for setting the agenda, the working

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<sup>91</sup> The main selection steps include:

- Job advertisement.
- Application – the applicants must have at least a 4-year Bachelor degree; hold a teacher licence; have completed a qualification programme for school leadership licensed by MES; and have at least 5 years of work experience in Education.
- Appointment of a 3-member selection committee, one MED official, one MED-appointed member of the Municipal Parent Council and one MES-appointed member. The committee members cannot be political appointees.
- Interviewing of applicants. All qualified applicants are invited to an interview and a shortlist of three candidates with highest score is established.
- Presentation of School Development Plan concepts. The shortlisted applicants are invited to present school development plan concepts. The audience consists of the selection committee, the School Board, parent representatives (one from each class) and school teaching staff. Presentations are scored by the selection committee members, whereas other participants are invited to express their preference for one of the candidates. This is done by secret ballot and votes are counted by the selection committee and the result is made public, but it is not binding for the selection committee.
- Recommendation by the selection committee. The selection committee carries out the final assessment of the candidates and comes up with a recommendation for the selection of one of them. This recommendation has to be published on the municipal web page.
- Appointment. A decision on the appointment is issued by the mayor, based on the recommendation from the selection committee. The Administrative Instruction has not precisely determined what happens if the mayor does not agree with the recommendation but, according to the Law (Law No 03/L-068 on Education in the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo), the final decision rests with the mayor.

<sup>92</sup> One example might be the new draft law on early childhood, which is still sectoral and only focused on education, even though CS was pushing for a more holistic law, including health and social welfare, among others.



modality, the preparatory work, the information to be shared, etc.). Moreover, donors meet irregularly, with some thematic meetings.

## How do these three dimensions underpin the resilience of the Kosovo education system?

The resilience of an education system can be assessed against various criteria, including its resistance to shocks, its adaptive capacity to change or its transformative capacity. **In the Kosovo case, it can be inferred from the above findings that the resilience of the Kosovo education system is first and foremost related to a certain stability of the system, which confines to resistance to change.**

On the positive side, an encouraging sign of resilience was given during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the responsiveness and capacity of the Government to rapidly come up with coping plans, and to elaborate various scenarios, as mentioned in the KEC report<sup>93</sup>. However, as previously mentioned, the lack of an institutional mechanism dealing with the digitalisation of education, both at central and decentralised levels, together with the lack of digital competence of educators and digital capacity of schools, is also a limitation to resilience in the event of unforeseen events such as pandemics, where there is a need to quickly adapt the teaching and learning environment. In other terms, the resilience of the education system is tied to the little room for manoeuvre for change, which the lack of proper monitoring and evaluation maintains.

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<sup>93</sup> Kosovo Education Center (KEC), The impact of the covid-19 pandemic on pre-university education in Kosovo, Pristina, June 2021, available at: <http://www.kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Ndikimi-i-COVID19-ne-Arsimin-Parauniversitar-ENG.pdf>



Textbox 5: Municipality case studies: Fushe Kosova and Podujeva

The following table represents an example of comparative analysis of what can be extrapolated by the SMIA system for the municipality of Fushe Kosova and Podujeva. These municipalities have been chosen as an example of the diversity of Kosovo municipalities: Podujeva is mainly rural and with a student population in rapid decline, Fushe Kosova is mainly urban and one of the few municipalities with a growing student population.

2021/22		Fushe Kosova	Podujeva
Pupils enrolled (public and private, pre-school to upper secondary)	Public	9 586 (164 in pre-school, 7 942 pre-primary/primary/lower secondary, 1480 upper secondary)	16 037 (45 in pre-school, 12349 pre-primary/primary/lower secondary, 3643 upper secondary)
	Private	922 (pre-school)	38 (pre-school)
Schools (public and private, pre-school to upper secondary)	Public	17 (1 pre-school, 13 pre-primary/primary/lower secondary, 3 upper secondary)	58 (1 pre-school, 53 pre-primary/primary/lower secondary, 4 upper secondary)
	Private	14 (all pre-school)	1 (pre-school)
Pupil-teacher ratio public schools	Pre-school	7.8**	5.6
	Pre-primary, primary, lower secondary	23.0** (min 8.7, max 37.0)	12.1** (min 0.8, max 21.6)
	Upper secondary	19.0** (min 12.9, max 26.8)	14.5** (min 9.3, max 17.1)
% of public schools with 2 shifts or above (pre-school to upper secondary, main and satellite schools)		68.8% (11 out of 16)	86.2% (50 out of 52, including one primary/lower secondary school with 3 shifts)
Surface of public school building per student	Pre-school	7.3	14.7
	Pre-primary, primary, lower secondary	2.8 (min 1.0, max 9.0)	4.8 (min 1.7, max 33.3, no info reported on school surface for 9 out of 53 school buildings)
	Upper secondary	8.6 (no info reported on school surface for 1 out of 2 school buildings)	5.5 (min 4.3, max 7.7, no info reported on school surface for 2 out of 2 school buildings)
% of public school buildings with internet connection (pre-school to upper secondary)		37.5% (6 out of 16)	29.3% (17 out of 58)
% of public school buildings having at least an IT laboratory (pre-primary to upper secondary)		33.3% (5 out of 15)	33.3% (19 out of 57)

Source: ETF calculations on SMIA data extractions

Note: min and max values refer to the school level with satellite schools aggregated to main schools for the PTR calculations and treated as separated building in surface of public school building per student.

\*\* municipality PTRs from MESTI/KAS 'Education Statistics in Kosovo 2021/22' differ: PTR pre-school Fushe Kosova 5.5, pre-primary to low sec Fushe Kosova 22.7 and Podujeva 13.6, upper secondary Fushe Kosova 20 and Podujeva 14.7



## II. Recommendations

Building on the findings described in Chapter I, several recommendations have been identified. In order to respond to different needs or perspectives of the reader, they are presented according to two different angles, under the three sections of this chapter.

- **Logic of policy pointers.** The recommended actions are first introduced and clustered by major thematic or policy area, whatever the stakeholders concerned. This ensures a synthetic vision of RED's conclusions and **Key recommendations**, with three key recommendation areas identified. A limited number of actions have been identified under each key area, and each of these actions have been divided into work priorities, ordered according to their expected time frame for complete implementation.
- **Logic of actors:** The two following sections are organised according to their respective target audience:
  - Based on the priorities for reform presented in the *Key recommendations Section*, the second Section provides **recommendations in terms of priorities for external assistance** to support the desired changes. Therefore, it is directly addressed to the **EU services** as the primary recipient of RED – but could also nurture other donors' reflection on future programming. To avoid redundancy with the previous section, many recommendations refer to the recommendations made there for further details.
  - The last section is directly addressed to the Kosovo government, in particular the **MESTI** and its national partner institutions. To make the recommendations as practical as possible, a link has been made every time it was possible with the measured planned in the education strategy 2026.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Three main recommendation areas have been identified by RED, as priorities for intervention by Kosovo's government and partners. Each of them contains a limited number of recommended actions, which are detailed in terms of the work priorities these actions could entail, in the short, medium or long term. *Figures 26 and 27* below present them in a nutshell.

Any policy maker knows that recommendations do not all have the same status: some are urgent, some are important, and the two do not always correspond; some are easy to implement, some require preliminary steps to be made; etc. In order to capture these differences, which have a major impact on the planning and priority setting, the recommended reform actions have been unpacked into various work priorities **taking into account the 'complexity' of implementation**, either **because of the time needed for complete implementation**, or **because of the pre-requisites or conditions to be met**, which may even be exogenous to the MESTI. The time frame retained for each, as a convention between the analyst team and the reader, is the following.

- **Short-term recommendations – 3 months to 1 year maximum for complete implementation.** They correspond to what we have called '**quick fixes**': the concerned measures or actions can be taken 'all things being equal', with no need for pre-requisites (in terms of additional budget or new legal arrangements for instance).
- **Medium-term recommendations – 1 to 3 years for complete implementation.** They correspond to measures whose results will not be visible before one year, although they should be kicked off as soon as possible. They may require legal changes or budget appropriation.
- **Long-term recommendations – Beyond 3 years for complete implementation.** They correspond to more sensitive but still needed reform measures, which may depend on other developments and conditions to be met that are beyond MESTI's sole control, for instance political discussion or public debate.

*Figure 26: RED recommendations in a nutshell: Key areas and related actions*

### RED key areas and recommended actions

#### A. DATA, ANALYSIS AND MONITORING

- Set up a sound monitoring and evaluation mechanism for ES 2026
- Carry out a number of ad-hoc, data-based analyses on specific issues
- Develop education and financial data management, building on improved information systems

#### B. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS FOR EFFECTIVE DECENTRALISATION

- Streamline the institutional and governance setting
- Create or activate coordination mechanism at the various governance levels

#### C. HOLISTIC CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR A QUALITY ASSURED, EQUITABLE SYSTEM

- Implement a holistic and user-centred approach to capacity building
- Build capacities for the quality assurance function
- Revise the funding framework
- Revise the approach to early childhood education and care
- Make digital education a driving lens for rethinking education



## Key recommendation area A: data, analysis and monitoring

In this domain, it is essential and urgent to **set up a task force fully dedicated to improving the quality of the data chain**, from production to analysis and use. This key recommendation is the umbrella for two main directions of action, one directly serving the education strategy 2026 progress monitoring, the other improving the monitoring function of the system and sector in general.

### **Action A1: Set up a sound monitoring and evaluation mechanism for ES 2026**

#### Short term:

- **Create an ad hoc group on education monitoring, under the leadership of MESTI, with a 3-to-6-month mandate focused on the monitoring mechanism associated to the strategy.** Ideally, this group should at least include expert colleagues from the Ministry of finance, labour and transfer, from the ministry of public administration and from the Kosovo Agency for Statistics.
- **Define thoroughly the monitoring mechanism of the education strategy 2026:**

This ad hoc group would have to:

- i- **Review and refine the indicator framework**, including, for each pillar of the education strategy, setting priorities among indicators, making sure that the definition and calculation methods (including the data needed for composite indicators) of these are clear, that they mirror as much as possible international references<sup>94</sup>, selecting among them a number of 'key' indicators<sup>95</sup> and confirming the achievability of the set targets against past trends and policy objectives<sup>96</sup>.
- ii- **Identify the institutions in charge** of each task related to the implementation of the indicator framework (of raw data production, indicator calculation, analysis, presentation in public debate - and possibly translation into policy action).
- iii- **Prepare reporting templates as shared, collaborative documents**, including a description of data collection procedures and an automated, blocked formula for the calculation of composite indicators.
- iv- **Define the monitoring process/procedures**, including the periodicity of monitoring and modalities of joint reviews (format, duration, supporting preparatory documents, actors, etc.), adoption of an annual time frame, reporting milestones and nomination of the institution (or ad hoc steering committee) in charge, as well as steps for sharing externally (beyond the MESTI).
- v- **Organise an information/communication campaign** addressing development partners and key education stakeholders about the refined monitoring mechanism and their expected participation and contribution.

#### Medium term:

- **Annually implement this refined monitoring mechanism up to 2026**, in the framework of internal exercises but also as a key element for education joint sector reviews with donors and development partners.

#### Long term:

- **Conduct a Lessons learnt exercise** on the Education strategy monitoring mechanism in place, for the next cycle of Education sector strategic planning, correcting or upgrading the indicator framework and the monitoring process.

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<sup>94</sup> These should be as much as possible inspired from international reference frameworks. For instance, the EU's DigCompEdu and DigCompOrg could be used in the field of digitalisation.

<sup>95</sup> A limited number of smart 'key indicators' would help move away from an input-based steering of the strategy to a result and impact-driven approach: these indicators should be clearly defined, including a possible explanation of this choice and how they will help measure the expected results and impact.

<sup>96</sup> or clarifying which specific accompanying measures should help speed up the progress path.

## Action A2: Carry out a number of ad-hoc, data-based analyses on specific issues

### Short term:

- **Detailed data-based analysis of the teaching force** (including distribution on the territory and by schools compared to PTR, individual number of teaching hours, type of shift taught, type of contract, age, salary and allowances, etc.)
- **Analysis of the education management at municipal level**, including staff number and profiles, financial management practice and use of spending at municipal level for education, including by budget economic categories and budget sources for each municipality, use of school data for steering the education provision, type of support/quality assurance provided by MEDs, etc.
- **Mapping of school premises' utilisation**, with a view to sharing spaces across the different education levels, assessing at this occasion child safety at school in a child protection perspective (including for early childhood and care provision, see below).
- **Mapping of planned donor contributions to the sector:** such a consolidation effort will help assess the credibility of the education strategy 2026 (given its substantial financing gap of one third of its cost), but should also foster more information sharing and coordination of interventions. Instead of being a one-off effort that could be placed under the joint leadership of the MESTI and EUOK, this analysis should be immediately followed up by decision and tools for systematising this practice.
- **Data needs assessment:** while many elements have been captured in this report already, such approach would need to be quickly systematised by the system's actors themselves for ownership and operational follow-up: the MESTI could appoint a **mixed team of experts**<sup>97</sup> whose mandate would be to: i) identify data needs, ii) confront them against available data produced by the two education management information systems and identify **gaps and interoperability needs**; iii) spot inconsistencies, inaccuracies, quality issues in the available data, iv) make proposals for revising the database architecture, including recommendations for filling the missing data, addressing duplications and inconsistency risks, and taking into account the needs for system and policy progress monitoring, especially in view of the new strategy's priorities.

Such studies could probably be easily supported through donor funds, while terms of reference for these studies would be shared to benefit from the partner community's suggestions or feedback.

## Action A3: Develop education and financial data management, building on improved information systems

Based on the weaknesses identified in *Table 1* and throughout the analysis, there is an **urgent need to reorganise the information and data management chain, streamlining, and enhancing its relevance and robustness**. This should go hand-in-hand with a more systematic use of this data by MESTI (including that already available). The analysis should go beyond the yearly joint publication of MESTI and KAS, with aggregate data by municipality, and should be geared towards regular and ad-hoc analysis **at school level**<sup>98</sup>. If necessary, this could be done with a re-skilling (training) of the current MESTI team in charge of the database and/or by hiring new data analysts. Another quick win could be **beginning or reinforcing collaboration with a national body which already has this kind of expertise, for example KAS**, with which MESTI already collaborates.

The next generation of management information system should have, **among its goals**, the identification of **inequalities and inclusion** issues, including in particular useable data on **shifts** (more detailed school data on the education levels and number of classes concerned by multiple shifts), or on **teachers** (disaggregated data by schools/teachers on teaching hours and pupil-teacher ratios). It should include guidance on the interpretation of indicators. It should also foresee an **alert mechanism** linked to certain indicators, so as to trigger, if need be, discussion and remediation measures at short notice. Finally, it will be key to define **how to make regular use of the data produced** through these revised information systems. A new and improved data-driven approach, including financial and education information, could be applied to the **quality assurance of the education system, and policy development and decision**, (e.g. MESTI should proactively use this analysis to inform the inspectorate on potentially alarming data, as a criteria for selecting priority schools to visit). See *Table 1* for more details on the current weaknesses already identified through this RED exercise.

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<sup>98</sup> The EU-funded Kosed project will develop geo statistical mapping of student-teachers ratio and budget allocation based on teachers deployment notably, starting in April May 2023.



Although this is a long-term effort, some steps could be identified as follows.

#### Short term

- **Set up a mixed team in charge of the revision of the education management information systems.** The diversity of profiles, including at least education and IT experts, is key to make sure that databases are aligned with needs (that should be expressed by education experts) and linked to policy, and avoid a tool-driven approach if there were IT experts only (who should include database architects, data managers, computer analysts). The participation of civil servants in charge of the financing of education (in MESTI and in MFLT) would also be very beneficial, for example to establish a link between resources and results, as the 'common thread' of the management information system.
- **Make a functional review of the existing system.** Based on the abovementioned data needs assessment, the mixed team could then focus on a **functional state of play of EMIS, HEMIS and LMIS**, aiming to guide their technical revision for medium-term results.

It should then propose adjustments, by adding the **necessary modules and ensuring the interoperability** of SMIA and SMIAL by formalising links with other IT management systems in use for labour market analysis, social assistance, financial management or national statistics. Quality checks could be planned by confronting data collected by EMIS with other sources, namely the updated census data and with ad-hoc regular tracer surveys, which are useful to monitor the skills gap and the employability of VET and university graduates.

#### Medium term

- **Fix the education, labour market and financial management information systems with particular attention to interoperability and use for policy.** In order to avoid a one-off analysis, define a framework for information sharing and reporting on education financial management. This could be part of the mandate of the previous team (provided the municipal level does indeed participate) or be entrusted to a separate team, to avoid overload. It should include the systematic use of tracer studies in higher education and VET.
- **Ensure, through training, ownership of all key stakeholders** on these data so that they are used for running the system and improving its quality (including ICT coordinators, inspectors, etc.).

#### Long term

- **Make compulsory the tracing of financial data from the municipal level** to the schools, including all economic categories and budgetary items.



## Key recommendation area B: Governance frameworks, including coordination mechanisms, for effective decentralisation

This key recommendation entails two directions of measures, which are urgent to kick off although they may imply long-term efforts for the revised organisation to be fully operational:

- **Streamlining the institutional and governance setting**, mainly along the suggestions previously made by the functional review (see the proposed priorities below), with the guiding objective of increasing leadership and anchoring accountability into working practices;
- **Creating or activating coordination mechanisms** which are pre-requisites to ‘put oil’ in the system’s operations, and ensure efficacy and accountability.

### **Action B1: Streamline the institutional and governance setting, drawing from the functional review**

Short term, at macro level

- **Review, update and discuss the recommendations of the functional review, and plan to act on the feasible ones for streamlining the institutional setting, in line with the new draft organisation chart and the functions to be performed**

Organising a workshop to re-visit the recommendations of the functional review would be useful to take stock of progress made and solutions found since then. Above all, it would provide an opportunity to **bring stakeholders from central and municipal levels together**, namely to share the difficulties they encounter in their daily tasks, hence paving the way for ownership on future institutional reforms. The currently complex institutional landscape, together with the need for efficiency and resource gains, call for a streamlining/rationalising of the number of institutions under MESTI. However, when considering options, it is essential to follow the principle of key functions to be performed and to compare the different functions attributed to the various institutions, and consider merging them only if these functions are the same or compatible. In other words, discussions on possible institutional streamlining should probably focus on the *functions* to be performed within the system, instead of the current institutional setting, which makes discussions more sensitive. While this task should be led at the highest levels (political) of MESTI, given its importance for future leadership roles, the EU Office in Kosovo could play an actively supporting role in this regard, as it initiated the review.

While doing so, the MESTI (as the legitimate lead on such a process) should make sure that the quality assurance function and the education provision functions remain separate.

- **Concentrate quality assurance function into a single organisational unit**

The empowerment of a single organisational unit (i.e. a department or a division) on quality assurance issues should make it possible to steer the quality assurance function over the different sub-sectors, and address a number of critical problems in terms of quality: accreditation of private education (existence of unlicensed education provision, especially in early childhood education, but not only); roles and resources of school headmasters and quality assurance coordinators; articulation with the inspectorate, etc.

- **Appoint an organisational unit in charge of advancing the digital agenda**

This concrete clarification should help ensure follow-up on the implementation of the fifth pillar of the education strategy 2026, which already has the challenge of bridging the funding gap. The draft organisation chart proposes the creation of an organisational unit, called Division for Digitalisation of Education, so this recommendation could be easy to implement.

As part of its urgent tasks, this Division should draw, from the objectives 5.2 to 5.5 of the education strategy 2026, a realistic, **financially sustainable digital agenda**. As the present analysis points out, the latter should put the priority on teachers’ digital skills and competences, as well as on the digital capacity of schools. To do so, short-term steps could include a proof of concept, including a number of urgent, evidence-based analyses to check and refine the situation at school and municipality level.



## Medium term

- **Revise the legislation for enabling the desired adjustment of the institutional setting.** This priority should build on the continuous support of the EU technical assistance team in reviewing the legal framework<sup>99</sup>.
- **Make schools the responsible level for more regular quality assurance procedures,** learning from and upscaling the successful pilot implemented with EU technical assistance support in two municipalities<sup>100</sup>: self-assessment of school performance, as well as assessment of teachers could be entrusted to school headmasters, following a revision of the legal framework if needed.

## **Action B2: Create or activate coordination mechanisms at the various governance levels**

Responding to the finding that coordination frameworks either do not exist or are not well functioning, there is an urgent need to set up or reinforce/revitalise coordination frameworks at all levels and in a multi-level governance approach, which promotes both vertical and horizontal links.

## Short term

- **Between education and finance: establish and activate a joint committee between MESTI and MFLT,**<sup>101</sup> as a first step towards increased coordination between education and finance, hence as a first step towards more transparency and accountability, with clear mandates, roles and responsibilities.
- **Between government and donors: make the education donor coordination framework operational and purposeful:** define expected results, a **regular** periodicity and modalities of meetings, technically prepare the meetings with a clear agenda, and the prior sharing of support documents and data. Include progress monitoring of the education strategy as a systematic point on the agenda, etc.

## Medium term

- **Between MESTI and MEDs: create a simple and user-friendly mechanism, facilitated by MESTI, for information sharing and flexibility across MEDs on their educational resources.** Such mechanism could first foresee a **platform for expressing needs** (e.g.: teacher gaps or sub-optimal use - missing teaching hours -, school premises shortages/exaggerated use of multiple shifts or school sub-optimal running - low pupil-teacher ratios). This mechanism could also offer space and help to **discuss possible cross-municipality solutions** on e.g., shared transport or boarding provision that could allow optimisation of the school network (merging of small schools, for instance).
- **Define a framework (a space) for regular, public debate on education involving the Kosovo civil society** (NGOs, unions, parent associations, etc). To date, such exchanges hardly occur outside of strategy drafting, whereas having it as a permanent space would help ensure shared responsibility about monitoring the system's operations. This could not only help to be more responsive in identifying bottlenecks or mismanagement issues for instance, but it could also **promote innovative solutions**, including capitalising on good but isolated practices. In a nutshell, it could contribute to a more 'agile' education system and to make the goals of the education reform agenda more visible.

## Long term

- **Initiate an inter-ministerial discussion involving municipalities on school network optimisation** (and feed the public debate on the topic), in order to prepare the ground for a school network


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<sup>99</sup> Analysing the implications of the new Law on Public Officials would help define the kind of legal expertise needed in future EU or other donors' technical assistance in the education sector. Profiles could anyway include: strong experience in managing education personnel human resources at school, municipal, regional or government levels; experience in education career development and management policies; demonstrated academic knowledge in public law of civil service personnel status, in particular education personnel, teachers and school leaders, and experience in managing education personnel human resources at school, municipal, regional or government levels.

<sup>100</sup> At the time of finalising this report, the EU technical assistance had helped to pilot a system of peer-led evaluation of schools (as self-evaluations, not inspections) in two municipalities, with the full involvement of school headmasters. This mechanism is expected to be incorporated in the relevant legislation on education inspection and will help to re-shape the role of the inspectors based on their real capacities.

<sup>101</sup> An inter-institutional Committee on Monitoring, Evaluation and reporting of Pre-university education expenses is recommended. The Committee would be composed of the Ministry of Finances, MESTI, and one or more representatives from municipalities, through the Association of Kosovo Municipalities. The Committee would be responsible for ensuring the transparency and accountability of pre-university education expenditure as well as if they are spent as planned through Special Education Grant.





rationalisation due to the demographic trends and the efforts of modernisation/digitalisation of school infrastructure, as it would require a number of accompanying measures that could be implemented in cooperation with other ministries (e.g. Ministry of Infrastructure, MFLT on social assistance) or would require additional capital expenses (to be discussed with Prime Minister's Office (PMO), MFLT, Ministry of Economic Development, etc.)

### **Key recommendation area C: Holistic capacity building for a quality-assured, equitable system**

**Capacity reinforcement is an impetus** for a better functioning of the Kosovo education system. It includes various levels: i) The institutional level, which probably requires a simplification of the institutional landscape, based on expected functions in the education system, ii) The organisational level, which will build on formalised, effective coordination mechanisms mentioned above, but also require clear collaboration and work processes, iii) The individual level, which remains the cornerstone, as the competences of individuals, critical success factors of all other efforts, need urgent intervention, which could take the shape of a 'capacity building (or training) masterplan' mirroring expected roles and responsibilities.

While the first two levels are globally covered under Key Recommendation 2, it is of utmost importance to insist on the third level, and to link it particularly closely to the need **to instil a quality assurance culture, and implement it at all levels of the system**, aiming at visible and regular results on the quality of the education provision.

Below are listed a number of important but apparently eclectic measures. In reality, they all contribute to building a better quality and more quality-assured education system.

#### **Action C1: Implement a holistic, systematic and user-centred approach to capacity building**

##### Short term

- **Conduct a comprehensive training needs analysis (TNA) by type of actor and disaggregated by municipality and school.** Specific attention should be directed towards needs for supporting the digitalisation interventions, the expansion of the early childhood education sub-sector and the enforcement of the quality assurance function throughout the system.

As far as **teachers** are concerned, the abovementioned training needs analysis should focus on pedagogical and digital skills (and pedagogical use of digital skills), and map disparities based on their geographic location. To gather evidence on digital capacity building needs of schools and digital skills and competence needs of teachers, this could encompass a new pilot or a progressive implementation of SELFIE for Schools (a first small pilot was already done in 2019) and of SELFIE for Teachers across all the country, as a free self-reflection tool for primary and secondary school teachers aiming to assess needs for building their digital competence<sup>102</sup>.

It should also include a focus on the **financial management and internal audit capacities of MESTI**, particularly in terms of expenditure accountability and internal auditing.

- **Draft a user-targeted and time-sequenced capacity building (or training) master plan**, based on the TNA, with cost estimates, targeting the different user groups, to be integrated as a **supporting annex to the education strategy 2026**, and use it as a pledge tool to donors. Although this may sound an unusual, ambitious proposal, we are convinced that the reasonable size of the country, as well as the support provided, although so far in an uncoordinated manner, by development partners, provide good conditions for this recommended action. Inspiration could probably be drawn from the OECD SIGMA approach. Also, this could be a task for **coordinated implementation**: with the **public administration bodies** responsible for training civil servants (including MESTI high-level or middle management, inspectors, or MED staff), with **universities**, for teacher training (through their faculties of education).

A study visit or similar **peer learning activity with Albania** could be organised in order to learn from the 9-month training programme for school headmasters that is currently being implemented.

For these actions, one should explore the possibility to use the budget line that municipalities have at their disposal for training, but do not seem to use so far.

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<sup>102</sup> For more details, see <https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie-for-teachers>

## Medium to long term

- **Secure resources** for the timely implementation of the training master plan, as part of the education and strategy and with specific requests to donors (including through technical assistance, or twinning opportunities).
- **Divide the responsibility of implementing the capacity building masterplan according to the user targets:** In a 'cascading effect' perspective, and having quality improvement as the most urgent objective, the priority implementation should probably concern high-level administration officers, school headmasters and inspectors.
- **Introduce a holistic reform of the teaching profession, including a modernised capacity building scheme for teachers.** At recruitment level, this should include a diversification of possible profiles but a common ground of pedagogical and digital competence and the definition of proficiency levels to access the profession. Further, the vision of pre-service training and continuous professional development must be revised and modernised. To implement the competence-based curricula effectively, teaching staff must understand how to use it responsively, intentionally and reliably. The teachers' initial training and continuous professional development needs to be re-designed to respond to this requirement, and should guarantee that all teachers will be supported according to their individual needs, taking into account their geographic location and teaching conditions; this future scheme for enhancing skills and competences throughout the career may offer classic training activities but should also include peer learning through communities of practice and other innovative programmes for horizontal and/or informal and non-formal learning processes among the teaching community. Last but not least, a regular assessment of the effects of this reform should be planned from the outset.

### **Action C2: Reinforce capacities for a full-fledged implementation of the quality assurance function**

A coherent approach to quality assurance calls for four elements to be combined: i) monitoring of quality at macro level, ii) effective accreditation process in place, which ensures that pedagogical standards (and not only administrative rules) are respected, especially in private schools, iii) existence of a 'quality assurance routine' at school level, whereby actors (headmasters, teachers, quality assurance coordinators) self-reflect on and improve the practices in school, including through peer-led evaluations<sup>103</sup> and iv) a well-functioning inspection model (whose role goes beyond, but contributes to quality assurance, and should rely on a sound planning for school and teachers inspections). This means that capacity reinforcement efforts need to target those different levels.

These four elements would deserve to be combined in a comprehensive 'action plan for the improvement of quality assurance function in Kosovo', as part of the Education Strategy 2026.


## Short term

- **Train micro and meso actors (headmasters, QA coordinators at school level, QA coordinators in MEDs)** on the approach and tools that are available to be implemented at school level for a continuous self-assessment and self-reflection on quality (including those developed with the support of the EU technical assistance in KOSED project) and on their roles and responsibilities towards a more compliant performance with the defined management and administration standards; this could include an 'open-door' policy to lesson observation which is supportive and designed to gather data, as opposed to the infrequent judgemental appraisals that teachers are accustomed to.
- **Coach MEDs and inspectors to jointly develop, in each municipality, a mid-term inspection plan** for their school network, taking into account human resource limitations. This would need to be articulated to<sup>104</sup>: a completion of the recruitment procedures of inspectors; better planning and

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<sup>103</sup> KOSED support project has shown crucial reflection in this area: in particular, only school directors, pedagogues and inspectors are the only people with a legal right to observe lessons in schools, either formally or informally. There is no legal basis for Quality Assurance Coordinators who are responsible for school self-evaluation, to observe lessons. This means that school self-evaluation is carried out with very little focus on the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place. To overcome this situation, a proposal has been made to modify an Administrative instruction : *Administrative instruction for Evaluation of Education performance in Pre-University Education 2017*.

<sup>104</sup> Recommendations based on the interview with the State Chief Inspector.



implementation of the inspection visits; a distinction of the role of inspections from the regular (daily) quality assurance mechanisms that would fall under school's or MED's responsibility (QA coordinators); an encouragement for them to explore if some teachers (who do not complete their standard teaching hours or have too few students to teach) could, through a special procedure, be moved to these functions, in particular the most experience ones, and with managerial experience.

An analysis of the current situation of private education provision should also be conducted, and a revision of authorisation processes should be conducted thereafter to guarantee stricter quality control.

### **Action C3: Revise the funding framework for the various education levels, making quality a key parameter for resource allocation**

#### Short term

- **Adopt and activate a new funding formula for pre-university education, differentiating general education and VET** for more realistic planning and running of the system. The funding formula should ensure that resources are allocated in a fair and equitable manner, maximising educational outcomes for students. It should consider the number of students, teachers, students with disabilities, students from vulnerable groups and minorities, average class sizes, school building conditions, etc. Regarding VET, a solution could be to either to add a realistic multiplying factor for VET, to take into account higher equipment costs and lower class sizes, or to aim for a **needs-based funding**<sup>105</sup>, with standards for enrolment that would be pre-established by the MESTI, and driven by labour market needs).
- **Consolidate and share the lessons learned from some municipalities' good practices for the decentralisation of budget management at the school level**, as required by the legislation on pre-university education.

#### Medium term

- **Define and adopt a performance-based funding formula for higher education institutions.** Priority parameters would be the education institution's performance (to be measured against employability after graduation, meaning a regular record and tracer studies), a good track record of student retention, graduation rates, student enrolment numbers, degree of programmes (i.e. engendering programmes offer high-cost degree programmes), research institutions, and so on.
- **Estimate room for manoeuvre in terms of capital investment and consider facilitating alternative financing models for early childhood education and care** (replacing the pre-school concept) as a way to make the abovementioned recommended change in the policy for education under 6 years of age sustainable.
- **Upscale the best practices for decentralised budget management at school level, as per the lessons learnt**

### **Action C4: Revise the approach to early childhood education and care**

#### Short term


- **Convert empty classrooms in rural areas into appropriate pre-school learning environments** including secured outside play areas and hygienic facilities for young children, to increase public pre-school access in areas without provision. Build these decisions on the mapping of school premises recommended under A.

#### Medium to long term

- **Reconsider the choices made for the pre-school education policy, including moving to a broader, cross-sectoral concept of 'early childhood education and care'.** Currently, it is foreseen that only age 5-6 is compulsory for young children, hence causing extremely low and inequitable participation rates from ages 3-5. Although this is related to lack of access and funds, the current

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<sup>105</sup> This proposal was made in the ALLED project report on the Financial Planning for VET System in Kosovo. The proposal is detailed in the ALLED Report starting from p. 45. <http://alled.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Financial-Planning-Final-3.pdf>



vision for early childhood education should be challenged to incorporate the elements of holistic development of the child.

### **Action C5: Make digital education a driving force for rethinking the quality of the education provision**

#### Medium term

- **Secure digital infrastructure and equipment**
- **Draft quality assurance and quality standards for digital education with a low-tech approach** and a priority attention on inclusion, and **revise the curricula reform**, including digitally innovative pedagogy for competence-based approaches and for the provision basic and advanced digital skills and competences. A good starting point could be the **digital competence of educators**, at the heart of the activation of digital in teaching learning and assessment practices.
- **Reinforce digital education competence of educators**, as a starting point for activating digitalisation in teaching, learning and assessment practices. A teacher digital training plan should include the creation of Teachers Networks: subject matters, didactics and adapted pedagogies sharing, among education professionals.

#### **Recommended actions and tasks in a nutshell**

*Textbox 6* consolidated all recommended actions, while *Figure 27* proposes a visual representation of this set of recommended actions.

#### KEY RECOMMENDATION AREA A - Data, Analysis and Monitoring

- **Action A1: Set up a sound monitoring and evaluation mechanism for ES 2026**
  - Create an ad hoc group on education monitoring, under the leadership of MESTI, with a 3-to-6-month mandate focused on the monitoring mechanism associated to the strategy
  - Define thoroughly the monitoring mechanism of the education strategy 2026
  - Annually implement this refined monitoring mechanism up to 2026
  - Conduct a lessons learnt exercise
- **Action A2: Carry out a number of ad-hoc, data-based analyses on specific issues**
  - Detailed data-based analysis of the teaching force
  - Analysis of the education management at municipal level
  - Mapping of schools' premises
  - Mapping of planned donor contributions to the sector
  - Data needs assessment
- **Action A3: Develop education and financial data management, building on improved management information system(s)**
  - Set up a mixed team in charge of the revision of the education management information systems
  - Make a functional review of the existing system
  - Fix the education, labour market and financial management information systems with a focus on interoperability and use for policy
  - Ensure, through training, ownership of all key stakeholders
  - Make compulsory a tracing of financial data through the municipality level

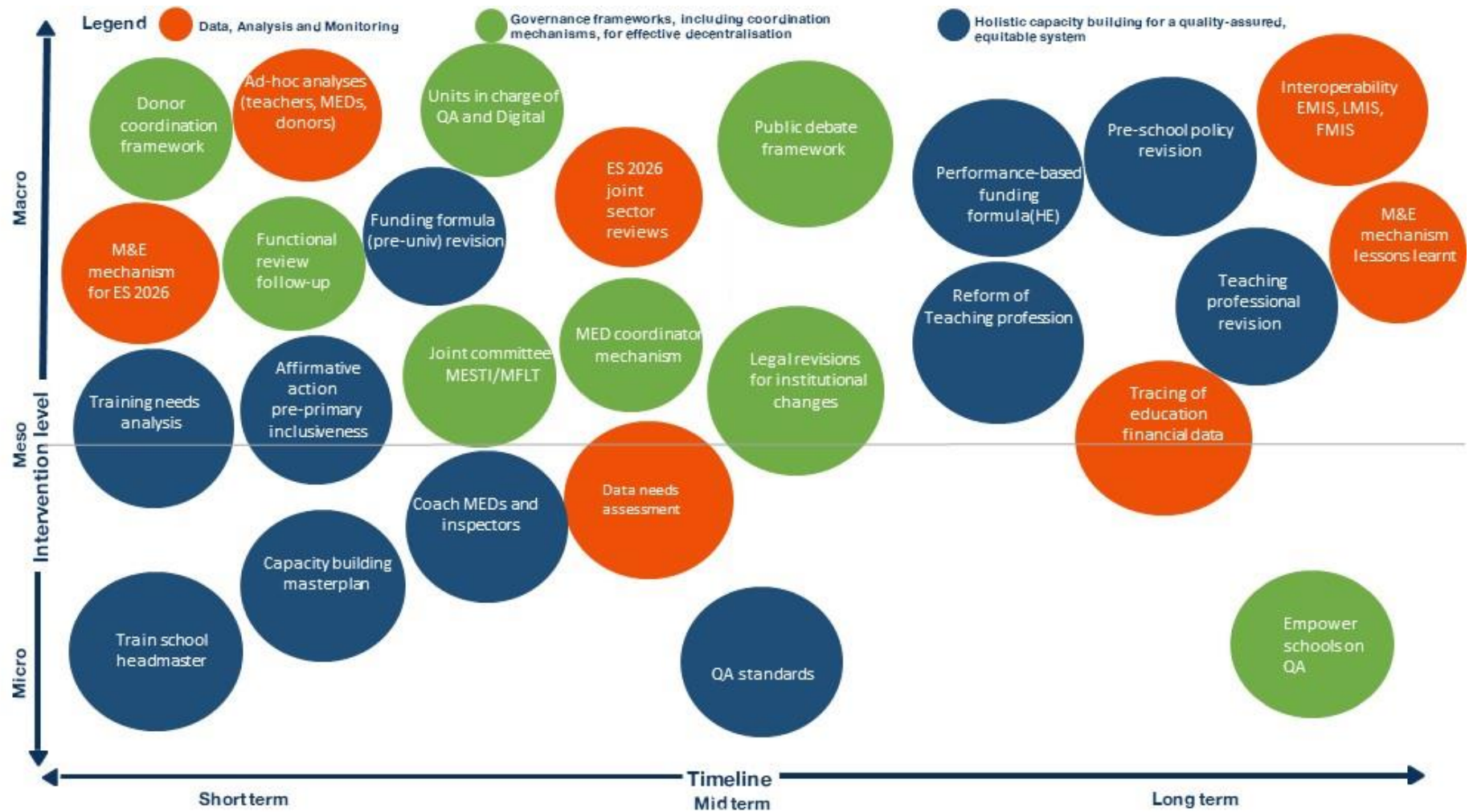
#### KEY RECOMMENDATION AREA B - Governance frameworks, including coordination mechanisms, for effective decentralisation

- **Action B1: Streamline the institutional and governance setting based on the functional review**
  - Review, update and discuss the recommendations of the functional review, and plan to act on the feasible ones for streamlining the institutional setting, in link with the new draft organisation chart and the functions to be performed
  - Concentrate quality assurance function into a single organisational unit
  - Entitle an organisational unit in charge of advancing the digital agenda
  - Revise the legislation for enabling the desired adjustment of the institutional setting
  - Make schools the responsible level for more regular quality assurance procedures
- **Action B2: Create or activate coordination mechanisms at the various governance levels**
  - Between education and finance: Establish and activate a joint committee between MESTI and MFLT
  - Between government and donors: Make the education donor coordination framework operational and purposeful
  - Between MESTI and MEDs: Create a simple and user-friendly mechanism, facilitated by MESTI, for information sharing and flexibility across MEDs on their educational resources
  - Define a framework (a space) for regular, public debate on education involving the Kosovo civil society
  - Initiate an inter-ministerial discussion involving municipalities on school network's optimisation

#### KEY RECOMMENDATION AREA C - Holistic capacity building for a quality-assured, equitable system

- **Action C1: Implement a holistic, systematic and user-centred approach to capacity building**
  - Conduct a comprehensive training needs analysis (TNA)
  - Draft a user-targeted and time-sequenced capacity building (or training) master plan
  - Secure resources and divide the responsibility of implementing the capacity building masterplan according to the user targets
  - Introduce a holistic reform of the teaching profession, including a modernised capacity building scheme
- **Action C2: Build capacities for a full-fledged implementation of the quality assurance function**
  - Train micro and meso actors (headmasters, QA coordinators at school level and in MEDs)
  - Coach MEDs and inspectors to jointly elaborate, in each municipality, a mid-term inspection plan
- **Action C3: Revise the funding framework for the various education levels, making quality a key parameter for resource allocation**
  - Adopt and activate a new funding formula for pre-university education, differentiating general education and VET
  - Learn lessons from municipalities' good practices for decentralising budget management at school level for upscaling the best practices
  - Define and adopt a performance-based funding formula for higher education
  - Facilitate alternative financing models for ECEC
- **Action C4: Revise the approach to early childhood education and care**
  - Convert empty classrooms in rural areas in appropriate preschool learning environments
  - Reconsider the choices made for the pre-school education policy, including moving to a broader concept of 'early childhood education and care'
- **Action C5: Make digital education a driving lens for rethinking the quality of the education provision**
  - Secure digital infrastructure and equipment
  - Draft quality assurance and quality standards for digital education with a low-tech approach
  - Reinforce digital education competence of educators, as a starting point for activating digital in teaching learning and assessment practices

Figure 27: RED recommended by timeline and intervention level





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU (AND DONOR) SUPPORT

### a. Implications for EU priority financial assistance

#### Which priorities?

The ideal support scheme should be to combine in the next EU support programme a **long-impact support to reinforcing key functions** for a well-functioning education system, with **short-term, quick fixes in terms of evidence base and analyses for decision-making**.

Beyond, obviously, aligning behind the Education strategy 2026, we recommend that the EU financial assistance supports the interventions listed under the three key areas identified in the previous section.

#### Short term

Given the lack of accurate information and data on certain key bottlenecks of the education system, the EU could foresee to **command and/or fund a set of targeted in-depth studies** (on which it would have a chance to review and contribute to the terms of reference) mentioned above.

In addition, the EU should play an active role in **getting together the different ministries** (MESTI, MFLT, MPA) to achieve the creation of the needed task forces and inter-ministerial groups, as described in Key recommendation B. Although this should be part of a reinforced policy dialogue (see after), it may be worth inserting it also as activities in the EU intervention.

#### Medium to long term

Based on the above analysis, we assess that **two functions deserve a special, substantial and steady/long-lasting support from the EU<sup>106</sup>**, as they are crucial for leapfrogging on the quality of the education system:

**The monitoring and evaluation function** as described in details in Key recommendation area A.

**The quality assurance function** as described in key recommendation area C.

#### Which modalities?


If ever **budget support** is envisaged, such support modality is **not mature** and would need to wait for the revision of the data chain to be effective, in order to be secured by adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which yet remain revision to move from a formal, mainly input-focused reporting to a meaningful monitoring attached to results.

Much needed **capacity building actions** should be organised into an integrated plan (having a capacity building component for each component of EU assistance rather than a dedicated CB project), so as to ensure sustainability over time, as well as to mainstream capacity building into all sector policies as a habit. These actions could be **entrusted to a pool of national institutions**, supervised by a **joint steering committee EUOK/MESTI**. This pool could include, as mentioned above the public administration bodies in charge of public servants' training, universities, and other public or private actors to be identified.

Last but not least, in order to foster bottom-up approaches and ground-based solutions in this somehow centralised context (schematically, as mentioned, decentralisation stops at the level of MEDs), the EU could choose implementation modalities for its projects that encourage civil society's participation and empowerment, such as **calls for tenders targeting civil society organisations** (incl. parents associations, NGOs, etc.), for instance.

#### Which link with ongoing or planned EU support?

In October 2020 the European Commission presented the Economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans as its main strategy for the region until 2027. The main aims of the Plan are to spur long-term economic recovery and regional economic integration, to support a green and digital transition, to implement reforms required to move forward on the EU path and to bring the region closer to the EU single market. All of



this should lead to sustained economic growth and job creation. One of the flagship initiatives mentioned in this Plan is the **Youth Guarantee** scheme that should be implemented by Western Balkan governments in line with the EU Youth Guarantee. The latter **targets as a priority vocational education and training**, as it offers an activation scheme to ensure that all young people receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education (EC, 2022). However, **it also encourages countries to undertake wider education and training system reforms to make sure young people acquire relevant skills and do not become ‘not in education, employment or training’ (NEET) individuals.**

On 27 July 2022 the Assembly of Kosovo ratified the Financial framework partnership agreement with the European Union, which ensures funding from the **Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) III for the period 2021-2027**<sup>107</sup>. These funds shall be used to accelerate the EU integration process and internal reforms in Kosovo and contribute to investments needed to implement Kosovo’s European Reform Agenda, National Development Strategy and sector strategies & action plans, such as those on education, youth and employment. Early childhood education could be targeted by these IPA funds.

All the areas and actions recommended in this report are compliant with this global EU support framework.

### **A good case for developing EU cross-sectoral programmes**

If administrative and organisation barriers can be overcome, the education sector in Kosovo could offer at least four opportunities for promoting and developing cross-sectoral programming within the EU. From the abovementioned key recommendations, there are at least **four domains** where such a combined support could apply, with some examples of:

- **Early childhood education** and care reform (enlarging the concept of pre-school education to early education and care) implies to shift from a single education perspective to an approach combining education, health, child protection, social services and nutrition;
- **Digitalisation of education** would ideally require a digital agenda at the crossroads between EU supports to education, country digital transition, IT infrastructure, e-governance and social inclusion;
- **Institutional capacity building** in education could usefully be designed in synergy with public administrative reform, public finance management, governance and decentralisation;
- **Financing arrangements** for the education sector should be revised in accordance with budget and public finance management reforms, as well as governance and decentralisation

Reversely, it would be interesting, within other EU support programmes (PFM, PAR, Information society...), to select the education sector, as a sector for priority implementation of transversal reforms.

### **b. Implication for the EU/Kosovo policy dialogue**

Given the level of financial assistance provided by the EU institutions, which in 2017 represented 40% of total ODA received by Kosovo<sup>108</sup>, **the EU has full legitimacy to lead on the policy dialogue** between Kosovo government and its donors (not only between Kosovo and EU). This could translate concretely into:

- **Requesting the organisation of actual joint sector reviews**, between the Kosovo government and its development partners, at the occasion of sub-committee meetings or other important moments for policy dialogue – with more systematic and technical content and data sharing ahead of the meetings to allow for meaningful discussions about policy progress, including monitoring of the new strategy’ implementation.
- **Embrace and sustain a political leadership at highest level on sensitive but critical issues for a successful reform of the education system.**

These two points are further elaborated hereafter.

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<sup>107</sup> through the various support modalities that can be deployed (see next paragraph)

<sup>108</sup> See context elements and OECD, 2020.





### Put the education strategy 2026 and RED in the spotlight of sub-committee meetings

The RED provides an opportunity to reinforce and structure the EU/Kosovo policy dialogue. Three main complementary suggestions are made in this regard:

- **Organise a joint annual review of the education strategy 2026 progress:** once the monitoring and evaluation framework of the ES 2026 will have been revised and refined as suggested in the ‘quick wins’, it will enable to monitor through data progress on the priority measures.
- **Integrate in this annual review an evidence-based of RED key findings and recommendations:** what has changed from the last year along the three thematic dimensions, which recommendations could be advanced.
- **‘Package’ this double monitoring into an ad hoc half to one-day workshop on education,** back-to-back the Stabilisation and Association Agreement sub-committee meeting on Innovation, Information Society and Social Policy, which includes a review of education, social policies and employment topics

### Advocate to advance certain transversal topics

- **Cross-ministerial (regular and operational) coordination.** This advocacy should start with the requirement of the operationalisation of the MESTI/MFTL joint committee, but also other important coordination mechanisms and frameworks explained under Section A, under Key recommendation 3
- **Institutional capacity building:** i- plea vis-à-vis MESTI for the implementation of the functional review (or for its update or revision, in case it is considered as inappropriate by Kosovo partners) and the establishment of a training master plan for teaching and non-teaching staff; ii- plea vis-à-vis other donors for committing to sustainably fund such a training master plan in a coordinated manner
- The **programme budgeting** is a topic on which the example of the education sector could be pioneering new approaches. But this will take time and probably needs a push from donors



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KOSOVO GOVERNMENT'S CONSIDERATION

While, as mentioned in the findings, the education strategy 2026 offers a sound policy vision, there is a need to **set clearer priorities among the many actions to be implemented over five years, acknowledging the still important funding gap** (one third of the estimated costs, see *findings' section on financing*) that will not enable to implement all the foreseen, the fact that **one year of implementation has gone** already, but also taking realistically into account the **absorption capacities** (including the institutional capacities or constraints, and the human resources). This would set the basis for a **credible policy agenda that donors and development partners could then more easily support**.

This section paves the way for such a 'reality check' approach, by relating key recommendations of this analysis to the actions planned in the education strategy 2026 as MESTI's main roadmap for the coming four years as per the *Table 2* hereafter. We hope this can facilitate their uptake in the planning work ahead, expected to start in January 2023. But this initial effort should be extended to a systematic review of each of the five pillars of the strategy.

This final analytical effort confirms that the education strategy 2026 entails many relevant and important reform measures that mirror RED concerns. Nevertheless, the structure of the document, organised around the four main education levels and the cross-cutting digitalisation objective, does not evidence the synergies, complementarity and integration across these levels, and across the public institutions in charge of implementing the reform, as they are now in charge of running the system. Yet less does it situate the possible role of other education stakeholders. It does not either detail the monitoring and evaluation mechanism that should guarantee a close and timely steering of the change process. Connecting these dots, and putting 'oil' in the system is probably the most urgent action for MESTI's roadmap to become comprehensive and owned by all the concerned stakeholders.

Table 2: Correspondence between RED recommended actions and the education strategy planned measures

TABLE CURRENTLY UNDER FINALISATION

<b>Key recommendation area A: Data, Analysis and Monitoring</b>		From the long list of actions in the ES for monitoring and evaluation, under each chapter, we recommend the MESTI to cluster them to consolidate efforts towards holistic monitoring improvement
<b>Action A1: Set up a sound monitoring and evaluation mechanism for ES 2026</b>	N/A	The 6.2 chapter is on monitoring and reporting, but does not list any specific activities. Outputs are mechanical, only focusing on the number of people trained and/or hired, but not on the quality of their performance A high number of activities in the first 5 chapters refer to monitoring actions
<b>Action A2: Carry out a number of ad-hoc, data-based analyses on specific issues</b>	N/A	No specific analysis foreseen to be implemented in the education strategy. In relation to the recommended data needs assessment, Review of database is alluded to in vague terms
<b>Action A3: Develop education and financial data management, building on improved management information system(s)</b>	N/A	Level-specific interventions on the EMIS, without clear harmonisation link (e.g. 3.1.7, 3.1.8 <sup>109</sup> on VET
<b>Key recommendation area B: Governance frameworks, including coordination mechanisms, for effective decentralisation</b>	5.1.2 Drafting of Administrative Instructions by MESTI that regulate all issues related to digitalisation, process automation, digital services, digital documentation, etc.  5.4.19 Digital competence of the academic staff is introduced as a new standard in the respective AI that regulates this issue.	

<sup>109</sup> Action 3.1.7. Development and improvement of the information management system related to vocational education and training and adult education. TimeLine TM1-TM4/2023, Action 3.1.8. Capacity building for the use of platforms at the central, local level and at the level of educational and professional training institutions. TimeLine TM4/2023- TM2/2024



	5.4.28 Assessment of staff needs in educational institutions for digital competence development and development of training program.	
<b>Action B1: Streamline the institutional and governance setting based on the functional review</b>		
- Review, update and discuss the recommendations of the functional review, and plan to act on the feasible ones for streamlining the institutional setting, in link with the new draft organisation chart and the functions to be performed	N/A	The indicator 1 of Specific Objective 2.1 relates to this proposed action, but the actions under 2.1.1. do not feed harmoniously into it.
- Concentrate quality assurance function into a single organisational unit	N/A	Quality assurance is covered in many actions. The structure of MESTI proposes the Inspectorate under one organisational unit.
- Appoint an organisational unit in charge of advancing the digital agenda	aligned	The digital education department is organised as a unit in MESTI, under the Secretary General. Political and leadership levels might be checked
- Revise the legislation for enabling the desired adjustment of the institutional setting	N/A	
- Make schools the level for more regular quality assurance procedures		Strategic Objective 2 is entirely focused on quality assurance, but mechanisms proposed are mechanical, outcomes do not measure internalised change.
<b>Action B2: Create or activate coordination mechanisms at the various governance levels</b>	2.1.2. Development and strengthening of mechanisms for effective communication and coordination between stakeholders of different levels in the system through reporting and coordination processes, Timeline: Q1/2022-Q4/2026	2.1.2 applies to pre-university level only as part of Chapter 2. In addition, it would require to be specified, as per our recommended elements below
- Between education and finance: Establish and activate a joint committee between MESTI and MFLT		
- Between government and donors: Make the education donor coordination framework operational and purposeful		
- Between MESTI and MEDs and across MEDs: Create a simple and user-friendly mechanism, facilitated by		



MESTI, for information sharing and flexibility across MEDs on their educational resources.		
- Define a framework (a space) for regular, public debate on education involving the Kosovo civil society		
- Initiate an inter-ministerial discussion involving municipalities on school network rationalisation – optimisation	2.1.11 Reorganisation of school network	An AI for the reorganisation of schools is planned as output. But the extent to which it will involve inter-institutional discussions is not clear.
<b>Key recommendation area C: Holistic capacity building for a quality-assured, equitable system</b>		
<b>Action C1: Implement a holistic and systematic approach to capacity building</b>		
- Conduct a comprehensive training needs analysis (TNA)	N/A	Several actions mention training, but a comprehensive, data-driven diagnostic approach is not foreseen
- Draft a user-targeted and time-sequenced capacity building (or training) master plan	N/A	
- Secure resources and divide the responsibility of implementing the capacity building masterplan according to the user targets	N/A	
- Introduce a holistic reform of the teaching profession, including a re-designed capacity building scheme for teachers	N/A	



<b>Action C2: Build capacities for a full-fledged implementation of the quality assurance function</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Train micro and meso actors in charge of QA (headmasters, QA coordinators at school and MEDs level)</li> </ul>	2.1.1. Capacity building of MEDs to fulfil their supervisory role. Q1/2023-Q4/2024	The actions seem to address only pre-university level (pillar 2) but this is fine as this could be the priority entry point
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coach MEDs and inspectors to jointly elaborate a mid-term inspection plan</li> </ul>		Quality assurance is the focus of Specific Objective 2.1 (under pillar 2), but a proposed collaboration between national and local quality assurance structures is not foreseen
<b>Action C3: Revise the funding framework for the various education levels, making quality a key parameter for resource allocation</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New funding formula for pre-university education differentiating general education and VET</li> </ul>	2.1.9. Drafting an administrative instruction for the implementation of the financing formula, In the first quarter of 2023.	Make sure VET schools (including mixes schools) are addressed differently from general schools (preferably on a needs-based approach – if not, with a realistic weighting factor)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MEDs good practice from decentralised budget management at school level</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define a performance-based funding formula for higher education</li> </ul>	Action 4.2.13. Development of HEI financing methodology and capacity building for implementation. TimeLine 2023-2025	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate alternative financing models of early childhood education and care</li> </ul>		Action 1.1.3 focuses only on cost analysis of diverse existing models.
<b>Action C4: Revise the approach to early childhood education and care</b>		



- Convert empty classrooms	Action 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.6 of ES cover mapping of existing infrastructural facilities, developing standards for educational buildings, and repurposing environments.	
- Reconsider the policy to a multi-sectoral concept of early childhood and care	N/A	Actions 1.2.1 in the ES 26 touch upon the concept but continues to consider early childhood in a narrow, segmented approach Action 1.3.1. mentions cross-sectorality, but continues to keep in focus only early childhood education, without including development and care
<b>Action C5: Make digital education a driving lens for rethinking the quality of the education provision</b>		Need to address the substantial funding gap related to pillar 5 of the strategy, as per the strategy cost and budget estimate.
- Secure digital infrastructure and equipment	5.3.1 Provide dedicated bandwidth and network Internet access (at least 100 Mbps) to all ETIs  5.1.3 Situation analysis and drafting of terms of reference for the digital platform...	
- Draft quality assurance and quality standards for digital education with a low-tech approach	N/A	Pillar 5 is fully focused on digitalisation, but low tech is not considered.



## Conclusion: RED, an evidence-based milestone within a demanding reform journey

This Rapid education diagnosis (RED) is to be seen as a milestone in the journey towards a more efficient and higher quality education system in Kosovo, offering equal chances to all pupils. It may not bring striking breakthroughs in the inherent knowledge of the challenges that the system currently encounters, but it certainly documents them in a more systematic and data-based way than was the case so far. It also integrates qualitative evidence to foster a participatory process, engaging the various stakeholders beyond the macro level, as well as outside the ministerial remit. Ultimately, it endeavours to reconcile many pre-existing analytical elements that were kept separate, whereas they provide strong impetus for reform once put together.

The report calls for improving transparency and accountability in the education system, thanks to more comprehensive data management, more analysis, basic tracing of spending and efficiency down to the decentralised level, and for clearly defined and applied monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. This is because these are the basics of adaptive and resilient education systems. However, this should not detract from focusing on the cornerstone of education, human capital, which applies particularly well to the Kosovo context: at all levels of the system, from schools to municipalities and ministries, human capital is the 'common thread' to focus on. This means that reform efforts should go beyond a mechanistic approach to education system management, and acknowledge human capital development as the main success factor. This involves an organic approach in building competences and capacity.

Clustering recommendations in three main areas is expected to make Kosovo's development partners' support easier to earmark. The European Union, through both its Office in Kosovo and the DG NEAR in Brussels, is fully legitimate, and holds an important responsibility in promoting the next steps: it includes in particular creating the necessary ad hoc working groups and discussion spaces that are pre-conditions for structural changes, and pushing for domestic inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation, under a Kosovo high-level political leadership. The ETF remains ready to help, where needed, in converting this advice into a concrete roadmap providing guidance to EUOK in the years to come.





# Annexes

## Annex 1: Bibliographic references

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## Annex 2: Data

### Data sources

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SMIA data extractions received from MESTI

### Files

Two excel files have served as support to this analysis. They are available upon request: please ask for:

- excel file 1 for School data
- excel file 2 on Financing data

### Additional data

Presented below are additional data on financing.

Total Government Budget compared to budget for education sector (Budget Plan 2021)

	Salaries and allowances	Goods and Services	Utilities	Subsidies and transfers	Capital expenditures	Reserves	Interest	Total
Total Budget	639 815 686	333 824 670	30 110 655	753 115 439	626 086 189	32 784 266	38 472 200	<b>2 454 209 105</b>
Budget for education	220 029 658	39 966 088	6 041 343	8 859 719	45 782 724	1 470 186		<b>322 149 718</b>
Share of Education budget vs. Gov. in %	34.39%	11.97%	20.06%	1.18%	7.31%	4.48%	0.00%	<b>13.13%</b>

### Total Budget In Education per Budget Organisations (Plan 2021)

	Salaries and allowances	Goods and Services	Utilities	Subsidies and transfers	Capital expenditures	Reserves	Total
Budget MESTI	19 655 821	14 772 973	1 590 459	6 041 929	22 055 272		64 116 454
Special Budget Education Grant	178 846 651	18 721 991	3 131 270	164 000	8 273 110	1 150 186	210 287 208
Self-revenues municipalities	436 043	3 168 743	144 614	1 209 790	6 379 342	320 000	11 658 532
University of Prishtina	21 091 143	3 302 381	1 175 000	1 444 000	4 000 000		31 012 524
Ministry of Internal Affairs					5 075 000		5 075 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>220 029 658</b>	<b>39 966 088</b>	<b>6 041 343</b>	<b>8 859 719</b>	<b>45 782 724</b>	<b>1 470 186</b>	<b>322 149 718</b>

### Total Budget in Education in % per Budget Organisations (Plan 2021)

	Salaries and allowances	Goods and Services	Utilities	Subsidies and transfers	Capital expenditures	Reserves
Budget MESTI (planned 2021)	30.7%	23.0%	2.5%	9.4%	34.4%	0.0%
Budget Education Grant	85.0%	8.9%	1.5%	0.1%	3.9%	0.5%
Self-revenues municipalities	3.7%	27.2%	1.2%	10.4%	54.7%	2.7%
University of Prishtina	68.0%	10.6%	3.8%	4.7%	12.9%	0.0%
Ministry of Internal Affairs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%

### Sources of funds identified in the budget (Budget Planned 2021)

Sources	MESTI	Municipality	UP	MIA	Total
Government grant/budget	55 762 589	210 287 208	27 014 774	5 075 000	298 139 571
Own income	2 832 565	11 658 532	3 997 750	0	18 488 847
Borrowing	521 300	0	0	0	521 300
Privatisation Agency of Kosovo (PAK)	5 000 000	0	0	0	5 000 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>64 116 454</b>	<b>221 945 740</b>	<b>31 012 524</b>	<b>5 075 000</b>	<b>322 149 718</b>

Comparison between planned and executed budget by categories, in amounts, 2021 (> Figure 15)

2021	Salaries and allowances	Goods and Services	Utilities	Subsidies and transfers	Capital expenditures	Total
Budget MESTI (planned)	19 655 821	14 772 973	1 590 459	6 041 929	22 055 272	64 116 454
Budget MESTI (execution)	20 345 560	22 554 296	1 032 583	4 585 831	15 416 203	63 934 474
	104%	153%	65%	76%	70%	100%

Budget amounts per economic categories

	Economic category	Amount in the budget plan	Share of total	What it covers (examples*)
1	Salaries and allowances	220 029 658	68.3%	Monthly salaries, payments for extra hours, pay
2	Goods and services	39 966 088	12.4%	Equipment (tables, chairs..), replacement of IT/computer, textbooks*, office supply, rents, cleaning service, transportation, boarding, school meals, heating, materials, etc.
3	Utilities	6 041 343	1.9%	Heating, electricity, sewage, phone bills.
4	Subsidies and transfers*	8 859 719	2.8%	Scholarships, projects to NGOs
5	Capital expenditure*	45 782 724	14.2	Construction of facilities, furniture, library books*, other equipment, etc.
6	Reserves*	1 470 186	0.5%	
	TOTAL education budget	<b>322 149 718</b>	100%	



## Annex 3: Consultation references

### Qualitative evidence collected through:

#### National Technical Team (NTT) consultation:

- First meeting on 5 September 2022: Presentation of RED Kosovo and focus on awareness raising
- Second Meeting on 19 October 2022: Focus on monitoring and evaluation of the Education Strategy 2026
- Third meeting on 22 November 2022: Focus on digitalisation and higher education

#### - List of NTT members

Name and Surname	Organisation
Donjeta Haliti	MASHTI
Haki Sfishta	MASHTI
Hanëmsha Latifi	MASHTI
Agim Kukaj	Ministria Ekonomisë
Bardha Rrustemi	MPBAP
Mevlyde Shamolli	MFPT
Advie Uka	ASK
Shpëtim Kalludra	APRK
Blerim Saqipi	Komuniteti Akademik
Besim Mustafa	OEK
Albina Arifi	Sbashk
Kozeta Imami	Unicef
Kushtrim Bajrami	GiZ F4J
Anton Gojani	ALLED2
Lulavere Kadriu Behluli	Save the Children
Blerim Haliti	LuxDev
Agon Ahmeti	Rrjeti Ombrellë të Shoqërisë Civile Për APU
Labinot Salihu	Këshilli i prindërve të Kosovës
Muhamet Gjoka	DKA Drenas/ Kolegjiumi për Arsim, Asociacioni i komunave

#### Consultation of Education Donors (Meeting on 5 September 2022)

1. Vjosa ROGOVA-DAMONI, Council of Europe Office in Pristina
2. Vlora Marmullakaj, Council of Europe Office in Pristina
3. Jeton Karaqica, Ministry of European Integration
4. Brendan , KEIRNAN, UNOPS
5. Sherafedin , MUSTAFA , UNOPS
6. Jehona Ademaj Sejdiu, Finnish Embassy
7. Venera Ramaj, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kosovo
8. Jean Christoph Favre, Embassy of Switzerland
9. Bahrije Dibra, KfW Development Bank
10. Mrika, Aliu, World Bank
11. Sebastian Krull, GIZ

12. Vera Franziska, GIZ
13. Albulena Zaimi, Austrian Embassy
14. Tankut Soykan, Council of Europe
15. Fatmir, Ramaj, Japan Embassy in Kosovo
16. Daniele Cristian PASSALACQUA, LuxDev
17. Cornelia Schneider, United Nations Kosovo Team
18. Svetlana RAKIĆ, International Organization for Migration
19. Neja Ivanović, Embassy of Slovenia in Pristina
20. Kozeta Imami, UNICEF Kosovo Office

## Bilateral interviews

### Agency for VET (AVETAET)

Fikrije Zymbery  
Valbona Hajredinaj

### EdGuard Institute (NGO)

Rinor Qehaja

### European Union Office in Kosovo

Stergios Tragoudas  
Anne-Sophie Houee  
Johannes Madsen  
Syzana Bytyqi Jagxhiu  
Aferdita Tahiri  
Mikaela Gronqvist  
Daniela Huhmann

### European Investment Bank

Konstantinos Mastrogiannopoulos

### GIZ

Kushtrim Bajrami  
Edona Nahi  
Sebastian Krull

### Jahjaga Foundation

Aferdita

### Kosovo Education Inspectorate

Defrim Gashi

### Kosovo Institute for Public Administration – KIPA

Enver Haxhiqaj, Director

### Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)

Dukagjin Pupovci, Deputy-Minister  
Majlinda Rizvanolli, National focal point  
Ryve Prekorogja, National focal point  
Arberita Tafilaj, Budget and Finance Department  
Vehbi Ismajli, Budget and Finance Department  
Fehmi Zylfiu, Budget and Finance Department  
Aferdita Kryeziu, Education Management Information System EMIS  
Haki Sfishta, Department of European Integration and Policy Coordination  
Enver Mekolli, Department of European Integration and Policy Coordination  
Hazbije Lahu, Department of European Integration and Policy Coordination



Grese Latifaj, Deputy Minister's Office  
Alba Hajdini, Deputy Minister's Office  
Avni Rexha, Department for Pre-university Education

**Office of the Prime Minister**

Vera Rexhepi, Senior Strategic Planning Officer, Office of the Prime Minister  
Adnan Ahmeti, Former Senior Strategic Planning Officer, Office of the Prime Minister

**Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers**

Milaim Aliu, Head of Central Budget Division  
Mevlude Shamolli, Budget Analyst for Education Sector  
Alban Krasniqi, Officer at the Macroeconomics Department  
Ardiana Veselaj, Treasury  
Gazmend Sylja, Treasury  
Rafet Shabani, Treasury

**Ministry of internal affairs and public administration reform**

Shehrije Leci  
Bardha Rustemi

**National Authority for Qualifications**

Avni Gashi, Director  
Donjeta Nimani, RPL officer

**Technical assistance for EU projects**

Alexis De Roquefeuil  
Robert Blease  
Mihaela Singer

**Trade Union Bashkimi i Sindikatave te Pavarura te Kosoves BSPK**

Rahman Jasharaj  
Atdhe Hykolli

**UNICEF office Mitrovica**

Tamara Slavkovic

**University of Mitrovica**

Nebosja Arsic, Rector

**University of Pristina**

Naser Shahiti, Rector  
Mimoza Ibrani, Vice-Rector  
Blerim Saqipi, Dean of the Faculty of Education

- **Field visits :**

1. Fushe Kosova
  - Fadil Krasniqi, Deputy Mayor
  - Elmie Graicevci-Zymberi, Education Officer, MED
  - Vlore Ferizi Berjani, Education Officer, MED,
2. Podujeva Local municipality (education directorate & finance directorate)
  - Xhevat Llugaxhiu, Head of Education Sector in MED
  - Ardian Emini Finance Officer in MED
  - Fatmir Emini, Director of Technical School
  - Nazif Sheqa, parent representative

### 3. Mitrovica

- Nebojsa Arsic, Rector of University of Mitrovica and colleagues
- Tamara Slavkovic, UNICEF

## - Technical Consultation Meetings (TCMs):

### 1. Municipal Education Directors (MEDs)

1. Albana Demiri, Gjilan
2. Rasim Hasani, Lipjan
3. Xhevdet Llulleci, Viti
4. Remzi Bajselmani, Suhareke
5. Nexhat Mockaj, Prizren

### 2. Teachers

1. Liridon Gashi, Klina
2. Xhevdet Kadrija, Klina
3. Sali Berisha, Klina
4. Valire Ismajli, Ferizaj
5. Ayfer Xhemaili, Prishtine
6. Estrita Nuredini, Prishtine
7. Alberta Halili, Prishtine
8. Mergim Mestani, Prishtine
9. Jetmir Berisha, Prishtine
10. Adonisa Spahiu, Prishtine
11. Nikelinda Dakaj, Kline
12. Galip Avdiu, Vushtrri
13. Ganimete Hyseni, Prishtine
14. Fitnete Gashi, Prishtine
15. Adriana Pajaziti, Prishtine
16. Kreshnike Ademi, Prishtine

### 3. School principals

1. Jeta Dida Bujari, Prishtine
2. Blerta Rexhepi Asllani, Prishtine
3. Gezime Rexhepi Collaku, Prishtine
4. Azem Jaha, Prishtine
5. Liridon Maliqi, Prishtine
6. Shqipe Vllasaliu Mehmedi, Prishtine
7. Fatmir Haradinaj, Vushtrri

### 4. Parents associations

1. Arben Berisha, Prishtine
2. Afrim Sahiti, Prishtine
3. Betim Sopi, Prishtine
4. Jeton Demi, Prishtine
5. Havushe Bunjaku, Kishnice
6. Agim Ferati, Prizren
7. Fatmir Korça, Prishtine
8. Diana Metushi Krasniqi, Prishtine
9. Mjellma Rrecaj, Prishtine
10. Nexhmi Hoxha, Prishtine
11. Albana Ramadani, Prishtine
12. Rukije Vllasa, Prishtine

### 5. NGOs

1. Albert Bakalli, Caritas Switzerland, Project Coordinator
2. Lulavere Behluli, Save the Children, Coordinator of the education programme
3. Fitore Gashi, SOS Villages, Educator
4. Nazan Mustafa, SOS Villages, Educator
5. Reze Hoxha, NGO Toka, Project Manager
6. Ferdane Asllani, Balkan Sunflowers, Project Manager
7. Valmire Morina, Teach for Kosova, Project Manager
8. Mevlude Murtezi, ChildProof, Director
9. Iris Gjinovci, School Me, Director

### 6. Students

11 secondary pupils identified by various school directors



## Annex 4: Additional information

### Annex 4a: Legal framework, norms and rules – including for formula funding

The law on pre-university of Education, articles: 3.1. student enrolment; 3.2. pupil-teacher ratio for allocation of personnel and payroll by calculating the average remuneration; 3.3. funding for replacement of teachers on medical or maternity leave; 3.4. funding for educational and training institutions by type and size of facilities; 3.5. funding for schools in deep mountain zones; and 3.6. funding per pupil for operating expenses and capital investments; and

The formula addresses the level of pre-school, primary and secondary education, taking into account the following criteria:

- a) Number of students enrolled for the year 2021/2022;
- b) Pupil-teacher ratio for primary and secondary education for majority students 1: 21.3 (based on Administrative Instruction No 22/2013 of MESTI);
- c) Pupil-teacher ratio for primary and secondary education for minority students 1: 14.2; d) Pupil-teacher ratio for preschool education 1:12;
- e) Pupil-teacher ratio for vocational secondary education for majority students 1: 17.2, and for minority students 1: 11.5;
- f) Pupil-teacher ratio for mountainous areas 1: 14.2;
- g) Calculation for English language teaching staff for grades I and II;
- h) Calculation for the technical administrative staff for 630 students 1 staff in pre-primary and primary education;
- i) Calculation for technical administrative staff for 470 students 1 staff in secondary education
- j) Calculation for support staff for 170 students 1 staff (cleaners) and 1 school staff (guards);
- k) The calculation of salaries and allowances is based on the average salary according to the levels according to the data received from the Treasury, multiplied by the number of teachers calculated according to the formula of pre-university education;
- l) Professional Pedagogical / Psychological Service;
- m) Quality coordinators;
- n) Calculation of salaries for replacements during maternity leave 6%;
- o) Goods and services are calculated according to the criteria per student (EUR 23 for majority students and EUR 25 for minority students) and for school (EUR 1 500 for pre-primary and primary school and EUR 3 250 for secondary school);
- p) Capitals are calculated according to the criterion of EUR 7 per student;

Approved policies by GC until 2022 are incorporated to the basic grant, as follows:

- a) Calculation of three salaries after retirement at a cost of EUR 1.5 million;
- b) Salary for assistants for children with special needs at a cost of EUR 1.5 million;
- c) Jubilee salaries according to the collective contract for education, at a cost of EUR 1.25 million;
- d) Professional practice at a cost of EUR 3.5 million;
- e) Salary for pre-school education 2 to 5 years old, at a cost of EUR 1.9 million;
- f) Salaries for teachers with aggravated health condition, at a cost of EUR 1.7 million,
- g) Goods and services for children (4 to 5 years old), at a cost of EUR 78.848;
- h) Cost of payment for validation and accreditation procedures for vocational high schools (8 schools), at a cost of EUR 38 400.

**Data updated based on the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2023-2025 page 80, available at: <https://mf.rks.gov.net/desk/inc/media/F4CB1BDF-67C6-49A8-954F-21434E5363F1.pdf>**

## **Annex 4b: Role and responsibilities of municipality education directorates, by law**

[LAW NO. 03/L-068 ON EDUCATION IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO \(rks.gov.net\)](http://rks.gov.net)

### **Article 4**

#### **Competencies and Enhanced Competencies of the Municipalities**

1. Municipalities shall have full and exclusive powers, insofar as they concern the local interest, while respecting the standards set forth in applicable legislation with respect to the provisions of public pre-primary, primary and secondary education, including registration and licensing of educational institutions, recruitment, payment of salaries and training of education instructors and administrators.
2. Municipalities may, in addition to the powers referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article, be vested with enhanced competencies in the field of education as prescribed by this law or other applicable legislation.
3. In accordance with the Law on Local Self Government, municipalities shall be entitled to cooperate, within the areas of their own competencies in the field of education, with other municipalities and other authorities. This entitlement includes cooperation with municipalities and institutions, including government agencies, in the Republic of Serbia.

### **Article 5**

#### **Competencies of the Municipalities in Public Education Levels 0, 1, 2, and 3 (Pre-Primary, Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary)**

Competencies referred to in Article 4 of this law shall include the following specific municipal competencies in public education at levels 0 (pre-primary), 1 (primary), 2 (lower secondary) and 3 (upper secondary), in accordance with general guidelines and/or procedures and standards promulgated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST):

- a) construction of educational facilities in accordance with Chapter 3 of this law and other applicable legislation;
- b) registration and admission of students in accordance with due respect for the principles of non-discrimination under law;
- c) employment of teachers and other school personnel in accordance with legal procedures for the recruitment, selection and employment of public employees;
- d) selection of the Director and/or Deputy Director of educational institutions in accordance with legal procedures for the recruitment and legal criteria's determined by MEST from a commission established by the Municipality which two members shall be from the Municipality and one from MEST;
- e) registration, public health and safety inspection and licensing of pre-primary educational institutions, in accordance with Chapter 4 of this law;
- f) payment of the managerial staff as well as other employed personnel in accordance with Kosovo legislation;
- g) training educators and other professional staff in accordance with guidelines, principles and standards promulgated by the MEST;
- h) supervision and inspection of the education process in accordance with guidelines established by the MEST;
- i) development, approval, and implementation of the Rules of Procedure for schools, including the Code of Conduct for managerial staff, teachers, other personnel, and students as well as disciplinary measures;
- j) reporting on pre-primary level education, budgetary and management operations to municipal governments and the MEST in accordance with municipal and central legislation;
- k) application of such delegated functions or competencies as shall be determined by formal agreement between the municipality and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo;
- l) monitoring and reporting on students' educational and social progress to parents and other responsible authorities as determined by legislation; and
- m) determination of the parents' participation fee for the admission of children to nurseries and kindergartens in accordance with the laws of Kosovo.

### **Article 6**

#### **Administrative Responsibilities of the Municipalities**

Competencies referred to in Article 4 of this law shall include the following municipal administrative responsibilities in public education, in accordance with general guidelines and/or procedures and standards promulgated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST):

- a) municipalities shall provide educational administration services sufficient for the functions of pre- primary,

- primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and higher education in accordance with the law;
- b) minimum educational administrative services shall include the appointment of a Municipal Director for the department/directorate including the education functional sector as well as sufficient professional and support staff to perform the duties required under Kosovo legislation; and
- c) monitoring of and reporting on educational management and operations in municipalities shall be performed through the municipal administrative body identified as competent for that function by the Mayor of the municipality.

#### Annex 4c: The digital education reform framework: some guidance for use

For capturing issues related to education digitalisation, as one of the tailored focus of RED Kosovo, the ETF's Digital Education Reform Framework was used as the main analytical tool, helping to identify policy areas and critical factors, bearing in mind the pillar 5 of the education strategy 2026 on 'the digitalisation of the education sector' and its related objectives. While the visual representation of this analytical framework was displayed as Figure 10 in the core text, below are provided more detailed explanation, which may be particularly useful should MESTI undertake a similar exercise as a self-assessment.

##### The 'What': focus areas for digital education reforms

The central part of the framework (in blue) is about the 'What' of digital education and aims at presenting the different possible policy areas with examples of real-life initiatives, so that policy-makers can learn from the experiences of other countries. Also, for each area, the main common challenges and the mostly used policy support tools are included. The framework identifies nine areas that can be at the focus of specific digital education policies:

- **Digital infrastructure** is the precondition for fostering the digitalisation of education systems and should guarantee access to adequate digital devices and sufficient internet connection, by privileging inclusive and sustainable approaches.
- **Digital competences of educators** should be addressed by equipping teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to effectively and confidently use digital technologies as a result of the provision of relevant and innovative, high-quality initial and/or continuous professional development.
- **Digital capacity of schools** is key for blending traditional and digital teaching and learning approaches: policies can target issues such as school leadership, digital strategy development, and data management capacity.
- **Digital pedagogies and curriculum** are needed to take advantage of the potential of the digital revolution: policies should promote and monitor meaningful digital pedagogies and update the curriculum to develop both practical digital skills and digital citizenship.
- **Digital education resources** of high quality and accessible, possibly through open licences, are a key component of digital education: their use as well as the capacity of educators to produce and curate them should be fostered.
- **Digital learning environments** and online platforms can be the focus of digital education policies, both for the development of connected learning management systems and virtual labs within schools and the creation of digital learning environments at regional, national and school level.
- **Digital assessment** has the potential to support authentic, self-directed and peer learning and to multiply interactions with peers and professionals: by fostering formative and summative digital assessment practices, policies can have a strong impact.
- **Digital competences of learners** are essential in everyday life and should be a target of digital education initiatives: governments can act by including digital subjects in schools and by building digital skills, knowledge and attitude through informal learning, with attention to digital citizenship.
- **Digital credentials** are a rather new area for digital education reform, which keeps receiving increased attention from the policy level due to the potential impact of micro- and digital credentials on increased employability and innovations in reskilling processes.

##### The 'How': critical factors for digital education reforms

The outer part of the framework (in green) is about the 'How' and outlines the main critical factors (regardless of, or potentially applying to all, policy areas) and the corresponding questions that may help policy-makers articulate key elements of digital education policies:

- **Data for policy-making.** Digital education policies should be based on sound evidence, and they should foster the collection and analysis of data according to international best practices; at the same time, policy-makers should be wary of how the data produced by digital education practices are collected, stored and used.
- **Digital inclusion.** Tackling digital and educational inequality should be the key driver of any digital education reforms, encompassing the provision of basic digital skills and specific measures to ensure that digitalisation increases inclusion and accessibility of education and training, and not the opposite.
- **Stakeholders' engagement.** Policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation should be an inclusive process that meaningfully involves stakeholders, including teachers, through various channels and in different phases of the policy process. The contribution of technology commercial providers should be carefully managed by the policy-maker.
- **Financing.** Available financial resources should be carefully planned, with attention given to sources' differentiation and sustainability. Innovative funding mechanisms, also with the participation of commercial actors, should be explored, ensuring that all parties involved, such as learners' families are considered.
- **Quality assurance.** An adequate mechanism for digital education quality assurance should be established, integrating new dimensions into the existing system to generate swift feedback rounds and immediate programme adaptation, to guarantee equity and innovation in a technology-neutral way.
- **Environmental sustainability.** The environmental impact relating to the introduction of digital practices in education should be kept in mind, to allow future-looking digital education reforms to fit environmentally sustainable standards and to foster the emergence of green and digital skillsets among learners.
- **Teachers and learners wellbeing.** As shown by the COVID-19 experience, introducing digital education can have a negative impact on the mental and physical wellbeing of teachers and learners. These risks should be taken into account by digital education initiatives, instilling virtuous circles of wellbeing support and development.

**Foresight capacity.** Digital education initiatives have to be based on a sound understanding of possible future developments, in societal, technological and educational terms: for this to happen, the capacity of policy-makers to deeply understand the long-term impact and trends of digital technology must be built on and nurtured.

#### Annex 4d: Recommendations on digitalisation in a nutshell

ST:

##### **Digital Agenda**

- In line with the Education Reform 2026 and related objectives 5.2 to 5.5, (i) setting of a digital agenda and related indicators and targets based on international reference frameworks (e.g., the EU DigCompEdu and DigCompOrg) – priority on digital skills and competence of teachers and digital capacity of schools,.
- Proof of concept, including a number of urgent, evidence-based analyses, e.g., the pilot of SELFIE for Schools (a first small pilot already done in 2019) and SELFIE for Teachers for digital capacity of schools, digital inclusion and to gather evidence of digital skills and competences need of teachers

##### **Monitoring**

- Refine the monitoring framework of the education strategy 2026, including a set of indicators based on DigCompEdu/Org and analysis and use of related SELFIE\* anonymised aggregated data for more granular analysis, priority to pre-tertiary education

##### **Governance**

- establishment of the planned MESTI/MFTL joint committee, set-up a department within the MESTI in charge of the digitalisation, and set-up of a committee involving municipality coordinators

##### **Management**

- In line with the Education Reform 2026 and related objectives 5.1, identify key issues related to use EMIS, identify gaps in the tool, mis configuration and skills requirement of the diverse user groups

##### **Rubric and standards**

- draft of quality assurance and quality standard for digital education (priority on inclusion)





## MT

### **Digital Agenda**

- Implementation of the digital agenda, including e.g., :
  - o Progressive implementation of SELFIE for Teachers across all country (**in priority**)
  - o Progressive implementation of SELFIE for Schools (already piloted in 2019 in XK) across the pre-tertiary sector
- Monitoring system
  - o Analysis of needs in terms of teachers' digital competence at different levels (e.g. system and municipality level)
  - o Design and development of innovative accredited training modules and learning paths (e.g. OER, blended methods, online platform)

### **Management**

- In line with the Education Reform 2026 and related objectives 5.1, identify key issues related to use EMIS, implement functional and configuration improvements, design and deliver necessary training to the different user groups.

### **Rubrics and standards**

- Proof of concept and implementation of rubrics and standards

## LT

- Overall reform of digital competence of teachers, proficiency levels to access the profession and CPD programmes
- Curricula reform including digitally innovative pedagogy for competence-based approaches and for the provision basic and advanced digital skills and competences
- Overall digitalisation of education and training system as a series of deep and coordinated culture, workforce, and technology shifts that enable new educational and operating models enhanced by digital technology



## List of acronyms

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
ECE(C)	Early Childhood Education (and Care)
ES	Education Strategy
ETF	European Training Foundation
EUOK	European Union Office in Kosovo
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFS	Government Finance Statistics
GNI	Gross National Income
HCD	Human Capital Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
KAS	Kosovo Agency for Statistics
KESP	Kosovo Education Strategy Plan
LT	Long Term
MED	Municipality Education Directorate
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (former name of MESTI)
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MFLT	Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (from UNICEF)
MT	Medium term
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2023-2025
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTT	National Technical Team
ODA	Official Development Aid
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OER	Open Educational Resources
PAK	Public Agency of Kosovo
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment (from OECD)
PMO	Prime Minister Office
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
QA	Quality Assurance
RED	Rapid Education Diagnosis
SABER	System Approach for Better Education Result
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management



SPMA	Systems Performance, Monitoring and Assessment (ETF Unit in charge of RED)
ST	Short Term
TCM	Targeted Consultation Meetings
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
USD	United States Dollar
VET	Vocational Education and Training