

**Joint European Union and Council of
Europe Programme
“Building Capacity for Inclusion in
Education – INCLUDE”**

External evaluation

Final evaluation report

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Acronyms

AI	Administrative Instruction
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
ICF	International Classification of Functioning
IEP	Individual Education Plan
KEC	Kosovo Education Centre
MESTI	The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

1. Executive summary

Background

The project Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE is co-funded by the EU and the CoE and implemented in Kosovo* by the CoE in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) with the budget of €2,223,000 for duration of 48 months (January 2020 – December 2023). The project's overall aim is to improve access to quality education for children and students from disadvantaged groups in pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Its specific objectives are as follows:

- to improve participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education;
- to improve participation and support services for children with SEN in pre-primary, primary and secondary education.

These are to be achieved through a range of activities such as capacity building and expertise at policy level to reduce the existing enrolment barriers by providing support to selected municipalities, supporting operation of learning centres by upgrading their teaching programmes, capacity building for teachers in resource centres and teachers in mainstream schools to develop their skills and competences for working with children with SEN, developing a training programme for assistants for children with SEN, awareness raising events and many other activities targeted directly at the final beneficiary groups – mentoring, summer schools, winter camps and so on.

The project aimed to work with 50 pilot schools as well as selected municipalities, learning centres and resource centres throughout Kosovo; further institutional partners include the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, local NGOs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, local NGOs supporting children with SEN and the Municipal Education Directorate.

Methodology

The external evaluation of the joint EU/CoE project Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE was an end-of-project evaluation commissioned by the Division of Formal and Non-formal Education of the Education Department of the CoE in accordance with the project proposal and guidelines of the organisation. The aim of the evaluation was to (i) assess the results achieved by the project, also taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic and (ii) provide recommendations for the possible future follow-up project based on lessons learnt.

The evaluation was undertaken between October and December 2023. Its methodology was guided by the Terms of Reference and structured around selected OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability.

The methods used within the evaluation, i.e. the desk research, qualitative data collection including the field mission, quantitative data collection (online survey), data triangulation, analysis and synthesis are presented below.

The desk research comprised a documentary analysis of relevant primary and secondary materials, including the project documentation and relevant strategic and legislative materials. Qualitative data collection methods consisted of semi-structured remote and in-person interviews with representatives of the CoE project management team, the MESTI, Steering Committee

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members, recipients of the INCLUDE project's grant schemes and relevant local and international experts involved in the project implementation.

Additionally, a field mission to Kosovo was conducted from 6 November to 10 November 2023 to visit 15 selected institutions involved in the project, namely pilot schools, resource centres and learning centres and interviews with their representatives were held, i.e. headteachers/directors and other members of staff (pedagogical staff, school psychologists, teaching assistants, tutors etc.).

Quantitative data collection was based on an online survey that was conducted among all 49 project pilot schools to elicit their views on the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the project and its activities. Overall, 116 respondents have completed the questionnaire.

All information and data collected were triangulated, synthesised and collated into a compilation of findings that were used as a basis for formulating recommendations to further support the concept of inclusive education.

Key findings

The relevance of the project is high. For the target group of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (specific objective 1), the project focused its key efforts on capacity building of pilot schools by supporting the model of a democratic and inclusive school culture and learning centres which currently lack a standardised framework of activities, reporting and data collection. For the target group of children with SEN (specific objective 2), the project adopted a similarly holistic approach in supporting pilot schools in their inclusive efforts and integrating students with disabilities and providing capacity building activities for resource centres which currently lack systematic professional development. The relevance of the project and its actions is further corroborated by the key partner – the MESTI – which played an essential role in the project design and implementation, and plans to act on its key policy outputs, particularly in relation to the SEN agenda within the upper secondary education level.

The coherence of the project and its approach is good. It is determined by the outward facing approach the project has adopted since its start which is reflected twofold – in its diverse partnerships and co-operation with various stakeholders representing the needs and viewpoints of final beneficiaries, also formally established and maintained through the project Steering Committee, and also in its links to other initiatives and their achievements thoroughly explored in the initial phases of the project implementation.

The overall effectiveness of the project and its activities is high. For the target group of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (specific objective 1), the planned activities were implemented as planned and with desired outcomes. The professional development sessions were successfully delivered, and school representatives were satisfied with their content, organisation as well as the impact on their practice. The positive feedback was identified during school visits as well as through the online survey conducted among all schools involved.

For the final beneficiaries of children with SEN (specific objective 2), school representatives benefitted from targeted training focused on inclusive education including the implementation of Individual Education Plans. Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the results of the online survey suggest they are able to apply the new knowledge in practice.

The overall sustainability of the project and its activities is good. The training programmes were based on a modular approach which created opportunities for participants to apply the new knowledge and skills directly in practice while being supported by their peers as well as allocated mentors. The organisation of the capacity building was conducive to networking which had a positive effect on strengthening of existing relationships as well as creating new ones. The biggest achievement in relation to sustainability is the change of mindset that representatives of schools, resource centres and learning centres attribute to the training attended – being self-

reflective and mindful, using tolerant and inclusive language and behaviour while challenging discriminatory attitudes and negative stereotypes.

The intervention logic of the project has proved effective - capacity building has had a positive effect on the teaching skills and ability of education professionals to work with children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and with children with SEN. This creates favourable conditions for improved attendance as well as attainment of these students in the long-term perspective.

Key recommendations

The project has contributed to positive changes for individual school establishments in the regions and also proved successful at the wider local level through its extensive research and conceptual work that will provide a basis for further policy development. The project has effectively drawn on achievements and outputs of other initiatives and its outward facing approach is another strength directly affecting its success. Given the benefits of the project, it is recommended that further funding for its continuation is allocated so that its effects are sustained and facilitated to a wider breadth of beneficiaries.

To further support the concept of inclusive education, continued support to the already involved as well as new schools, resource centres and learning centres should be considered through individual mentoring support and capacity building activities. Creating structured opportunities for representatives from schools where they can formally share their experience, expertise, tried and tested activities for working with children with SEN and with children from vulnerable communities might be beneficial. For resource centres, more advanced and specialised training focused on working with children with complex and multiple disabilities as well as mentoring support might be helpful.

The interviews indicated that the relationship between schools/resource centres and their respective municipal officers needs strengthening, and regular networking might create a basis for greater mutual understanding and aligning of institutional agendas.

As parents play an irreplaceable role in children's development and their educational attainment, any future efforts to promote and support inclusive education should include an active dialogue with parents to reflect this holistic approach. It might be beneficial for schools to organise workshops and learning events in a way that students, teachers and parents explore the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination together (i.e. as opposed to *training sessions for parents* which might be perceived as patronising).

The positions of qualified teaching assistants to provide specialist support to teachers in working with children with SEN in schools are necessary and an integral part of a successfully delivered notion of inclusion. The professional training of these positions is of vital importance so that they do not replace the classroom teacher to work with a child with SEN in isolation (and aggravating his/her segregation from the class) but so as to provide assistance to the child so that he/she can participate in the process of teaching and learning with the rest of the class.

Capacity building initiatives aimed at increasing integration and inclusion of children with SEN are typically combined with infrastructure investments so that the school environment and its full accessibility is suitable for persons with physical disabilities (mobility, sight, hearing etc.). While the full reconstruction of existing premises might not be feasible, consider making minor adaptations in terms of signage, handrails, ramps, non-slip surfaces, location of light switches, alarms etc. that might have a positive effect on this target group leading to their increased integration in mainstream schools.

2. Methodology

The external evaluation of the joint EU/CoE project Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE aims to (i) assess the results achieved by the project, also taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic and (ii) provide recommendations for the possible future follow-up project based on lessons learnt.

The evaluation has reviewed the activities carried out by the Council of Europe (CoE) within the project implementation from the project start in January 2020 until its end in December 2023. The key users of evaluation findings and recommendations are the Division of Formal and Non-Formal Education of the Education Department of the CoE, the donor of the project, and the project partners as well as the CoE as a whole in terms of broader organisational learning.

The evaluation report was elaborated in October and November 2023. Its methodology was guided by the Terms of Reference that formed a basis for the development of an **evaluation matrix** (annex 2) structured around selected OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability and corresponding qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis instruments.

Desk research

The evaluators conducted a documentary analysis of relevant primary and secondary materials, including:

- the project documentation – Description of the Action, Inception Report, annual Interim Narrative Reports since 2020, the Steering Committee meeting reports, the project website;
- relevant strategic and legislative materials – Kosovo Education Strategy 2022-2026, Kosovo reports by the European Commission (EC), Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017-2021, the National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kosovo 2013–2023, the Law on Protection and Promotion of Community Rights and their Members and the Law against Discrimination.

Data collection

Qualitative methods of data collection consisted of **semi-structured remote and in-person interviews** with representatives of the CoE project management team, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Kosovo* (MESTI), Steering Committee members, recipients of the INCLUDE project's grant schemes and relevant local and international experts involved in the project implementation.

A **field mission to Kosovo** from 6 November to 10 November 2023 was also conducted to visit **15 selected institutions** involved in the project, namely **pilot schools, resource centres and learning centres** and interviews with their representatives were held, i.e. headteachers/directors and their members of staff (pedagogical staff, school psychologists, teaching assistants, tutors etc.). The full list of institutions visited can be found in annex 1. In total, 113 stakeholders were interviewed. The list of interviewees can be found in annex 1.

Quantitative data collection was based on an **online survey** that was conducted among **all 49 project pilot schools** to elicit their views on the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the project and its activities. The questionnaire was translated into Albanian and sent to pilot schools' headteachers who then distributed it among their members of staff. The online questionnaire was sent out on 30 October 2023 and was open to respondents until 12 November 2023. Overall, 116

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respondents have completed the questionnaire. The full analysis of the online survey can be found in a separate annex.

All information and data collected were triangulated, synthesised and collated into a compilation of findings (chapter 4). Based on the findings, clear and forward-looking recommendations were formulated considering the identified lessons learnt (chapter 5). All literature and document review references are listed in annex 3.

3. Background

The starting point of an **inclusive approach** in education was the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, which recognised the child's right to education based on the principle of non-discrimination. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) established the right for persons with disabilities to receive inclusive education, and inclusive education became part of the reform agenda of institutions such as the UN, UNESCO and the European Union (EU). The basis of an inclusive approach is to keep as many children as possible in the mainstream education and to prevent the segregation of children with special educational needs (SEN).

The 2030 **Agenda for Sustainable Development** emphasises that inclusive education must be seen in connection to complex challenges such as economic and social inequalities. One of its aims (SDG4) is to *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*, explicitly specifying vulnerable persons, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations.¹ Globally, only slow and limited progress has been recorded in achieving this goal and with the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is even more distinctively off-track with the Agenda education targets.²

While not formally part of the UN SDGs, Kosovo*³ endorsed the Resolution on the SDGs in 2018 committing to these goals. As the EC Kosovo Report 2019 states, Kosovo is at an early stage of preparation in the field of education and particular attention should be paid to improve access to quality education for disadvantaged groups. **Children with special educational needs** are one of the most marginalised groups in Kosovo's society and the report notes that only 10% of children with disabilities benefit from adequate access to health, education and social services.⁴ In the following years, no or limited progress has been made⁵ although the report from 2022 commends positive developments in this area – manifested in the decision to increase the number of assistants for children with SEN to 100 per year, at least until 2024.⁶

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children represent another disadvantaged group living in difficult socioeconomic conditions. They face significant challenges in the education system, with discrimination and their drop-out rates remaining high. While activities of learning centres have proved vital and effective for after-school support of children from marginalised communities, no systematic funding⁷ has been allocated for these centres⁸ and given their dependence on donor funding, their stability is uncertain.

The efforts in improving the access to quality education have been supported by general as well as targeted **legislative and strategic documents**. The Law on Pre-University Education explicitly stipulates principles of inclusive education whereby it should be provided in accordance with international standards and all educational institutions *should accommodate children regardless of physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions and should promote integration*.⁹ The accountability to take appropriate measures including the establishment of resource rooms and

¹ UN. 2015. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

² UN. 2023. *Progress and info*.

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⁴ EC. *Kosovo Report 2019*.

⁵ EC. *Kosovo Report 2020*.

EC. *Kosovo report 2021*.

⁶ EC. *Kosovo Report 2022*.

⁷ Since 2021, the MESTI has provided annual funding to selected learning centres through grants.

⁸ EC. *Kosovo Report 2020*.

⁹ The Republic of Kosovo. 2011. *The Law on Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo*.

adapted classrooms for children with disabilities in municipal schools has been assigned to municipalities.¹⁰

The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 also sets the inclusion of children with SEN and children from marginalised communities into the mainstream education system as a priority. To help facilitate these efforts, the already existing **resource centres** for children with SEN and **learning centres** for children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities were of critical importance.

In relation to the strategic objective 1 – Participation and Inclusion, the strategy includes a specific set of measurable targets regarding the inclusion of children with SEN and those belonging to disadvantaged communities. For instance, 50% of children with special needs should be included in the pre-university education system by the end of 2021. As the Evaluation of the Implementation of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 states, there is an agreement among stakeholders that the participation of children with SEN in education is not satisfactory and the low numbers of teaching assistants and support teachers nationwide deepen this challenge further.¹¹

Similarly for children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the available data from 2020 show that their participation in the education system remains extremely low in comparison to national average.¹² The gap is particularly evident in lower and upper secondary education as the table below demonstrates.

Table 1: Participation of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education

Indicator	Baseline data for KESP 2017-2021	2020	Target defined for 2021	Total participation in education
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary education	53.9%	44.9%	70%	79.4%
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in primary education	85.3%	84.1%	95%	88.3%
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in lower secondary education	65%	63.7%	85%	93.4%
Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in upper secondary education	30.3%	31%	50%	88.8%

Source: Action Plan of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021, Evaluation of the Implementation of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021

As the Evaluation of the Implementation of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 summarises, the achievement of indicators set out is far from satisfactory and the desired progress in providing quality education for all has not been achieved.

While the new Education Strategy 2022-2026 commends the positive impact of learning centres on the increased rate of enrolment of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in compulsory education and reducing their drop-out rates, it acknowledges their funding is not sustainable. Similarly, the strategy recognises the extensive challenges of children with

¹⁰ The Republic of Kosovo. 2011. *The Law on Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo*.

¹¹ Kosova Education Center. 2021. *Evaluation of the Implementation of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021*.

¹² Kosova Education Center. 2021. *Evaluation of the Implementation of Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021*.

disabilities and their severe underrepresentation within the education system – only 2.1% of them are part of the education system compared to their 15% ratio of the population.¹³

The targeted legislative and strategic framework includes the Strategy for Integration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities 2009-2015, the Strategy for the Advancement of the Rights of the Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2022-2026, the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017-2021, the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2022-2026, the National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kosovo 2013-2023, the Law on Protection and Promotion of Community Rights and their Members and the Law against Discrimination. While the implementation of these framework resources in practice remains a challenge,¹⁴ significant successes have been achieved as well. For instance, the 2022 Progress Report of the Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kosovo 2021-2023 records most of the intended activities as *implemented* ranging from smaller tasks of hiring pedagogical staff for visually impaired children to capacity building activities and training of 5,000 teachers to work with children with disabilities which creates potential for positive long-term effects.

Regarding inclusive education, a range of organisations have supported Kosovo in realising these complex and systemic changes and ambitions by implementing targeted projects and programmes, for example the EU, the CoE, UNICEF, Caritas Switzerland, Save the Children, GIZ and many others.

Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE

This project is co-funded by the EU and the CoE and implemented by the CoE in cooperation with the MESTI with the budget of €2,223,000 for duration of 48 months (January 2020 – December 2023). The project's overall aim is to improve access to quality education for children and students from disadvantaged groups in pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Its specific objectives are as follows:

- to improve participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education;
- to improve participation and support services for children with SEN in pre-primary, primary and secondary education.

These are to be achieved through expertise at policy level and capacity building to reduce the existing enrolment barriers by providing support to selected municipalities, supporting operation of learning centres by upgrading their teaching programmes, capacity building for teachers in resource centres and teachers in mainstream schools to develop their skills and competences for working with children with SEN, developing a training programme for assistants for children with SEN, awareness raising events and many other activities targeted directly at the final beneficiary groups – mentoring, summer schools, winter camps and so on.

The project aimed to work with 50 pilot schools as well as selected municipalities, learning centres and resource centres throughout Kosovo; further institutional partners include the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, local NGOs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, local NGOs supporting children with SEN and the Municipal Education Directorate.

¹³ The Republic of Kosovo. 2022. *Education Strategy 2022-2026*.

¹⁴ CoE. 2023. *Terms of Reference*.

4. Findings

The following chapter begins by detailing the relevance of the project for the intended target groups and stakeholders involved. The next sections focus on project coherence and effectiveness to evaluate the fit between the chosen means and intended effects. The final section reviews the sustainability of the project and its activities.

While addressing the evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation matrix (annex 2), the evaluators put emphasis on the assessment of the evaluation criteria as a whole rather than answering questions individually. The analysis in the following subsections tackles all evaluation questions and presents the findings in a continuous and coherent text. This approach allows making the content more accessible and avoiding discussions on dividing lines between individual evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

The overall aim of the project is defined by its two specific objectives - within the capacity of Kosovo education:

1. to improve participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education;
2. to improve participation and strengthen support services for children with SEN in primary and secondary education.

The intervention logic of the project defines several activities through which these outcomes may be facilitated and reached and as such, they demonstrate a wide scope of support from multiple angles.

4.1.1 Final beneficiaries - children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (specific objective 1)

Initial assessment and analysis

To understand the current status of the situation in education of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, a **mapping study** was developed by the project to gather and analyse reports and interventions supporting inclusion and their effects. The study summarises the societal, legal and institutional context of inclusive education in the region while also pointing out the international standards and norms. The consideration is holistic and comprehensive, and the principles of diversity and social cohesion are explored. The study reflects on philosophical aspects of integration, the risks and divisive nature of homogenisation and the need to preserve one's identity. In this sense, education is seen - on one hand - as a means for achieving the goal of protecting and developing minority identities and achieving social integration, and - on the other hand - as a critical pillar for ensuring that every individual irrespective of their background and circumstances develops their full potential.

The theoretical concept is further built upon by a thorough analysis of relevant reports and interventions supporting children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities clearly outlining their landscape, key components, local actors, beneficiaries as well as lessons learnt and missing gaps. To understand the challenges of pupils/students from the disadvantaged communities, a survey of teachers' practice and attitudes towards inclusive education was undertaken as part of the study in which various stakeholders from four municipalities took part. The results offer concise summaries of views ranging from students and teachers to school headteachers, representatives of municipalities, learning centres and the MESTI.

Given its wide-ranging scope, the focus of the study and its findings are highly pertinent for the efforts directed towards inclusive education – either directly for the project or beyond it. Indeed, its recommendations were twofold – some served as a guidance for the INCLUDE project on how to better address its activities to support children from the three communities while others were directed towards the policy-makers on how to best address the education policies reflecting the work that had been already done as well as the identified challenges.

Although this project output is not utilised directly by final beneficiaries, it provides a critical baseline framework which has been used effectively not only for the purposes of the individual intervention but has the potential to be of benefit extending beyond the project boundaries.

Supporting schools

The key emphasis of the project lies in the **capacity building** opportunities for schools so that their representatives have the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to build, implement and continuously support the model of a democratic and inclusive school culture. Through training sessions, examples of extra-curricular activities, community and parents' involvement, teachers' practices and attitudes and awareness raising activities on fighting bullying, negative stereotypes and hate speech, the aim is to create inclusive school climate conducive to improved attendance of students from disadvantaged communities of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. Therefore, the relevance of supporting schools in this particular cause, is high as these skills which are vital for creating inclusive and democratic school environments are widely lacking among the school professionals.

Supporting learning centres

Learning centres have a long-standing history in Kosovo albeit without a formal and legal basis until 2018 when AI 19/2018 was approved establishing the requirement to register with the MESTI to continue or start their activities. However, given the slow implementation of the administrative instruction (lack of procedural guidance and funding), many learning centres have faced challenges in providing their services and their long-term sustainability is at risk.¹⁵

Despite this, given their objectives¹⁶ and supporting vulnerable children in school enrolment and attendance, their services are of critical importance. While support provided through an individual project is unable to substitute the required systemic provision at the national level, it has potential to contribute to positive outcomes for individual learning centres and their communities.

A needs assessment report conducted through the project has identified the acute needs of learning centres and their employees and in cooperation with the Kosovo Education Centre (KEC), **training programmes** for respective topics have been developed. These comprise areas such as leadership and management of learning centres, prevention of school drop-outs, teaching methodologies etc. The MESTI has been an active partner in this process approaching the learning centres to yield the expected (high) demand from them.

For the learning centres to provide targeted and effective support to vulnerable children, their services need to meet and maintain **quality standards** which is difficult to establish in a fragmented system where individual centres are operated by different organisations. The project therefore aimed its activities at upgrading the training programmes for centres' employees as well as at harmonising the activities they offer. It resulted in a plan to develop

¹⁵ CoE. 2018. *Description of the Action: Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education - INCLUDE*.

¹⁶ According to AI 19/2018, the objectives of learning centres are defined as follows: physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of children; increase participation of children in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education; improve school attendance and performance; reduce or eliminate drop-outs; increase involvement of children in extra-curricular activities; increase awareness of the significance of children's education; active involvement of parents in children's education; added opportunities for socialisation among children.

a standardised framework so that services of all learning centres are regulated within the stipulated quality standards.

In general, a critical point in organisational management is understanding the context also from the quantitative perspective and base all strategies, policies and procedures on accurate, comprehensive and reliable data. The project identified considerable gaps in **data collection** of the learning centres and directed one of its activities at the development of a harmonised system for systematic data collection, including indicators on attainment of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. This is a crucial aspect for operation of learning centres from several perspectives – they need to understand the regional context including the upcoming demographic changes so that they are able to plan, optimise and utilise their capacity and changing demand, but perhaps even more importantly – they need to be able to measure what efforts/activities are working well and are effective, which ones are not and what the actual progress in improved learning outcomes for their pupils/students is. This forms a basis both for individual as well as institutional learning and the subsequent overall enhancement of the services delivered. The project aimed to collaborate with local experts, representatives of academia and the MESTI to develop this highly relevant and vital data collection system.

The close co-operation with the MESTI is critical here and based on the interview with its representative, the MESTI is aware of the gaps in the data collection system of learning centres. The project is pivotal in its role to address this and also in how its activities fit closely with the agenda of inclusion and support of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Supporting NGOs

In addition to supporting learning centres that work directly with children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the project also provided grants to NGOs to develop and implement a **mentorship programme and tutoring provision** for children in upper secondary education. This is yet another activity focused on preventing school drop-outs and assist vulnerable children in career orientation and building self-confidence. As the data in the Background chapter show, the upper secondary education is the stage where the extremely marked difference between the children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and their majority counterparts becomes most evident (31% inclusion in comparison to 88.8% total participation). This warrants specific and targeted activities directed at those in greatest need. Similarly, grants for summer schools and winter camps were planned to allow supplementary teaching support for specific subjects and competences and the high demand for these activities proves the relevance of such initiatives.

Supporting municipalities

The project also aimed its support at municipalities so that they are able to contribute to reducing barriers to access to quality education for disadvantaged pupils/students. To direct its efforts effectively, the project conducted a needs assessment analysis among the municipality members of staff to identify the basis for capacity building. It is positive that the assessment also reflected the views of civil society organisations and activists involved in education of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. As a result, the subsequently developed **training syllabus** focused on the identified needs - awareness raising activities for inclusive education and human rights, co-operation with communities and data collection. Instead of the originally intended ten municipalities, it extended its scope to all 22 municipalities where the disadvantaged communities live. Overall, 25 (14 men, 11 women) municipal officers for inclusive education and officers for communities attended the training strengthening their theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills in relation to their direct work with vulnerable target groups. The visits of pilot schools confirmed that relationships with their respective municipalities are not overly efficient and functioning (with a few exceptions) and more efforts need to be targeted towards this aspect of school operation.

Raising awareness

The mapping study conducted in the initial phase of the project confirmed that the significance of inclusive education is not widely accepted and understood, and more efforts need to be directed at raising awareness on issues related to it among various groups of stakeholders including teachers, parents, municipal officers and the whole communities. In general, awareness raising activities on topics related to wider public phenomena (such as social inclusion, discrimination etc.) tend to be more effective if targeted not only at individual stakeholders but when they are underpinned by a systematic comprehensive strategy. The project included a **high-level conference** to provide a broad platform for discussion on this topic. The high relevance of such an activity is indisputable and the need to continue informing all types of stakeholders on the notion and significance of inclusive education and to provide guide on practical steps that individuals are able to undertake within their specific remit is an effort well-directed.

To assist the desired effect of raising awareness about inclusive education and its practices among all types of stakeholders, information activities were also aimed at the institutional level through pilot schools involved in the project, their members of staff, pupils, students but also parents and the local community. Indeed, as the mapping study identified information gaps among all types of actors, the project activities are truly wide-ranging and holistic – from school-organised Diversity Days and posts on social media, to community information meetings, events organised by CSOs and TV video spots.

4.1.2 Final beneficiaries - children with SEN (specific objective 2)

Supporting schools

In relation to the specific objective 2 and children with SEN, the majority of project activities was concentrated on **capacity building and increasing professional competences and skills** of a variety of stakeholders working with this target group. Within schools, critical focus was aimed at pilot schools to develop and implement a model of a democratic and inclusive school culture by providing individualised approach to children with various learning abilities and needs.

The demand from schools was high and within the first round, 50 applications were received with 25 of them being successful. Despite efforts to include a Serbian school, it withdrew following the decision of the management. The selection process required the schools to provide details on their specific context including the commitment from the school management to take an active part in project activities.

The reasons for applying varied among the interviewed schools although the majority of them cited the high number of students from vulnerable communities, the increasing number of children with SEN, the need for teachers to learn how to work with them as well as the overall desire to understand the concept of democratic and inclusive school ethos.

Training programmes were aimed at teachers from mainstream schools from the primary and secondary level on topics including the management of inclusive classrooms, child-centred pedagogy, differentiated instruction, and Individual Education Plans. The interviews with teachers from pilot schools identified a critical need for further professional development of teachers, particularly in areas of working with SEN children as their pre-service training (Bachelor's studies) do not prepare them for it sufficiently. While there is a Master's degree in Inclusive Education, this is not a standard qualification the prospective teachers undertake.

Inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream schools requires an additional support in the classroom which may be delivered by **teaching assistants**. They were included in capacity building activities of the project and the high relevance of this action is evident as it directly assists

the national commitment¹⁷ to build and further expand the pool of trained assistants for working with children with SEN in mainstream schools to enable the inclusive efforts in education.

Supporting resource centres

In relation to children with SEN, the **knowledge and professional experience of employees in resource centres** is critical. The resource centres are specifically for children with severe and multiple impairments while also offering assistance to mainstream schools in teaching pupils/students with SEN. There are currently six resource centres in Kosovo and their operation is regulated by the Law on Pre-University Education and Administrative Instruction 23/2013.¹⁸ The project reflected the lack of capacity at central level to provide training to these professionals to ensure that frontline employees can provide their services effectively.¹⁹ The demand and interest in the trainings provided by the project was high as confirmed by the interviewed resource centres. They all welcomed the opportunity to develop their professional knowledge further as there are not many specific trainings available on working with children with various types of impairments. Based on the interviews, the pre-service training does not provide them with a sufficient practical knowledge, examples and activities they may apply in practice.

Supporting municipalities

Within assessment teams in municipalities, the project built on the methodology and instruments already developed for pedagogical assessment of children with SEN. Linking to previous achievements is positive and the project aimed to train the municipality members of staff on their practical application and implementation, including the main concepts and structure of education of students with SEN, functioning of resource centres, guidelines for planning and reporting of the work of mobile teachers, Individual Education Plans and teaching in the fields of activities.

Supporting the MESTI

To provide effective support to children with SEN, a comprehensive assessment framework needs to be in place to allow the key actors involved to make informed and professional decisions regarding the children's needs and the targeted assistance that is required. The project aimed to co-operate closely with the MESTI and develop **tools and materials for assessment of children with SEN**, particularly for the upper secondary education level. The relevance of such an action is directly reflected in the co-operation partner, the MESTI, that subsequently endorses the developed process, any related policy documents and their implementation.

Generally, the relevance of the project is high as it helps the MESTI overcome the challenges it faces in lacking the systematic capacity building for education professionals both pre-service while they are preparing for their qualification as well as during their practice by offering professional development opportunities at the national level. Based on the interview with its representative, the MESTI is fully aware of the gaps in securing the required number of teaching assistants in mainstream schools as well as in equipping the schools and resource centres with much needed technology that facilitates the process of teaching and learning of children with SEN and enables to achieve better outcomes for them. The project steps in not only with the necessary training provision but also with driving the agenda of inclusion forward and bringing various stakeholders and actors together.

Raising awareness

Similarly to the final target group of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, awareness raising activities in relation to children with SEN and their inclusion in the education system were targeted to multiple audiences – including the parents of these children but also wider communities and the general public. The relevance of this approach is corroborated by the findings of the initial mapping study which emphasised the need for multi-targeted and diverse

¹⁷ As stated in the Education Strategy 2022-2026.

¹⁸ UNICEF. 2017. *Situation Analysis of Children with Disabilities in Kosovo*.

¹⁹ CoE. 2018. *Description of the Action: Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education - INCLUDE*.

methods as the most effective. The result of these activities is discussed in the Effectiveness chapter.

The relevance of the supported action is high as described in detail per individual specific objectives. For the target group of **children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities** (specific objective 1), the project focused its key efforts on **capacity building of pilot schools** by supporting the model of a democratic and inclusive school culture and **learning centres** which currently lack a standardised framework of activities, reporting and data collection. It has also provided **support to municipalities** where the vulnerable communities live by targeted training on inclusive practice for municipal officers for inclusive education and communities.

It is positive that the project has **utilised the extensive experience and contacts of NGOs** that work directly in the regions and display an extremely proactive and committed approach to supporting local children and their families in increasing their school attendance, improving their school attainment and from the long-term perspective, in contributing to realising their full potential despite the challenges and inequalities they face. All these activities were supported by **numerous awareness raising activities** on the school, municipal but also national level to promote and celebrate diversity, equality and social cohesion.

For the target group of **children with SEN** (specific objective 2), the project adopted a similarly holistic approach in **supporting pilot schools** in their inclusive efforts and integrating students with disabilities and providing **capacity building activities for resource centres** which currently lack systematic professional development. The project did not exclude **municipalities** as a crucial link between the schools and resource centres. Including various campaigns, events and a study visit to explore inclusive approaches abroad again confirm a **comprehensive understanding of the agenda**.

The relevance of the project and its actions is further corroborated by the key partner – **the MESTI** – which played an essential role in the project design and implementation, and plans to act on its key policy outputs, particularly in relation to the SEN agenda within the upper secondary education level.

4.2 Coherence

The CoE has extensive experience in the area of education, more specifically education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. Within numerous programmes, it has developed various frameworks, materials and tools for policy-makers as well as for practitioners. The intention to build on the results and successes already achieved is evident in the project design as one of the first activities was to conduct research into achievements and lessons learnt from previous initiatives focused on inclusive education.

The mapping study has analysed a number of projects to examine their scope of application, geographical coverage, levels of education addressed and the duration of these activities. The rationale behind the study was not only to map the existing (both past and present) projects and their successes but also to explore potential barriers in their implementation and consider how the sustainability of their achievements could be increased. By identifying the missing gaps in the landscape of educational projects, the project set out to inform its own implementation and actions. Further details about the mapping study can be found in the Relevance chapter.

This outward facing approach is also evident in the number of active partnerships and collaborations the project has established and maintained since its start in 2020. As the main beneficiary, **the MESTI** plays a crucial part in the project implementation and from the sustainability perspective, it is essential in ensuring that the project outputs complement the objectives of strategic frameworks (e.g. the Education Strategy 2022-2026). Representatives of the MESTI are also members of the project Steering Committee.

To ensure that all target groups are represented adequately, the project Steering Committee is comprised of their representatives to ensure their viewpoints are expressed and voiced, for example:

- Down Syndrome Kosovo - advocating for the rights and respect for these rights, for raising the quality of life and inclusion in society for individuals with the Down syndrome;
- Kosovar Disability Forum – aiming to address and advocate for issues of national importance affecting the lives of persons with disabilities;
- Kosovar Association of the Deaf - raising awareness of the needs of deaf people in society and trying to ensure that members of the deaf community have equal opportunities;
- Nevo Koncepti – campaigning for the protection of human rights with an emphasis on the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities through the promotion and influence on the development of public policies in favour of vulnerable groups of society.

In addition to stakeholders from pilot schools, resource centres, learning centres, and municipalities, the project has active co-operation with various **NGOs** working directly with the target groups of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as well as children with SEN building on their specific expertise in teacher training and policy support. It has also relied on and utilised their training materials and concepts as outlined in more detail in the Effectiveness chapter.

The project has also created synergies with the work and initiatives of the following organisations:

- **Save the Children** – developed instruments for pedagogical assessment of children with SEN. Within the project and based on these instruments, a module for assessment of children with SEN was developed.
- **UNICEF** – developed a training programme for teachers focused on inclusive education. The project has adapted this programme with the addition of the ICF for SEN and the Individual Education Plans which has now been accredited by the MESTI and used as part of the project capacity building activities.

Synergies with the project Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in the Target Municipalities were created and UNICEF supported creation of resource rooms for inclusive education in seven pilot schools recommended by the INCLUDE project.

- **Kosovar Association of the Deaf** – together with the resource centre Mother Theresa in Prizren, the cooperation focused on obtaining the accreditation of the sign language course and building capacity of educators working with students with hearing impairments.
- **Promotion of Diversity and Equality of the Horizontal Facility for Western Balkan and Türkiye** – within the campaign Bloc the Hatred. Share the Love, a joint activity was organised in five pilot schools in Pristina, Prizren and Ferizaj/Uroševac in which 90 students were involved in workshops to recognise and prevent bullying, cyberbullying and hate speech.

The project has utilised effective relationships from previous collaborations, for instance the Supporting Access to Education and Intercultural Understanding (a joint EU/CoE project) and Fostering a Democratic School Culture and Diversity in Schools (within the EU/CoE Horizontal Facility I.) which provided a solid basis for implementation of activities through work with pilot schools and the INCLUDE project has used the same model of diverse school teams for a whole school approach.

A practical example of an outward facing approach and reflecting pressing needs is presented in the training on the use of online platforms for teaching children with SEN for teachers of resource centres. This was a result of an unexpected situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and following a request from the MESTI, the project delivered the training to 178 teachers from resource centres and mainstream schools, including mobile teachers and teaching assistants. In this relation, please see recommendation 9.

The coherence of the project and its approach is high. It is determined by the outward facing approach the project has adopted since its start which is reflected twofold – in its **diverse partnerships and co-operation** with various stakeholders representing the needs and viewpoints of final beneficiaries, also formally established and maintained through the project Steering Committee, and also in its **links to other initiatives and their achievements** thoroughly explored in the initial phases of the project implementation.

The MESTI as the key partner of the initiative ensures the alignment with key strategic documents and policy papers. Additionally, synergies with other organisations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Kosovar Association of the Deaf have been maintained which had a positive impact on the project effectiveness and achieved results.

4.3 Effectiveness

4.3.1 Final beneficiaries - children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (specific objective 1)

Supporting schools

The training on **Democratic and Inclusive Learning Community** that was offered to schools as the essential part of the project comprised four training seminars followed by monitoring visits in schools after each of them. The school visits were undertaken by assigned mentors to ensure continuous contact, support and monitoring of follow-up activities and assignments.

The interviewed school representatives were unanimously extremely satisfied with the training sessions and similar sentiment is reflected in the online survey results²⁰ conducted among all 49 pilot schools involved. The overall satisfaction with the organisation as well as the content of the training is presented in the table below.

Table 2: Responses to the following question: Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspect of the training.

Aspects of the training Democratic and Inclusive Learning Community (N=104)	Very good	Good	Weak	Very weak	I do not know
The overall quality of the training programme	74	30	0	0	0
Thematic areas covered within the training in relation to my needs	60	43	1	0	0
Duration and timetable of the training	44	55	3	1	1
The quality of learning materials, tools and resources	60	43	0	1	0
The quality of training lectures	72	31	0	0	1
The level of self-study/assignments required	60	43	0	1	0
Improvement of my <u>theoretical knowledge</u> in relation to supporting democratic and inclusive learning community	70	32	2	0	0
Improvement of my <u>practical skills and abilities</u> to support democratic and inclusive learning community	74	29	1	0	0

The encouraging feedback is followed by promising lasting effects as 85% (N=99) of respondents believed the training had a positive impact on their work with students at their school. From the follow-up activities organised between the training sessions, the most popular included:

- lectures, workshops and discussions on the topics related to a democratic and inclusive learning community, such as bullying – 62% (N=72);
- awareness raising activities including campaigns, posters – 61% (N=71);
- surveys on the related topics – 31% (N=36).

Some of the schools conducted additional activities such as a march in the city square against bullying, cleaning the school premises and planting trees and flowers, recreational and sports activities for students, teachers and parents or a thematically focused meeting of the Council of Teachers in the municipality. More than 80% of respondents stated these activities had a positive effect on their school (81% N=94). Overall, **487 (119 men, 368 women) education professionals** such as headteachers, deputy headteachers, teachers from pre-primary to upper

²⁰ Overall, the online survey was completed by 116 respondents (26 men, 88 women, 2 respondents have selected the answer other).

secondary level, psychologists, pedagogues and representatives of parents' councils completed this training. In this relation, please see recommendations 1, 2 and 3.

Although the project aimed to work with 50 pilot schools, its effectiveness in this relation has not been affected by the final number of **49 pilot schools**. The remaining school was successful in the selection process and did not lack enthusiasm nor commitment to participate in project activities; however, it was a Serbian school that decided to withdraw from the initiative. The timing of the decision did not allow to engage a suitable substitution.

Supporting learning centres

The support provided to learning centres through the project comprised professional training offered to their staff whereby the MESTI took an active role in contacting them individually and gauging an interest directly from them. There were two different trainings offered:

- **Step by Step Methodology** – a four-day training on teaching methodologies for learning centres organised for two groups of participants in Pristina and Prizren; **54 (15 men, 39 women) tutors and facilitators** from learning centres attended;
- **Education for Social Justice** – a three-day training on teaching children from different backgrounds; **62 (17 men, 45 women) managers, tutors and facilitators** from learning centres completed this training.

Both trainings were held in person and the project management team collected positive feedback from them. There were two additional training activities planned, namely Prevention of School Drop-Out and Management and Leadership which were not delivered as they were not accredited by the MESTI. In this relation, please see recommendations 1, 2 and 3.

The guiding framework for learning centres so that their services are standardised and regulated has not been finalised yet. The project team adopted a participatory approach in this activity and held an interactive workshop with approx. 30 representatives from learning centres to understand their expectations. The final draft will be presented to them on 1 December 2023 and their feedback will be collated. The proposed framework sets out to offer guidance on overarching principles of the learning centres' operation while giving enough flexibility to plan their specific activities according to their individual context, needs and interests.

As mentioned in the Relevance chapter, the critical point in understanding the operation as well as achievements of learning centres is culminated in the data collection system which should provide a thorough and informative overview of their capacities and demand. It has a direct link to the management of their personnel resources as well as the progress achieved through a systematic tracking of their activities such as the number of children attending and participating, including details about their grades, background and so on. The implementation of the newly created data collection system has not been completed yet due to technical constrictions within the MESTI data system. To avoid duplicities, a separate database will need to be created; this work is scheduled to start in January 2024 (outside the current project's scope).

Supporting NGOs

The project awarded several grants to NGOs working directly with children and young people from vulnerable communities. In terms of final beneficiaries, it should be noted that their activities are particularly critical for young people as they do not attend activities offered by learning centres beyond the grade 9 and otherwise would not be able to access targeted support. The activities focused on providing mentoring and tutoring sessions to upper secondary students and overall, **more than 600 (300 boys, 309 girls) children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in 22 municipalities benefited from the mentoring programme** and **more than 100 (45 boys, 56 girls) students from five municipalities benefited from the tutoring programme**.

One of the NGOs, **Roma Versitas Kosovo**, received two grants – one for mentoring sessions, the other for tutoring sessions and given its experience and expertise, the organisation based these

activities on an existing Roma Education Fund mentoring programme. The mentoring part was implemented in ten locations²¹ and the organisation proactively engaged with secondary schools in these areas to ensure support from school headteachers but also from municipality officials. The signed memoranda of understanding with municipalities facilitated the implementation of the sessions (for instance in cases of a headteacher change). It is positive that the organisation managed to secure a high number of mentors (a group of 40 mentors) to which training was delivered in two groups. A structural challenge in North Mitrovica (under the Serbian authority) was successfully overcome by collaboration with a local community centre. The initial plans were exceeded – overall, a total of 2,330 mentoring hours were delivered to 304 students as opposed to the target of 2,000 hours and 300 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian upper secondary students. A particularly noteworthy achievement is the bigger ratio of girls compared to boys – out of 304 students, 168 comprised female mentees (55%).

The success achieved may be attributed to the extensive experience and proactive approach of the organisation – its understanding and a previously conducted assessment of various localities enabled it to actively minimise potential difficulties by targeting its efforts and organising numerous meetings with relevant partners such as schools and municipalities.

The content of mentoring sessions focused on building self-confidence, preventing school drop-out and providing support with career orientation including CV and motivation letter writing, job interview preparation and further self-esteem modules. While the impact of such activities is difficult to measure in short-term as they affect individual's views on education, commitment and resilience, there exist indications that the efforts were well-directed – out of 304 mentees, only two drop-outs were identified (with one of them migrating to the EU) and no students repeated their grade.

The tutoring element was implemented in five locations²² and the outreach process was similarly proactive as with mentoring. After numerous meetings with secondary schools and municipal education directorates, the needs of the students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities were assessed, and recruitment of teachers and pedagogues was initiated. Overall, a pool of 43 tutors delivered 1,495 tutoring hours to more than 100 students. The positive impact is evident in their improvement of grades (especially in Maths and Albanian) as well as feedback from their regular teachers and academic staff.

Another NGO that based its mentoring activities on the Roma Education Fund mentoring programme is the **Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians** that directs its efforts not only in relation to socioeconomic aspect of the vulnerable communities but also to anti-discrimination through sensitising the local public and working at the policy level at the same time. Its key areas therefore include not only education but also housing, employment, youth, and women empowerment. In this wider sense, the organisation sees the role of a mentor encompassing not only a teacher's perspective but also one of a social worker and a psychologist.

On the whole, the organisation's pool of 67 mentors provided sessions to 305 students working with them in small groups of 3-4 students and also individually. Based on the feedback from students as well as their teachers, the positive impact was reflected in students' improved grades and no drop-out within the group of 305 students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Additionally, socialisation of many of these students increased and while they previously tended to be withdrawn during the sessions, their interaction and involvement positively changed. While this organisation does not see the mentor's belonging to a vulnerable community as a necessity, building of trust is critical here. As they source their mentors from teachers within regular schools, their application for the position of a mentor clearly indicates their interest and commitment to support vulnerable students and their attainment – both individual and educational.

²¹ Prizren, Gjakova, Deacn, Malisheva, Istogu, Kamenica, Gjilani, North Mitrovica, Gracanica and Pristina

²² Peja, Gracanica, Gjakova, Prizren and Obilic

The activities targeted to upper secondary students link well with the initiatives and efforts of the MESTI who have been in the last two years actively promoting and awarding scholarships for students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities to increase their chance to continue in their education in higher levels.

In addition to mentoring and tutoring provision for children from vulnerable communities, the project supported NGOs in other activities for this target group such as summer and winter camps. **Bethany Christian Services** is one of such organisations running three learning centres and campaigning for school enrolment of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian backgrounds. Taking a proactive approach and visiting local families to discuss the importance of education and on-time registration in schools has been bringing positive results. Its learning centres provide additional educational services to improve children's performance at school by targeting and supporting learning difficulties, low schooling motivation, drop-outs but also problematic economic and social situation in their families.

Within the visited learning centre in Gjakova, the staff work with children on a regular basis, providing necessary educational support with homework and exercises in basic subjects. The director together with his staff see an important role in arts and crafts, allowing children to practice their fine motor skills, apply their fantasy in painting, drawing, colouring, have opportunities to design and create various types of decorations, tools and handicrafts while learning the principles of recycling and environment protection. The benefits of art on the physical and mental development of children have been proved in countless areas such as self-expression (fantasy, creativity), sensory development (different textures, colour combinations), problem solving skills (linking ideas, materials, colours in an intentional way), decision making skills (expressing feelings on paper, independence in the creation process), language and communication skills (doodling and scribbling being essential for developing writing and language skills later in life) or socialising (creating art can be highly interactive, forging connections with others). The representatives of the Bethany Christian Services are highly mindful of this holistic approach to working with children while also carefully considering their background, understanding the challenges of the local community and looking for solutions suitable for their specific circumstances and conditions. The summer and winter camp activities are designed participatively, building on their experience while reflecting new challenges. At the same time, the management applies a structured and comprehensive approach to the organisation of the camps including a regular training of trainers and facilitators, established processes for child protection and clearly defined benefits of all individual activities children participate in. During 2022, 126 children attended the summer camp and 147 children participated in the winter camp. It is encouraging to see that through fun and attractive activities children are able to learn new things about life as well as themselves, develop their physical and emotional skills through new experiences and challenges and above all, benefit from integration and inclusive practices.

Supporting municipalities

As mentioned in the Relevance chapter, the capacity building for municipal officers was based on a needs assessment analysis taking into account the experience and knowledge of civil society organisations and activists working with members of vulnerable communities. The training comprised three modules two of which were delivered by international experts – Human and Minority Rights and Inclusive Education while the last one given its content was delivered by two local experts – Policy and Legal Framework for Inclusive Education. Overall, **25 (14 men, 11 women) municipal officers from 22 municipalities completed this training.** Based on the feedback provided to the project management team, the areas explored were considered helpful and required for professional development and work of municipal officers. While the evaluators did not interview representatives from municipalities to further assess the relevance and effectiveness of these sessions, their involvement in this initiative is regarded highly relevant and important given the role municipalities play in schools' operation and ultimately, their success in terms of positive outcomes for their children and students. In this relation, please see recommendations 5 and 6.

Raising awareness

The project conducted numerous raising awareness activities at both local and national level. For instance, in 2022, the **Diversity Day** on 26 April was marked by various activities with the MESTI, pilot schools and resource centres. An exhibition of artwork by students with disabilities attending resource centres was hosted by the Minister of Education following by a round table at the MESTI emphasising the relevance and commitment of the ministry to support students with SEN. The event also promoted a significant policy document developed within the project for the inclusion of students with SEN in upper secondary education level. In 2023, the MESTI declared the whole month of April as the Diversity Month and related awareness raising activities were organised in municipalities, all 49 pilot schools and six resource centres. Additionally, a round table discussion at the MESTI was held as well.

At the local level, pilot schools organised their own activities celebrating the Diversity Day and highlighting the importance of education for every child irrespective of their background or impairments. A plethora of events were also organised as part of the pilot schools' assignments between the training sessions to apply the new skills in practice. For example, many of them conducted surveys among students on bullying trying to gauge their understanding of this agenda, its signs, dangers and consequences. Based on the interviews, many schools realised the level of bullying at their school is higher than anticipated with the general knowledge of this phenomenon being lower than expected.

In many cases, students were able to lead their own initiatives with teachers providing necessary support only and their creativity proved exceptional – for instance in making an emotionally powerful video about the consequences of bullying, designing a project for an inclusive garden within the school empty and unused grounds, or drawing an expressive portrait showing emotions a young, bullied girl might feel and struggle with. Some schools grasped the concept of inclusion in their own way and focused on certain notions within it, for example on well-being of their students and created a whole framework of school-wide policies and procedures emphasising the importance of students' emotional state, providing them with necessary support and even creating structures they can access for reporting bullying, discussing difficulties and challenges in confidence and so on. In all discussed cases, students responded well to these initiatives as they triggered their natural curiosity. They were ready to participate in new and exciting activities which provided them with opportunities to lean on their creativity and socialising, communication and leadership skills. They seemed willing to show empathy and understanding and teachers in many cases confirmed these activities have improved their mutual relationships.

The most prominent activity was the **high-scale conference on inclusive education** bringing together representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, the MESTI, municipalities, headteachers, teachers, CSOs, embassies and international donors to discuss and strengthen inclusive and democratic education policies and practice. The conference was opened by the Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, by emphasising the focus of authorities to create a fair society with schools offering equal opportunities for all students so that they are able to realise their full potential. However, the keynote speech did not present a general statement about the importance of education and the state's role in it; it was very clear and specific in outlining the key government initiatives, an increase of over 26% in education budget, expanding teaching in the Roma language in four municipalities, scholarships for upper secondary students from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, mentoring and tutoring opportunities for them and even proclaiming the year 2022 as a year of persons with disabilities. Not only the presence of the Prime Minister but particularly such a tailored and highly reflective speech on where the opportunities in providing inclusive education for all lie reflects and confirms the high relevance and success of the project. The detailed overview of key activities and achievements of the project even further corroborates the close cooperation and affinity of the project to the national stakeholders.

4.3.2 Final beneficiaries - children with SEN (specific objective 2)

Supporting schools

In addition to the training on Democratic and Inclusive Learning Community, a ten-day training on **Inclusive Education** was offered to representatives of 47 pilot schools to strengthen their skills in assessing students with SEN based on the ICF and designing and implementing Individual Education Plans.

The interviewed school representatives were extremely satisfied with the training sessions which is also reflected in the results of the online survey (see the table below).

Table 3: Responses to the following question: Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspect of the training.

Aspects of the training Inclusive Education (N=109)	Very good	Good	Weak	Very weak	I do not know
The overall quality of the training programme	78	30	1	0	0
Thematic areas covered within the training in relation to my needs	64	43	2	0	0
Duration and timetable of the training	51	55	2	1	0
The quality of learning materials, tools and resources	59	46	4	0	0
The quality of training lectures	78	29	1	0	1
The level of self-study/assignments required	66	41	1	1	0
Improvement of my <u>theoretical knowledge</u> in inclusive education	70	37	2	0	0
Improvement of my <u>practical skills and abilities</u> in relation to inclusive education	72	35	2	0	0

The impact of the training sessions is similarly positive – nearly 90% of respondents (N=104) felt the training had a positive impact on their skills in providing better support to students with SEN and 85% of respondents (N=99) confirmed their skills in designing and implementing Individual Education Plans have improved. In addition, all respondents (N=115) with the exception of one think it is important to support inclusive education to ensure better outcomes for children irrespective of their background and/or disability. Overall, **464 (132 men, 332 women) education professionals** such as headteachers, deputy headteachers, teachers from pre-primary to upper secondary level, psychologists and pedagogues from 47 pilot schools completed this training programme. In this relation, please see recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 10.

Supporting resource centres

The capacity building activities delivered through the project filled a critical gap in providing professional development opportunities to staff of resource centres. Two training modules were offered:

- **Inclusive Education and Disability** – completed by **89 (16 men, 73 women) professionals** from six resource centres; 23 (7 men, 16 women) of them participated in the Train the Trainer activity for this module and present potential for further dissemination and training of this professional knowledge;
- **Enabling Learning for All** – completed by **92 (16 men, 76 women) professionals** from six resource centres.

The training content, based on the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) instrument, was developed within the project and approved by the MESTI during the first year of the project

implementation. The interviewed resource centres' staff appreciated the close link between the ICF and the curriculum and the practical orientation of the training based on theoretical knowledge. It clearly highlighted which areas of functioning are affected by certain disabilities and provided practical examples and tasks how to apply this knowledge in practice. The interviewed staff confirmed they were able to apply many of the techniques presented in their specific context with their students; methods for monitoring students' achievements were also regarded helpful and sufficiently practical. In this relation, please see recommendations 1 and 2.

The training sessions also included a specific topic for music teachers of resource centres working with severely disabled children in form of a **Music Therapy** module which was delivered through a two-day workshop in Pristina. While this was not originally planned, the topic was driven by the interest from education professionals which indicates flexible and constructive approach in the project implementation. The interviewed representatives were satisfied with the content of this module and appreciated the practical ways how to establish contact with students with various disabilities and stimulate them through music and musical instruments. It is regarded as an important element of innovation as similar modules had not been delivered before.

The organisation of the training sessions including the trainers and materials were considered excellent. The group assignments gave them a chance to collaborate with colleagues from other resource centres which they regarded as particularly helpful. The interviewed staff felt their existing relationships have become stronger and they have also managed to create new ones with staff from other resource centres. Overall, the networking element was considered extremely positive in facilitating the exchange of ideas and experience. The opportunity for all staff members from one resource centre to participate in the training was positive as previously, only selected groups were able to participate.

The need to provide professional development activities for professionals from resource centre is critical given the Bachelor's degree in Special Pedagogy is no longer open and closed in 2005. The interviewed staff would welcome continuous support as well as advanced professional development in these specific areas to expand their knowledge on methods of teaching; a specific area of expertise they require is related to working with children with complex and multiple disabilities and teaching methods for working with various impairments in one classroom. In this relation, please see recommendation 4. An element that is hindering the full application of the gained knowledge is the lack of technology the resource centres possess even though it is crucial to support the development of children with SEN (e.g. visual technology for children with hearing impairments, sensory rooms, sensory eye-FX, TD snap etc.).

In addition to the sessions above, a training module for 25 (10 men, 15 women) professionals working with children with hearing impairments in the Mother Theresa resource centre in Prizren was developed as well as teaching methodologies for deaf students. The module was accredited by the MESTI which confirms its relevance and sustainability as it indicates its use in the future.

Supporting municipalities

Overall, **29 (15 men, 14 women) education inspectors within municipalities** completed the training on **Inclusive Education** and supervision of its implementation in schools. The feedback was positive as they appreciated the details about functioning of resource centres, their working with the mobile teachers, monitoring of the implementation of Individual Education Plans as well as the concept of teaching in the fields of activities which resource centres typically use in working with children with severe disabilities. In this relation, please see recommendations 5 and 6.

Based on the interviews, the provision of supporting municipalities in their understanding of the operation of schools and resource centres seems critical as their assessment teams play an important role, including for children with minor disabilities which need to be taken into account in their education. Some of the interviewed schools were not satisfied with the level of co-operation and acknowledging their requests for assessments of their students. From the teachers' perspective, it is important for them to be aware of the nature of a student's disability so that they can plan their classes effectively. In this process; however, they have to rely on the municipal

assessment teams which in their view do not respond promptly enough. The process is further complicated by the resistance of some parents to an Individual Education Plan for their child as they do not feel comfortable with this perceived label. As the ultimate decision regarding the Individual Education Plan rests with the child's parents, more emphasis should be directed to their understanding of its benefits and advantages for the teaching and learning process of a child with SEN.

Supporting the MESTI

The project supported the MESTI in conducting a **Study on the Level of Academic Achievements of Students with Hearing Impairment in the Resource Centre Mother Theresa in Prizren**. The developed study met the objectives and scope described in the concept note as requested by the Office for Good Governance within the Prime Minister's office and was approved by the MESTI in 2023. Its key aim was to obtain data on access to languages, language learning and literacy levels among the students with hearing impairments from the above-mentioned resource centre. The preliminary results of unsatisfactory levels of reading achievements were confirmed and recommendations for various stakeholders were provided as part of the study. The strength of the study is presented in its comprehensive qualitative approach using different data collection methods while cooperating with the Kosovo Association of the Deaf. The root cause of students' unsatisfactory reading skills which have a long-term negative impact on their academic achievements lies within the teachers' lack of sign language and pedagogical skills, lack of materials used in teaching, lack of usage of sign language interpreters, and lack of sign language as a subject for students with hearing impairments. The results of this study will be used by the MESTI to guide the improvement of education of students with hearing impairments in the future.

The project also developed a **Framework for Including Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Upper Secondary Schools**. This policy document was introduced to 39 VET school headteachers during a two-day workshop in Pristina to guide them through the introduction of students with disabilities in the secondary level and to clearly describe responsibilities of all relevant actors. The framework provides information on the current situation of students in this age group and specifies the key challenges in this relation such as poor and unsuitable infrastructure in schools, teachers not being trained on working effectively with SEN students, lacking support services, and lacking adapted learning materials. The framework stipulates roles and responsibilities of different actors in supporting these students and available support systems at national, municipal and school levels.

In addition, a significant project output is presented in the revision of the **Curriculum for Teaching in the Fields of Activities for Resource Centres** which is now compulsory for their operation. This was undertaken through a series of participatory workshops with a ministerial working group and utilising the expertise of the CoE.

Raising awareness

Raising awareness activities were not particularly differentiated between those focused on inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students and those focused on children with SEN. They encompassed promoting and celebration of diversity in its widest sense and in addition to events described in the specific objective 1, the project organised **a study visit to Germany and Luxembourg** for 11 education policy-makers and professionals. During five days in October 2023, they were able to explore the respective models of inclusive education and get inspiration and ideas to apply in their own schools and resource centres. All phases of teacher training were considered from the university education through 18-months' long teaching practice to continuous professional development with highly relevant topics such as differentiated methods of teaching, teachers' self-awareness and attitudes towards inclusion. In addition, discussions with policy-makers enabled them to consider how to connect inclusive policies with practice.

The interviewed representatives from schools and resource centres viewed this study visit as extremely inspirational and motivational and would appreciate similar opportunities for all their members of staff. The interviewed professionals had been familiar with inclusive practices

abroad; however, visiting inclusive classes and observing various teaching techniques applied in practice is in their view much more effective. The fact that the schools visited did not have state-of-the-art modern and inclusive infrastructure was encouraging as the educators could see that impressive results for students with SEN are not reliant on it. In this relation, please see recommendation 8.

A holistic approach of the project to support educational attainment of children is reflected in its aim to **engage in a dialogue with parents**. In November and December 2023, 12 workshops were held across seven municipalities²³ with 180 representatives of Parents' Councils and parents from the majority as well as parents of students with SEN and those belonging to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities attending the sessions on the topics of inclusion, non-discrimination and their role in supporting their children in education. The parents formulated concrete steps for actions to be taken by them within schools in order to improve the provision of quality inclusive education. The outcomes of the workshops with policy recommendations will be presented to schools' management and the MESTI. In this relation, please see recommendation 7.

Additional comments

Overall, the satisfaction with the project and its activities is extremely high as proved by the interviews conducted with representatives of schools, resource centres and learning centres as well as by the online survey results. 97% of respondents (N=112) were *very satisfied/satisfied* and only four respondents selected *neutral* as their response. There were no respondents who were *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* with the project. The following points include the most appreciated aspects of the training programmes as transpired both through the online survey and the personal interviews:

- co-operation and teamwork with other schools and resource centres which created new partnerships;
- high-quality materials, presentations, lectures, activities and examples as part of the training sessions;
- high professionalism of trainers, their supportive and encouraging approach;
- sufficient space for discussions with peers as well as for self-reflection;
- follow-up activities the participants were required to implement in their schools/centres made them fully understand and appreciate the concept of inclusiveness and non-discrimination;
- socialising with their students during the activities mentioned above had a profound impact on learning more about them and be more empathetic and understanding towards them;
- knowledge about the Individual Education Plans proved helpful in their regular work.

One of the very few negatives mentioned in relation to the training programmes was its organisation over the weekends which many school representatives found tiring and not suitable. However, this is based on a regulation by the MESTI whereby no training sessions are allowed to take place during the week to avoid disruption of school classes. Similarly, some survey respondents and interviewees viewed the duration of the training sessions rather long and too intensive.

The overall effectiveness of the project and its activities is high. For the target group of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (specific objective 1), the planned activities were implemented as planned and with desired outcomes.

²³ Pristina, Peja, Gjakova, Prizren, Ferizaj, Istog and Gjilan.

Despite working with 49 pilot schools instead of originally planned 50, the **professional development sessions were successfully delivered**, and school representatives were satisfied with their content, organisation as well as the impact on their practice. The positive feedback was identified during school visits as well as through the online survey conducted among all schools involved. On the whole, 487 education professionals completed the training programme on how to build and support democratic and inclusive school climate.

The interviewed NGOs confirmed their targets in relation to **mentoring and tutoring activities as well as winter and summer camps were reached and had a positive effect on children and students involved**. The project successfully utilised the contacts and expertise of these NGOs and overall, more than 600 children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities benefitted from the mentoring programme and more than 100 from the tutoring programme.

For the final beneficiaries of children with SEN (specific objective 2), **school representatives benefitted from targeted training focused on inclusive education** (completed by 464 education professionals), including the implementation of Individual Education Plans. Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the results of the online survey suggest they are able to apply the new knowledge in practice.

The project provided **extensive support to resource centres** not only in terms of **capacity building opportunities** (attended by more than 200 participants) but also through the development of a study on the level of academic achievements of students with hearing impairment in the resource centre Mother Theresa in Prizren and the framework for including students with SEN in upper secondary schools.

The high effectiveness of project activities in both specific objectives was strengthened by numerous awareness raising activities, for instance marking the **Diversity Day**, organising a high-level **conference on inclusion** with the presence of the Prime Minister or conducting an **inspirational study visit** to Germany and Luxembourg to explore their inclusive policies and approaches in practice.

4.4 Sustainability

As outlined in the previous chapter, the effectiveness of the project and its activities is high as corroborated by interviews with representatives of schools, resource centres and learning centres as well as by the online survey conducted among all 49 pilot schools involved in the project implementation. In addition to the outcomes that were achieved as planned (for instance reflected in the number of training participants), the critical part for measuring the project's success is about the positive change that has been reached and about the likelihood of its sustaining in the future after the project implementation has ended.

The data collection confirmed the overwhelmingly positive feedback on the project and its actions from the primary target groups (i.e. representatives of schools, resource centres and learning centres); however, the real desired effects are aimed at the final beneficiaries of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and children with SEN. The intervention logic is clear - through offering professional development opportunities to primary target groups, it is expected the outcomes of students and children they directly work with will improve. In the long term, this should be translated into improved outcomes for these vulnerable groups through increasing their school attendance and improving their school attainment by providing them with individual, targeted and specialised support.

In addition to the satisfaction with the project activities, the following aspects have a critical effect on sustaining their impact:

- **strength and diversity of partnerships** – the organisation of the training sessions was conducive to strengthening of existing and establishing new partnerships as participants were required to work within groups composed from various schools/resource centres which facilitated exchange of ideas, experiences and lessons learnt. The interviews confirmed that there are not many structured opportunities for staff from schools or resource centres to meet regularly with their counterparts from different establishments and regions and the majority of them found this opportunity helpful - not only in terms of peer learning but also in terms of gaining a perspective on their own successes and challenges in comparison to others. This reflection and self-reflection element proved to be an important part of the training experience and learning. As a follow-up, some schools and resource centres organised similar networking events and visits within their own remit and plan to continue with them in the future.
- **visibility of the initiative** – for any intervention to be successful, it needs to be visible not only to those directly involved, but also to the wider audience. Awareness raising activities were an integral part of the assignments the training participants were required to undertake within their schools and while it is not necessary for students to know the extent of the training their teachers completed, it is essential for them to see its subsequent effects. The interviewed schools provided details on a plethora of activities they organised in relation to diversity and inclusion and the involvement of a large number of students (in many instances of the whole school) was typical for all of them.
- **opportunities to apply the gained knowledge and learning in practice** – following any training session, it is essential for trainees to use the new skills and knowledge directly in practice. The modular approach of the training programmes in combination with regular assignments was based on the premise that only active learning is sustainable and therefore, space for trying out and practising new techniques and methods was created and as such, participants experienced their positive effects first-hand. For many interviewees, this was pivotal, and they pinpointed the practical element in combination with the space for reflection as the key success in their learning. The concept of inclusion was not new to them; however, the practical examples of minor and often unintended excluding language and behaviour showed them how to apply the theoretical notion of

equality and non-discrimination in practice. This **critical change of mindset** transpired during all interviews and as such, **creates the essential and firm pre-requisite for sustaining the positive change in the future.**

The interviews confirmed the high sustainability from the perspectives outlined above and the survey results provide an additional source of its evidence. As stated in the table below, the pilot school representatives regard these aspects promising – 94% (N=109) *strongly agree/agree* the project has supported networking among schools, 97% (N=112) *strongly agree/agree* the project has had a positive effect on the overall ethos in their school and 99% (N=115) *strongly agree/agree* the project awareness raising activities have had a positive impact on the topic of inclusion as a whole.

Table 4: Responses to the following question: Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements in relation to the INCLUDE project.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I do not know/ not relevant
The project has supported networking among schools and their members of staff.	67	42	5	0	2
The school has strengthened existing and/or built new partnerships as a result of the project.	51	54	8	0	3
The project has had a positive effect on the overall ethos in our school.	69	43	2	0	2
The project awareness raising activities have had a positive impact on the visibility of this initiative.	57	57	2	0	0
The project awareness raising activities have had a positive impact on the topic of inclusion as a whole.	73	42	1	0	0

The online survey results show similarly positive impact on teachers’ skills and abilities and schools’ capacity to apply an inclusive approach – 96% of respondents (N=111) *strongly agree/agree* the project has had a positive effect on their teaching skills and ability to work with children with SEN, 88% of respondents (N=102) *strongly agree/agree* the project has had a positive effect on their teaching skills and ability to work with children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and 99% of respondents (N=115) *strongly agree/agree* that the project has strengthened the capacity of their school to create democratic and inclusive environment.

Table 5: Responses to the following question: Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements in relation to the INCLUDE project.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I do not know/ not relevant
The project has had a positive effect on my teaching skills and ability to work with children with special educational needs.	65	46	3	0	2
The project has had a positive effect on my teaching skills and ability to work with children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.	54	48	5	0	9
The project has enabled integration of children with special educational needs at my school.	57	51	3	1	4
The project has strengthened the capacity of my school to create democratic and inclusive environment.	73	42	1	0	0

In addition to quality teacher training and active application of inclusive and non-discriminatory approaches, the online survey respondents view the following areas as important and having a direct impact on the success of adopting inclusion in education:

- create open and tolerant climate in school so that all students feel valued, accepted and are able to benefit from the learning process fully;
- create infrastructure conditions in schools for children with disabilities and impairments;
- create comprehensive strategies and school procedures built on principles of inclusion and non-discrimination, equal and fair treatment of all children;
- use a wide selection of appropriate didactic tools, techniques and activities that facilitate the implementation of inclusiveness in practice;
- cooperation with parents and the local community;
- collaboration with relevant stakeholders including municipalities, the MESTI and NGOs.

In relation to the long-term objectives of the project, the online survey as well as the interviews confirmed that the project has contributed to creating suitable conditions to improve participation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian girls and boys and to improve participation and support services for children with SEN in pre-primary, primary and secondary education as indicated in the table below.

Table 6: Responses to the following question: Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements in relation to the INCLUDE project.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I do not know/ not relevant
The project has positively contributed to <u>increased enrolment numbers</u> of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian girls and boys at my school.	36	48	12	1	19
The project has positively contributed to <u>increased attendance</u> of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian girls and boys at my school.	31	49	14	2	20
The project has positively affected the <u>attainment and learning outcomes</u> of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian girls and boys at my school.	39	46	12	2	17
The project has strengthened inclusive education for children with special educational needs.	64	48	3	1	0
The project has strengthened inclusive education for children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.	46	47	10	1	12

A visibly restrained approach in agreeing to statements with long-term objectives that inevitably need several years to materialise is appropriate here. It indicates the respondents considered them carefully and did not let their enthusiasm from the training programmes rate the project's potential and outreach unrealistically. From the project implementation and impact perspective, their responses may be viewed as promising and very positive – approx. 70% of respondents believe the project has positively contributed to increased enrolment numbers and attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian girls and boys at their school and it has positively affected their learning outcomes and attainment. Overall, 80% of respondents (N=93) *strongly agree/agree* the project has strengthened inclusive education for children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and 97% of respondents (N=112) *strongly agree/agree* it has strengthened inclusive education for children with SEN.

Similarly, the **sustainability of other project outputs is assessed as high**. This is determined by the MESTI being the key partner of the project that was involved in its design and implementation. The project has produced many materials and documents that already are or will be applied at the national level – for instance the Framework for Including Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Upper Secondary Schools is a policy paper clearly defining binding roles and responsibilities of all relevant actors to provide access to quality education to all children irrespective of their disabilities. Similarly, the project provided critical expertise for the development of the Five-Year Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025 for the operation of resource centres. It addresses the concerns and challenges of resource centres and also sets out the strategic objectives including indicators, responsibilities, timeline and resources for the activities to be delivered by resource centres. Also, the Curriculum for Teaching in the Fields of Activities for Resource Centres which has been revised as part of the project is now mandatory for use in all resource centres and its application (and sustainability) is guaranteed by the MESTI. In addition, the MESTI has taken an initiative to organise a stakeholder workshop to discuss the recommendations and their application in the direction of related policies as a result of the conducted Study on the Level of Academic Achievements of Students with Hearing Impairment in the Resource Centre Mother Theresa in Prizren. This is an excellent example of an unplanned positive effect of the project which again emphasises its high sustainability.

On the other hand, the sustainability of the effects of training programmes is not likely to continue without further support both to the schools and centres already involved and to new ones. As mentioned previously, the current pre-service training of education professionals does not focus on inclusion and working with vulnerable children sufficiently and to the extent required and therefore, capacity building in this area will be necessary in the future. Recommendations in relation to this aspect are listed in the next section.

The overall sustainability of the project and its activities is good. The training programmes were based on a **modular approach** which created opportunities for participants to apply the new knowledge and skills directly in practice while being supported by their peers as well as allocated mentors. The organisation of the capacity building was conducive to **networking** which had a positive effect on strengthening of existing relationships as well as creating new ones. The assignments the pilot schools were required to complete were sufficiently practical and specific and proved extremely popular among the students – their outputs and products are still visible in many schools that have been visited (posters, wall decorations, slogans, exhibitions). The biggest achievement in relation to sustainability is **the change of mindset** that representatives of schools, resource centres and learning centres attribute to the training attended – being self-reflective and mindful, using tolerant and inclusive language and behaviour while challenging discriminatory attitudes and negative stereotypes.

The intervention logic of the project has proved effective - **capacity building has had a positive effect on the teaching skills** and ability of education professionals to work with children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and with children with SEN. This creates favourable **conditions for improved attendance as well as attainment** of these students in the long-term perspective.

The training sessions are not self-sustainable as schools do not have resources to organise and manage them within their current budgets and therefore, continuous support in this sense is required going forward.

5. Lessons learnt

As outlined in the previous chapters, the project demonstrates high relevance, coherence, effectiveness and sustainability and the factors listed below have contributed to the results achieved. Their application in similar projects/contexts could enhance their success. General principles of effective project development and implementation are considered essential and prerequisite and therefore are not included in the list below.

Project design

- Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children and children with special educational needs represent one of the most marginalised groups in Kosovo's society facing significant challenges in the education system. The project target groups and their needs have been identified specifically and in detail and at several levels including the individual level (providing training to members of staff working with them on a daily basis), the regional level (facilitating building/strengthening relationships between schools, learning centres and resource centres and municipalities) as well as the national level (developing systemic tools, assessment framework, policy recommendations). This **clear focus on the target groups and their specific needs combined with a multi-level approach** has proved successful and might be applicable and transferrable to other initiatives too.
- The mapping study developed as part of the project has proved useful in **identifying achievements and gaps of similar interventions, reports and studies and was utilised to its maximum extent by informing further activities of the project**. In combination with the **theoretical part of the study** exploring the concept of inclusion, integration and identity as well as related risks, **this approach is deemed effective** and could be replicated/adapted in other contexts.

Project implementation

- The selection of relevant project partners is critical in ensuring that project implementation as well as its outputs and results address and are directed to all identified target groups and wider stakeholders. In this instance, the MESTI has proved essential not only from the relevance perspective but also from the sustainability view as it plans to act on the project's policy outputs and enhances the visibility both of the project and the notion of inclusion in education. The **involvement of a respective high-level partner** is therefore recommended for other similar interventions in the future.

Capacity building activities

- In relation to any training sessions, it is essential for trainees to use the new skills and knowledge directly in practice. **The modular approach** of the project's training activities **in combination with regular assignments** was based on the premise that only **active learning is sustainable** and therefore, suitable space and opportunities for participants to practice new techniques and methods was directly built in within the project design. This approach has proved effective in participants' change of mindset with a positive impact on sustaining it in the long term and it might be therefore considered and replicated in similar capacity development activities in the future.
- Further to the point above, the **combination of local and international experts/trainers** for capacity development activities is a factor that has contributed to

the positive feedback from participants as they appreciated their understanding of the local context and specific challenges it brings as well as the access to best practice from abroad. While this is not an innovative approach, it needs to be highlighted as it has had a positive impact on the capacity development results.

6. Recommendations

As outlined in the previous chapters, the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and sustainability of the INCLUDE project and its activities are high. The undertaken interviews with a wide selection of stakeholders and the online survey among pilot schools clearly manifested **extremely positive outcomes** for primary target groups of education professionals from schools, resource centres and learning centres which **contribute to favourable conditions for increasing the inclusion in education of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and children with SEN**.

The project has contributed to **positive changes for individual school establishments** in the regions and also **proved successful at the wider local level** through its extensive research and conceptual work that will provide a basis for further policy development. The project has effectively drawn on achievements and outputs of other initiatives and its outward facing approach is another strength directly affecting its success. Given the benefits of the project evidenced in the previous chapters, **it is recommended that further funding for its continuation is allocated** so that its effects are sustained and facilitated to a wider breadth of beneficiaries.

While the project has managed to achieve impressive results, the targeted efforts to support the concept of inclusive education and child-centred approach should be continued. For that purpose, the following recommendations drawn from the implementation of the INCLUDE project might be helpful:

1. Continue supporting the pilot schools, resource centres and learning centres in their professional development building on their gained knowledge and skills in adopting an inclusive and democratic approach in teaching and learning. In addition to the training programmes they have completed, **individual mentoring support** might be suitable delivered within their institutions and advancing their inclusive efforts further by formalising them within internal school policies, development plans and procedures so that the **learning gained becomes institutionalised**. This will keep the momentum in capturing the commitment and enthusiasm of education professionals and it will also enable smooth induction process for new members of staff to ensure the concept of inclusion is adhered to in the future. In the long term, these schools might become mentors of inclusive education and disseminate their knowledge further.
2. **Continue the capacity building support** to new pilot schools, resource centres and learning centres as the INCLUDE project clearly manifested the need as well as demand in the area of professional development of education professionals, particularly in relation to working with children from vulnerable communities and children with SEN. The comprehensive training programmes with quality materials, specialised teaching methods, techniques, tools and activities have proved enormously relevant and helpful. Consider providing **tailored materials and examples of activities** as per individual school types, e.g. for music schools, VET schools etc.
3. Create **structured networking opportunities for representatives from schools** where they can formally share their experience, expertise, tried and tested activities for working with children with SEN and with children from vulnerable communities and discuss related challenges. The **peer learning/support** proved useful in the training programmes delivered and efforts should be made to sustain it. The same approach might be beneficial for resource centres.
4. For **resource centres**, consider providing **more advanced and specialised training** focused on working with children with complex and multiple disabilities. Mentoring support provided directly within the resource centres might be of benefit, too.

5. **Expand the support provided to municipalities** and their teams so that they are fully knowledgeable in the concept of inclusion and non-discrimination in education as they play a vital role in schools' operation and functioning.
6. In addition to the point above, create opportunities for **representatives of schools and resource centres to meet regularly with their respective municipal officers** and establish/strengthen effective and functioning relationships. The interviews indicated this is one of the weakest points leading to challenges in relation to the assessment of children with SEN, implementing Individual Education Plans and their subsequent monitoring. **Regular networking** might create a basis for greater mutual understanding and aligning of institutional agendas.
7. Parents play an irreplaceable role in children's development and their educational attainment and any future efforts to promote and support inclusive education should include **an active dialogue with parents** to reflect this holistic approach. It might be beneficial for schools to organise workshops and learning events in a way that students, teachers and parents explore the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination together (i.e. as opposed to *training sessions for parents* which might be perceived as patronising).
8. **The study visit** of education professionals to Germany and Luxembourg was viewed as very inspirational and the interviewed representatives of schools and resource centres indicated it might be suitable and helpful not just for the school management but **for individual teachers** as well.
9. The positions of **qualified teaching assistants to provide specialist support to teachers** in working with children with SEN in schools are necessary and an integral part of a successfully delivered notion of inclusion. **The professional training** of these positions is of vital importance so that they do not replace the classroom teacher to work with a child with SEN in isolation (and aggravating his/her segregation from the class) but so as to provide assistance to the child so that he/she can participate in the process of teaching and learning with the rest of the class.
10. Capacity building initiatives aimed at increasing integration and inclusion of children with SEN are typically combined with **infrastructure investments** so that the school environment and its full accessibility is suitable for persons with physical disabilities (mobility, sight, hearing etc.). While the full reconstruction of existing premises might not be feasible, consider supporting **minor adaptations** in terms of signage, handrails, ramps, non-slip surfaces, location of light switches, alarms etc. that might have a positive effect on this target group leading to their increased integration in mainstream schools.

6. Annexes

6.1 List of interviews

Institution name	Interview date	Number of interviewees
Schools		
Ymer Prizreni upper secondary school, Prizren	7. 11. 2023	8
Emin Duraku primary school, Prizren	7. 11. 2023	13
Nexhmedin Nixha upper secondary school, Gjakova	8. 11. 2023	1
Kadri Kusari upper secondary school, Gjakova	8. 11. 2023	14
Ismajl Luma primary school, Lipjan	9. 11. 2023	8
Vatra e Diturise primary school, Gjilan	9. 11. 2023	12
Sahit Baftiu VET school, Gjilan	9. 11. 2023	9
Faik Konica primary school, Pristina	10. 11. 2023	6
Prenek Jakova music school (primary, lower and upper secondary school), Pristina	10. 11. 2023	7
Ali Sokoli upper secondary medical school, Pristina	10. 11. 2023	9
Resource centres		
Perparimi resource centre, Pristina	6. 11. 2023	6
Lef Nosi resource centre, Prizren	7. 11. 2023	6
Mother Theresa resource centre, Prizren	7. 11. 2023	2
Learning centres		
Bethany Christian Services learning centre, Gjakova	8. 11. 2023	3
Ismajl Luma learning centre, Lipjan	9. 11. 2023	1
Other stakeholders		
Vjosa Rogova-Damoni Council of Europe	6. 11. 2023	in person
Nazan Safqi, Luljeta Beluli Kabashi The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation	6. 11. 2023	in person
Gazmend Tahiraj	13. 11. 2023	online
Judith Hollenweger Haskell	13. 11. 2023	online
Avni Mustafa Roma Versitas Kosovo	14. 11. 2023	online
Isak Skenderi Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians	15. 11. 2023	online
Lana Jurko Network of Education Policy Centres	15. 11. 2023	online
Total number of interviewees		113

6.2 Evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ Data analysis	Data sources	Evaluator(s) responsible
RELEVANCE					
1. How significant is the project for fostering quality education in Kosovo and improving access to education for children from disadvantaged groups (namely children with SEN and children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities)?	1.1 To what extent are the project objectives relevant and adequate?	Relevance of project activities in relation to defined project results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased enrolment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education ○ improved attendance and learning outcomes of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education ○ enhanced participation of children with SEN in pre-primary, primary and secondary education ○ enhanced capacity of regional resource centres to provide support services to children with SEN and support their transition to and integration in mainstream schools 	Desk research Interviews Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of the Steering Committee Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project’s grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova Helbich
	1.2 To what extent are the project actions in line with needs and priorities of the Beneficiary?	Alignment of project activities with the needs of target groups Participation of schools, learning centres and resources centres in the project Participation of institutions of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and children with SEN	Desk research Interviews <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of the Steering Committee Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project’s grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ Data analysis	Data sources	Evaluator(s) responsible
	1.3 How significant are the project activities for individual target groups?	(Self)assessment of the importance of project activities	Desk research Interviews Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	MESTI Representatives of the Steering Committee Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project’s grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova Helbich
	1.4 How far did the design of the intervention address the problems identified? Have any gaps been identified?	Alignment of project activities with the needs of target groups Strengths and weaknesses of the current project design	Desk research Interviews Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of the Steering Committee Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project’s grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova Helbich
	1.5 What was the demand from target institutions to take part in the project (schools, learning centres, resource centres)?	Participation of schools, learning centres and resource centres in the project	Desk research Interviews <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of the Steering Committee Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project’s grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ Data analysis	Data sources	Evaluator(s) responsible
COHERENCE					
2. To what extent have synergy effects with other interventions been identified?	2.1 How did the project implementation ensure complementarities with other interventions?	Evidence of complementarity with other interventions Effectiveness of awareness raising activities Strength and diversity of partnerships	Desk research Interviews <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova
	2.2 Have any synergies at national and/or local level been identified and utilised?	Evidence of synergies with other interventions Unexpected effects identified	Desk research Interviews <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova
EFFECTIVENESS					
3. To what extent has the project implementation been successful?	3.1 To what extent have the project outputs been achieved?	Level of achievement of defined project outputs	Desk research Interviews Online questionnaire	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova Helbich
	3.2 What progress has been made towards the achievement of the expected results?	Level of achievement of defined project results			
	3.3 What are the reasons for the achievement or non-achievement of the expected results?	Level of achievement of defined project results Identification of factors affecting the project implementation	<i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>		
	3.4 What internal and external factors have affected the project implementation?	Internal and external enabling and hindering factors			

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ <i>Data analysis</i>	Data sources	Evaluator(s) responsible
4. To what extent has the project been effective in helping the MESTI to strengthen quality inclusive education for children with disabilities and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children?	4.1 What impact of project activities on individual target groups has been identified?	The extent to which target groups have benefitted from the project activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ mapping study developed ○ support of pilot municipalities ○ support of pilot learning centres ○ teaching programmes upgraded ○ learning centres' activities harmonised ○ services and quality of learning centres standardised ○ conference on inclusive education ○ mentoring provision, mentorship programme developed ○ summer schools and winter camps ○ awareness raising activities ○ support of positive school climate ○ systematic data collection established 	Desk research Interviews Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova Helbich
5. To what extent has the project been effective in helping to strengthen the capacity of schools, school directors and of other stakeholders to create a democratic and inclusive school culture?	5.1 To what extent has the project contributed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased enrolment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education? ○ improved attendance and learning outcomes of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education? ○ enhanced participation of children with SEN in pre-primary, primary and secondary education? ○ enhanced capacity of regional resource centres to provide support services to children with SEN and support their 	Degree of positive impact of the project identified in the defined areas of the education system Intervention logic	Desk research Interviews Online questionnaire <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova Helbich

Evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	Measure(s)/ Indicator(s)	Data collection instruments/ Data analysis	Data sources	Evaluator(s) responsible
	transition to and integration in mainstream schools?				
	5.2 To what extent has a gender and human rights based approach been mainstreamed in the project implementation?	Identification and assessment of positive outcomes in relation to equality and non-discrimination	Desk research Interviews <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova
	5.3 What unexpected positive/negative effects of the project implementation have been identified?	Identification and assessment of unexpected effects	Desk research Interviews <i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	CoE project management team MESTI Representatives of project pilot schools Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	Ulbrikova
SUSTAINABILITY					
6. To what extent are the project outcomes and positive impact sustainable?	6.1 To what extent are the project outcomes likely to continue producing effects after the end of its funding?	(Self)assessment of the sustainability of project results and outcomes	Desk research Interviews	CoE project management team MESTI	Ulbrikova
	6.2 What are the factors that hampered the impact and sustainability of the assistance?	Identification and assessment of hindering factors	<i>Qualitative data analysis – content analysis, narrative analysis, intervention logic</i>	Representatives of project pilot schools	
	6.3 Did the project facilitate any long-term dialogue/cooperation at the institutional level?	(Self)assessment of the sustainability of project partnerships Prospects for future sustainability of partnerships		Representatives of resource centres and learning centres Recipients of project's grant schemes Local and international experts Project documentation	

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