



This project is funded by the European Union

ARISE – Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education

Policy Brief: Bosnia and Herzegovina



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, poverty is widely spread among elderly, women, youth and children. 23% of the population is on the edge of poverty, while more than half of the population is at risk of poverty.¹

Poverty is connected with vulnerable societal groups such as people with disabilities, Roma, returnees and internally displaced persons, victims of gender-based violence, people living in rural and remote areas, single-parent's families, female headed households, people with low education attainment. The poverty rate among children (31%) is significantly higher than among the general population (23%).²

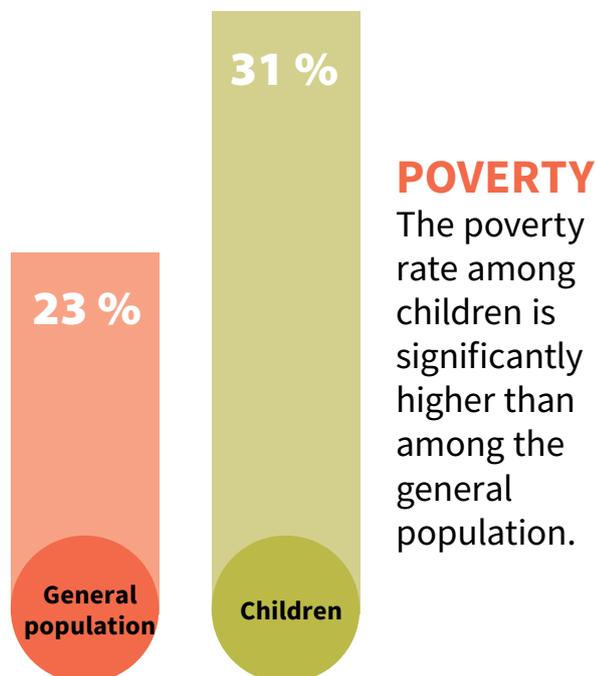


Figure 1. Child poverty rate relative to the general population

After a 2007 state-level framework law introduced mandatory pre-school education for children one year prior to the start of elementary school, pre-school enrolment, especially of older children, increased, although it remains low (Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH, 2017, p.3). Available estimates suggest that the gross enrolment ratio of children aged 3 and older in pre-primary education in BiH is only 14.9%, as opposed to 93.9% in the EU28 (Çağatay, 2017, p.2).



Figure 2. Gross ratio of pre-school enrollment of children in BiH and in the EU

1 Papić, Ž., Fetagić, M (2019), Towards the European Union-Key Social Inclusion Issues in B&H

2 Multiple Indicator Cluster survey (MICS 2011-12) data; Extended Household Budget survey, 2011; Initiative for Better and Humane Inclusion, Report on Poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina, IBHI, 2013; World Bank data; UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina, Report on the Situation of Roma Children and Families in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013



Also, a significant disparity between students from poorer and richer households in a term of continuing the education is present. 43% from the first and 23% from the second group of students do not continue with secondary education. This gap yet is more pronounced in higher education, where only 9.3% of students from poor families attend faculty, while the percentage of students from wealthy families is three times higher (27.3%). Due to the low degree education, poverty persists from generation to generation.³

The 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report showed that 15-year old students in BiH are, on average, about three school years behind their peers in OECD countries. Socio-economic status explains 7% of the variance in reading performance in Bosnia and Herzegovina (OECD average: 12%). The average difference between advantaged and disadvantaged students in reading is 58 points, compared to an average of 89 in OECD countries. However, 13% of disadvantaged students are academically resilient (OECD average: 11%).⁴

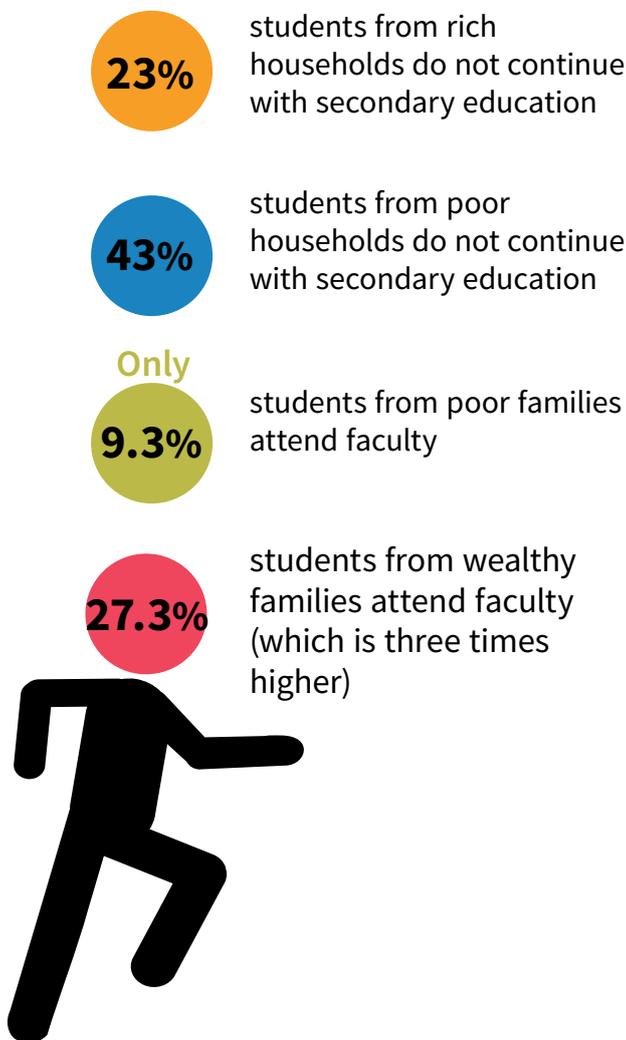


Figure 3. Disparity between students from poorer and richer households in a term of continuing the education

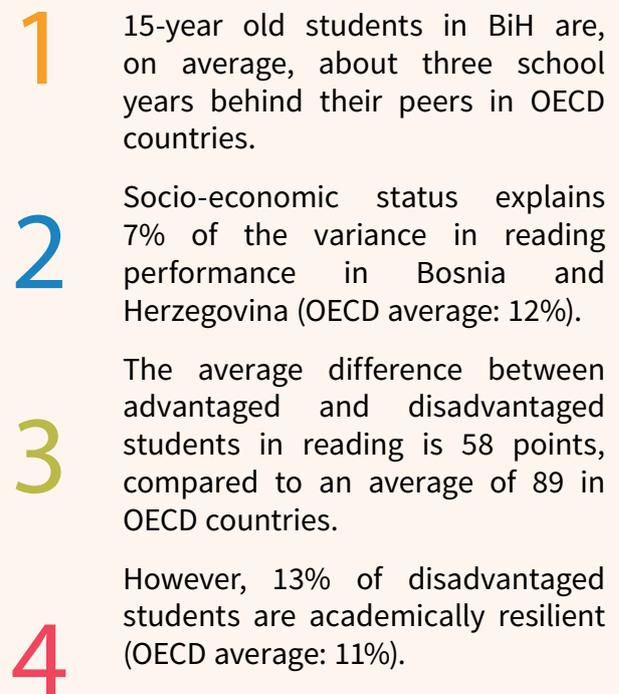


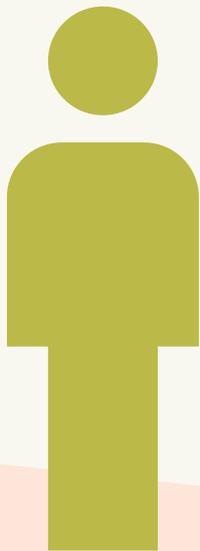
Figure 4. Results of PISA research

3 Džumhur Ž. (2018), PISA 2018 Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education, Sarajevo. Available at: <http://anyflip.com/giwgb/lejs/>

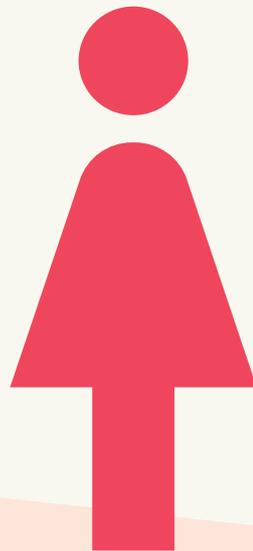
4 <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?plotter=h5&primaryCountry=BIH&treshold=5&topic=PI>



Youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) is another indicator that covers young people from 15 to 24 years of age. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 21.7% of all 15-24-year-old women are neither enrolled in education nor training nor employed, whereas 20.8% of all 15-24-year-old men are out of education, training, or employment.⁵



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, **20.8%** of all 15-24-year-old men are out of education, training, or employment.



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, **21.7%** of all 15-24-year-old women are neither enrolled in education nor training nor employed.

Figure 5. Percentage of young people aged 15 to 24 who are not in employment, education or training

⁵ International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database. Data retrieved in September 20, 2020. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.MA.ZS?locations=BA&most_recent_year_desc=true

According to Article 44 of the Framework Law on Preschool Education, the competent social welfare authorities are obliged to co-finance or fully finance the costs of pre-school education for the following groups of children: children without parental care; children with special needs; children of persons with disabilities; children of civilian victims of the war; children of single parents; children of social welfare beneficiaries; and children of full-time students. In practice, Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks systematic and effective measures towards pre-school education.

Beside free textbooks and transportation, which is available only to a certain number of students and not in all areas of BiH (exception is Brcko District ensuring that all students in primary school receive free textbooks and transportation), some support is offered by municipalities who provide small monthly scholarships mainly to secondary school and university students. Financial support for children to complete primary education is allocated based mostly on the socio-economic condition of the family. It is not strictly stated what kind of financial support for children to complete primary education is provided, but the adequacy and coverage of child cash benefits have advanced in RS, while the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children in FBiH was only approved in February 2020.

There is no available data on the percentage of beneficiaries of free meal, free textbooks and free transportation nor data on percentage of beneficiaries of scholarships nor the selection process.



Main Problems of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

High poverty rate - Among students in BiH, most variations in achievement are explained by the socio-economic status of students. Within any school, poorer students tend to show lower achievement and complete their schooling sooner than richer students. Schools with the weakest students and the greatest need for responsible support approaches have the least capacity to achieve this. With this in mind, it is not surprising that in some schools, unfavorable environments remain poor.

Ineffective budget planning and insufficient funds - Budget for equity measures, such as procurement of free textbooks, are not included in the general budget for education, but allocated from government budget (capital investment), sometime Ministry of Transport, or the budget of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. Also, ministries often do not have relevant and up-to-date information necessary for effective budget planning so a significant number of student travellers were not provided with free transportation, and the approved funds are insufficient.

Lack of capacities in pre-school institutions - Recent estimates by the Agency for Statistics of BiH suggest that some 24,918 children up to the age of 6 were enrolled in the 332 public and private childcare and pre-school institutions in the 2016-17 academic year, but a further 2,816 children could not be enrolled because of a lack of capacity, therefore due to insufficient number of institutions. (Agency for Statistics of BiH, 2018, p. 3).

Non-existence of a state-wide student assessment system - There are no mechanisms in place to systematically measure or monitor the quality of education inputs, outputs, or outcomes, and data do not feed back into the policy-making process. Furthermore, BiH does not have a state-wide student assessment system to measure learning across the country, and it does not participate regularly in international student assessments⁶. Also, there is no monitoring/evaluation at school level in the area of education equity.

Equity



6 Review of Efficiency of Services in Pre-University Education, Bosnia and Herzegovina, WB 2019
<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/719981571233699712/pdf/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-Review-of-Efficiency-of-Services-in-Pre-University-Education-Phase-I-Stocktaking.pdf>



Promising Policy Example

Framework Law for Preschool Education adopted in 2007, for the first time envisages free compulsory pre-school education in the year before starting school (Article 16). Having in mind extremely low access to preschool education to children from low SES, this law makes it possible to overcome, at least to a lesser extent, the difference in terms of opportunities for acquiring the necessary competencies between children from rural and urban areas, and children from high and low SES. The implementation of this legislation has been very slow but with the recent positive trend regarding the enrolment of children five years of age in the obligatory preparatory preschool programme. The proportion increased from 31% in 2011/2012 to 54% in 2016/2017, and to an estimated 78% in 2018/2019.⁷

As mentioned previously, the competent social welfare authorities are obliged by the Framework Law on Preschool Education (Article 44) to co-finance or fully finance the costs of pre-school education for the children without parental care, children with special needs, children of persons with disabilities, children of civilian victims of the war, children of single parents, children of social welfare beneficiaries, and children of full-time students.



Recommendations

Systematic mechanisms in measuring and monitoring the quality of education and data are needed in order to improve education and increase students' success. Also, systematic approaches or legal solutions are needed to facilitate the inclusion of all groups of all lower SES children in schools.

Official and formal communication canals between schools, health and social services would prevent some difficulties and would build close cooperation so that these services are always available to students, not just in order to assure necessary support for specific child or children, either in the area of health or social protection.

In all, in order to reduce inequalities in education following measures are needed: to develop model of right-based participatory action planning at local and cantonal levels, to establish multidisciplinary teams for coordination and monitoring at local levels, to localize guidelines for the implementation of the best interest of the child, to develop and/or improve child-centered program budgeting at the local level and to develop public-private partnership guidelines.



⁷ UNICEF BiH estimate for school year 2018/2019