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arise Action for Reducing
Inequalities in Education

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National Report for Bosnia
and Herzegovina



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Centar za obrazovne inicijative Step by Step

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Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education

National Report for
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sarajevo, 2021

ARISE Consortium



Centar za obrazovne politike
Centre for Education Policy



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Introduction

The national report was created within the project Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education (ARISE¹), a regional project implemented in Albania, Bosna and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey and funded by the European Commission. The project aims to support inclusion of students with low socio-economic status by building national and regional partnerships of civil society organisations from six aforementioned beneficiaries to engage in advocacy and constructive policy dialogue with governments, raise awareness among education stakeholders and pilot interventions targeting low SES students at the school level.

Data and information presented in the national report are collected through a policy questionnaire fulfilled after the analysis of equity-related policy documents and consultations with relevant institutions and experts and focus group and interviews with policy makers, school principals, teachers, school support staff, students, parents, civil society organisations and educational experts. Focus group and interviews are implemented to obtain stakeholders' perspective on equity-related issues in general and in the educational context of a country.

1 More information about project: <https://www.arisenetwork.eu/en/>

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence





1. General policy context relevant for equity

1.1. Equity in national legislation and strategic documents

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) several laws address equal treatment and anti-discrimination. The most important law² addressing equal treatment in BiH entered into force in 2009 and is in line with EU directives. It contains a non-exhaustive list of grounds on which discrimination is prohibited (Article 2): race, skin color, language, religion, ethnicity, national or social origin, national minority, political or other beliefs, property, membership in a trade union or other association, education, social status and gender, sexual expression or orientation as well as any other circumstance. In 2016, significant amendments concerning gender identity, age and disability were adopted. However, while the list of grounds on which discrimination is prohibited is open-ended, there is no explicit mention of multiple discrimination. Law also defines the types of prohibited discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination (Article 3) and although the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination is positively evaluated in a recent report by the [Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH \(2017\)](#), others criticize the law because its aims are of reactive nature rather than committed to fostering equality. (e.g., [Kadribašić, 2013](#))

Although a solid body of legislation addressing anti-discrimination and equality issues exists, the implementation is insufficient, and there is no available data about its reasons.

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2 Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, „Official Journal of B&H“, no. 405/09. Available at: <http://www.asocijacijaxy.org/uimages/legislativa/0a1b87be952c-58c12df97ec00d84f326.pdf>



Equity and equality are very often used as the same term. The key causes of inequity according to UNICEF BiH are poverty, rural/urban divide, minority status, disability, refugee and migrant status. The equity as a process and tool which ensures equality and protection from discrimination is neglected.

1.2. Poverty as source of inequity (data and research findings on poverty as cause of inequity)

BiH does not have a legal definition of “low socio-economic background”. Poverty, an integral element of low socio-economic background, is widely spread among elderly, women, youth and children. According to the UN, one of six people spend EUR 1.50–2.50 per day or EUR 45–75 per month. In other words, 17% of the population lives in extreme poverty, far below the absolute poverty line. Around 700,000 people (23% of the population) are at risk of poverty, while more than half of the population lives at risk of poverty.³ The employment does not guarantee decent income. It is estimated that around 25% of employed are working poor. The poverty rate among children (31%) is significantly higher than among the general population (23%). Children with disabilities, Roma and other minorities, children living in poor communities, children from single-mother families, children living in families with three and more children are in a worse situation. The situation is extremely difficult for children who are victims of crime and violence, such as children engaged in begging, labor and sexual exploitation, children on the move.⁴

UNICEF study⁵ on multi-dimensional poverty in BiH found that 74% of children aged from 5 to 15 years are deprived in at least one dimension, while 23% are deprived in three or more. One third of chil-

- 3 Papić, Ž., Fetagić, M (2019), Towards the European Union-Key Social Inclusion Issues in BiH
- 4 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
- 5 Ferrone, L. and Chzhen, Y. (2015). Child Poverty and Deprivation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (N-MODA), Innocenti Working Paper No.2015– 02, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence



dren aged from 0 to 4 years are deprived in four or more dimensions. Poverty is associated with vulnerable social 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 lower education. Poverty is also associated with families with more children.

After a 2007 state-level framework law introduced mandatory pre-school education for children to attend preschool one year before elementary school, the enrollment of children in preschool has increased, especially with older children, (Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH, 2017, p.3), although the ratio is still low. Available estimates suggest that the gross enrollment ratio of children in preschools in BiH aged from 3 years and older is only 14.9%, as opposed to 93.9% in the EU28 (Çağatay, 2017, p.2).

The 2007 law also set standards for cantonal legislation in the Federation of BiH (FBiH), but the implementation of relevant legislation by cantons has been uneven, with two cantons (Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and West-Herzegovina Canton) failing to adopt legislation on pre-school education to date (Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH, 2017, p. 4). Recent estimates by the Agency for Statistics of BiH suggest that around 24,918 of children up to the age of 6 were enrolled in the 332 public and private childcare and preschool institutions during the 2016/ 17 academic year, and the rest of 2,816 of 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). There is no available data of ratios.

The last country-wide Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) was conducted in the period from 2011 to 2012, hence there is limited recent data available but significant disparities persist, particularly for children from the Roma community, children with disabilities, children on the move and other vulnerable children (Situation Analysis of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina March 2020, UNICEF).

According to Eurostat, in 2015 BiH citizens were able to afford only 38 percent of the average customer's basket of EU citizens. According to the same parameter, BiH is placed on the second last place in Europe. There is no available data on how much families spent on education.





A significant disparity between students from poorer and richer households in terms of continuing education. 43% students from the first and 23% from the second group do not continue secondary school (high school). This gap yet is more pronounced in higher education, where only 9.3% of students from poor families attend faculties, 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. A surprising 31.5% of students who complete primary school do not continue to attend secondary school. The reason for this is poverty and low achievements.

In BiH, girls are more likely to graduate than boys. There is a relatively large difference between the share of girls and boys who stated that they expect to get a university degree (more than 18% in favor of girls). The high expectations of girls regarding their future education are reflected in the high enrollment rates of women in universities. However, although women are more represented among university students, they are still insufficient in certain areas of study, such as science and engineering.⁶

6 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/>

2. Equity in education

2.1. International data about impact of SES on achievement

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%).⁷

In BiH, differences in performance were more marked at the bottom of the socio-economic divide status, as disadvantaged students scored much lower in reading than students in the three higher quarters of socio-economic status – amongst whom differences in performance were comparatively small. BiH students were above average in equity education, and below average in reading performance while the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed that BiH students scored below the global average in mathematic performance (with BiH scoring 456 in comparison to the global average of 500) and also scoring lower than the other countries from this region that participated in this research (Slovenia and Serbia). TIMSS results showed that a mere 1 percent of BiH students scored above the advanced TIMMS mathematics benchmark (global average was 2%), and only 10% of BiH students scored above the high benchmark (global average was 15%). Almost

7 <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/ntryProfile?plotter=h5&primaryCountry=BiH&threshold=5&topic=PI>





one quarter of BiH students (23%) did not reach the lowest benchmark (APOS0, 2009; according to Branković et al., 201636).

To date, evidence-based data about the quality of basic education in BiH has been limited. The definition of quality defines the research in Education. Even though Bosnia and Herzegovina have not defined the quality of Education on any level yet, such research does not exist, but International Comparative research could be taken as legitimate tool for validating the quality of Education.

One of seven high-achieving disadvantaged students in Bosnia and Herzegovina – about 1 in 30 high-achieving advantaged students – do not expect to complete tertiary education.

The Alternative Report on Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been created as part of the process of periodic reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child by non-governmental organizations working with and for children. To date, no entity or cantonal government has started developing a strategy for poverty reduction and special programs at local and community levels.

The specific focus of Brief Assessment of Basic Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (MEASURE-BiH)⁸ was on the role, influence and ongoing interventions and processes in basic education supported by the international community in BiH as well as BiH government education institutions. Financial support for children to finish primary education is mostly based on the socio-economic condition of the family, or status as a national minority with only Brčko District ensuring that all students receive free books and transportation. It is not strictly stated what kind of financial support is provided for children to finish primary education, but the adequacy and coverage of child cash benefits have advanced in Republic of Serbia (RS), while the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children in FBiH was only approved in February 2020.

Child Poverty and Deprivation in BiH study provides the first estimates of national multidimensional child deprivation rates in BiH using the National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis pioneered by UNICEF.

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8 USAID/MEASURE BiH. (2016). Brief Assessment of Basic Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. <http://www.measurebih.com/basic-education-assessment>

The analysis uses data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey for children aged from 0 to 4 and the expanded Household Budget Survey for children aged from 5 to 15. The dimensions analyzed for children under five are: nutrition, health, child development, discipline, access to information, and residence, while for older children were: nutrition, clothing, access to education, free time, socialization, access to information and residence.

This study shows that 98.1% of 0–4-year-olds are deprived in at least one dimension, and 33.2% are deprived in four or more dimensions at a time. 73.8% of 5–15-year-olds are deprived in at least one dimension, while 22.8% are deprived in three or more dimensions. Poor children are more likely to be deprived in any of the studied dimensions simultaneously. However, the degree of overlap between deprivation and poverty is moderate, with only 13.8% of 5–15-year-olds both poor and deprived in at least three out of seven dimensions studied.

The findings of various studies indicate the very adverse effects of poverty on physical and mental health, emotional well-being, child development, educational attainment, crime rates and future income. Children growing up in low-income families are more likely to become poor adults themselves, and the likelihood increases with more prolonged exposure to poverty at an early age. The children born in poverty have significantly lower scores on cognitive tests (MCS sweep 2, 3 and 4) at ages 3, 5 and 7. Such data indicate that long-term poverty has substantial adverse effects on children’s intellectual development. Data from the same study shows that children exposed to long-term poverty during their earliest years, when they are seven years old, achieve on average results that are even 20% lower than children who never exposed to poverty.⁹ The SES of the student is a variable that correlates the most with PISA achievement in all participating countries; in all OECD countries parity index is below 1¹⁰ and it varies from the countries with the most equality (such as Estonia, ESCS parity index 0.8 to the countries with the highest inequality – Brazil, Indonesia, 0.2).¹¹



9 Dickerson A, Popli GK. (2016). Persistent poverty and children’s cognitive development: evidence from the UK millennium cohort study. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A, Statistical Society*. 179 (2), 535–558.

10 Read more about these issues in Chapters 4 and 9 in PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>

11 Data from PISA 2015: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018/trends-in-socio-economic-escs-parity-index-2006-2015_eag-2018-graph4-en



2.2. Main obstacles for low SES students

General attitude to the equity in education is limited to providing access to education and increasing enrollment rates. The research¹² established that about ¼ primary schools keep records of children who should attend school but for some reason don't. When enrolling, primary schools cooperate with municipalities, pedagogical institutes and the statistics agency. 60% of high schools keep records of school dropouts. High schools rely on data on the number of children who have graduated from primary school. A unique base is necessary to be able to keep track of how many children who have finished primary school continue secondary education. Which children are they, that is, from which risk group are the children who are not continuing their education and do not obtain a high school diploma. Specific and holistic data on this issue does not exist.

There is awareness of the necessity to provide equal opportunities in terms of accessibility and availability of education. However, society's awareness about its obligation to ensure equal educational opportunities so that all children, regardless of their individual characteristics or circumstances are able to reach their educational potential, is low. Inclusive education is mostly regarded by inclusion of children with developmental difficulties in education. However, inclusive education has been still understood in terms of providing access, but not quality education for all.

Most variations in students' achievements in BiH are explained by their socio-economic status. Within any school, poorer students tend to show lower achievement and drop out of school sooner than wealthier students. Schools with the weakest students and the greatest need for responsible support approaches have the least capacity to gain such support. With this in mind, it is not surprising that in some schools, unfavorable environments remain poor.

All the laws on social protection in BiH contain a similar definition of the state of need and beneficiaries. The priority beneficiaries include children, the elderly persons and persons with disabilities. The

12 Non-attendance and leaving education – MDH Achievement fund – <https://www.sdgfund.org/non-enrolment-and-school-dropout-bosnia-and-herzegovina>



specific situation of social need among others includes, poverty, disability, family status, antisocial behavior, domestic violence, human trafficking, and substance abuse.

The social protection interventions include financial benefits, benefits in kind and social services. Financial benefits are composed of financial assistance, assistance for the care of another person and one-time financial assistance. Benefits in kind include providing humanitarian packages, vouchers for clothing and living space. Social services mean all types of action which are not direct material resources.

Actual family expenses with children, persons with non-war-related disabilities, and all other vulnerable individuals in BiH is between 1 and 1.2% of GDP, which is the lowest in the region. The social exclusion of families from rural areas, Roma families and families with children with disabilities is multidimensional. Poverty remains significant and social transfers are not effectively targeted.

On the basis of extended social protection right to nutrition of children from poor families, the Municipalities and Centers for social work are able to provide food for children with lower socio-economic status. However, domestic legal frameworks do not set up the obligations to the local governments in this regard. There aren't any obligations on LSG side concerning education provision and support to low SES families. In spite of a number of positive, practical examples in enabling lower SES children access to food organized through joint action of Municipalities, Centers for social work, schools, private sector and civil society organizations, or with the support of the donor community, the needs are not satisfied in a systematic way. Child rights activists and professionals emphasize that there is a number of children whose nutritional needs are not met. For some children, especially those from Roma community the food they get in school would be the only meal during the day. There is no available data on how officials deal with this during COVID – 19 pandemics.

Also, there are no systematic approaches or legal solutions to facilitate the inclusion of all groups of children with lower social economic status (SES) in schools even though international Conventions are insisting on it. It is unknown if children can enroll without proper place of residence and obligatory health check. Some primary schools have formed multidisciplinary teams, but in every school,



there is a pedagogue who monitors students and provide support. The data about what kind of support a pedagogue provides compared to multidisciplinary team is not available. If the primary school has a multidisciplinary team, it consists of pedagogue-psychologist, or pedagogue, special educator and a speech therapist. The professional team analyses students' documentation they have provided in the first grade to determine of special education, speech therapy, pedagogical-educational status, etc.



3. Description of the existing policy measures aimed at reducing inequity

3.1. Education

The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995) states that the enjoyment of rights and freedoms shall be secured to all persons without discrimination on any grounds, including language (Article 2). According to the Constitutions of the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are three official languages: Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian (Article 7 and Amendment XXIX). In addition, there are two official scripts: Cyrillic and Latin.¹³

Centralized planning (at cantonal/entity/BD level), as the overarching educational management policy, gives schools little to no autonomy in planning and budgeting, but also regarding the curriculum and employment. According to MEASURE report (2016), the education authorities in BiH continue to use management practices that focus on compliance with detailed regulations and financing schemes based on inputs, rather than outputs. This means that most local education authorities and school principals lack the autonomy and authority to make crucial management decisions for their own institutions, including how much and what type of vocational content students are taught and how many teachers to employ.¹⁴

13 Bosnia and Herzegovina – Education indicator – Multilingual Education by UNESCO – <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/bosnia-herzegovina-education-indicator-multilingual>

14 Brief Assessment of Basic Education of BiH, MEASURE 2010 <http://www.measure-bih.com/uimages/Basic%20Education%20Assessment.pdf>





Budget for equity measures, such as free textbooks, are not included in the general budget for education, but allocated from government budget (capital investment), in some cases Ministry of Transport, or the budget of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. Textbooks are usually provided for primary school students, mainly from the 1st to the 4th grade students, and even then, only to certain percentage of children from low-income families or families with three or more children etc. The free transportation is obligation of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to provide for all students who live more than two kilometers away from school. However, ministries often do not have relevant and up-to-date information necessary for effective budget planning so a significant number of students travelers are not provided with free transportation, and the approved funds are insufficient.

Beside free textbooks and transportation, which is available only to a certain number of students and not in all areas of BiH, some support is offered by municipalities who provide small monthly scholarships mainly to secondary school and university students. 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.

According to UNICEF, schools in rural communities are significantly disadvantaged compared to schools in urban areas. The lack of financial assistance often compromises the realization of the right to education for children from low-income families¹⁵.

There is no established system for school performance or evaluation. Schools are obliged to fulfill legal requirements concerning number of working days, paperwork concerning students, grading and other formal obligations. School principal provides an annual report to the school board who adopts it based on implementation of activities included in the approved annual plan.

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 meas-

15 Situation Analysis of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF, March 2020.

<https://www.unicef.org/bih/en/reports/situation-analysis-children-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

ure learning across the country, and it does not participate regularly in international student assessments¹⁶. Also, there is no monitoring/evaluation at school level in the area of education equity.

3.2. Health system

There are no official or formal communication canals between schools, health and social services. They cooperate when needed in order to assure necessary support for specific child or children, either in the area of health or social protection.

Representatives of the health sector Article 115–117 36 Law on Health Care, Article 116 37 Strategy for the Development of Primary Health Care, Federal Ministry of Health, p. 20 *that all children at the entity level have equal rights to treatment, including free drugs that are on the primary lists provided that the primary lists differ between cantons and are directly dependent on the economic capacity of q certain canton.* Ultimately, this results in children being given territorial affiliation not equal access to medicines. Information on of health care opportunities from other cantons is not available.

According to the analysis, there are a number of obstacles to exercising the right to access health care and children are often required to fulfill various administrative procedures, such as providing evidence of school attendance, parental health insurance, etc. These procedures are contrary to the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which regulates the issue of health care, and this protection must be provided to every child under the age 18. In the last two years efforts have been made to separate children’s health care from their parents’ status, but again for the children under the age of 15.¹⁷

Despite the constitutional requirements, quality health care is not available to everyone, particularly to vulnerable groups, such as Roma. Fragmented service delivery, high spending on pharmaceuti-

16 Review of Efficiency of Services n 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>

17 (https://www.ombudsmen.gov.ba/documents/obmudsmen_doc-2013020406593191bos.pdf)



calls and inefficiencies in insurance and hospital systems cast doubt on the sustainability of health services.

Health care centers perform mandatory immunization based on annual immunization plans. For preschool children, the invitation is sent to the parent or the guardian. For the primary school age children, upon notification of health authorities, schools are obliged to bring for immunization all students to immunization against certain infectious diseases.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MISC) data from 2011–12 shows that the rate of full immunization for tuberculosis (BCG/Bacillus Calmette-Guérin), diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DPT), polio and measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) was 68 percent for all children, and only 4 percent for Roma children. The extremely low rate of Roma children immunization is primarily caused by lack of health insurance, poor access to services, negative attitudes and mutual mistrust between Roma and public institutions, including health care professionals. (Situation Analysis of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina March 2020, UNICEF). The causes of the low immunization rates among Roma children indicate that the measures to increase immunization rates do not reach all the children.

3.3. Social care and welfare

According to Article 44 of the Framework Law on Preschool Education, the social welfare authorities are obliged to co-finance or fully finance the costs of pre-school education for: 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.

Social care services – particularly for marginalized and vulnerable children – are scarce and, where existing, are often overburdened with limited time and resources which is affecting quality and accessibility.

Local governments are not obliged by law in fulfilling healthy nutrition needs for children with lower socio-economic status while school food is organized and provided by joint action of Municipal-



ities, Centers for social work, schools, etc., but not in a systematic way.

An important step forward in improving child welfare services has been the development of unique, standardized case management tools – Child Protection Guidelines for Social Welfare Centers, but the services currently provided are largely limited to financial assistance, little social work services, foster care, and the institutionalization of children.

Alternative informal care is based on group and individual needs of targeted children and their families. They include a whole range of services from education and upbringing to the provision of psychosocial support.

The alternative informal care practices include day centers for street children, children involved in begging and children with learning difficulties. CSO provide some types of educational activities and cooperate with families and communities. Youth Centers in BiH, which provide different drop-in sessions, training and non-formal education and youth activities are accessible for children and youth from the lower SES families.

There are no systematic approaches or legal solutions to facilitate the inclusion of all groups of all lower SES children in schools. In some primary schools there is a multidisciplinary team, but in every school, there is a pedagogue who monitors students and provides support. The tasks of the professional team are to analyze of the documentation of students enrolled in the first grade, determination of special education, speech therapy, pedagogical-educational status, development of individual customized curriculum, monitoring of methodological and didactic implementation, implementation of special education and speech therapy, cooperation with teachers and parents and evaluating an individual customized curriculum.



4. Recent changes in last years that affected equity in education

4.1. Short summary of main reform initiatives that help promote equity

In the last 15 years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted four state-level frameworks that could have had influence on equity in education.

The Framework Action Plan on the educational needs of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from 2018 to 2022 was adopted at the 155th session of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina held on September 25, 2018.

In 2017 The Council of Ministers adopted the Platform for the Development of Preschool Education for the period 2017–2022. This is the first state-level strategic framework in education to be adopted in several years, and it harmonizes preschool education policies with international standards.

Special Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the educational needs of Roma was revised and adopted in 2010 by the Council of Ministers of BiH and proposed by the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH (MHRR).

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 2018/2019.¹⁸

All levels of governance in BiH lack effective and efficient monitoring mechanisms due to the several shortcomings. Firstly, strategic planning process in BiH lack reliable and systematic methodological approach. It also lacks operationalization including action plans and logical frameworks. Many policies lack monitoring and evaluation, including indicators, as well as budget allocation. There is also a lack of systematic and updated data.

4.2. How are reforms seen by different stakeholders

In general, strategies and policies are characterized by weak and inconsistent implementation, lack of or fragmented monitoring mechanisms. The policies and strategic goals are hard to achieve. Different stakeholders do not have this issue on the agenda, and weak response for the interview request is one of the proofs of this attitude.



5. Key conclusions and recommendations

BiH has extensive anti-discrimination legislation comparable to EU standards, but its effectiveness is limited. Although a solid body of legislation addressing anti-discrimination and equality issues exists, the implementation is insufficient and important particular laws and bylaws are missing or they are left on lower legal levels to be developed and implemented.

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In BiH, there is still a phenomenon that children's access to their right to health care is conditioned by the requirement that one of the parents has the status of a health insured, which excludes a large number of children from health care. This is particularly affected by deadlines in health care legislation, the omission of which also deprives parents of health care. In the last two years, efforts have been made to separate children's health care from their parents' status, but again with a 15-year age limit for the child. It is obvious that the legislator targeted this age by linking it to primary education, which is compulsory by law. In this way, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which considers any person under the age of 18 to be a child, continues to be violated.

The priority beneficiaries of social protection include children, the elderly persons and persons with disabilities. The specific situation of social need includes: among others, poverty, disability, family status, antisocial behavior, domestic violence, human trafficking, and substance abuse. The laws prescribe basic social protection services which are obligatory under the authority, and allow the local authorities to define other interventions referred as extended rights.


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 fol-

lowing 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 preschool education.

There are some recommendations 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.



 <https://www.arisenetwork.eu>

 <https://www.facebook.com/ARISEproject/>

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