



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

**REPORT ON THE REALIZATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF EDUCATION IN SERBIA UNTIL 2020**

Reporting period: January 2019 to July 2020

June, 2020

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Acronyms and abbreviations list:

Acronym and Abbreviations	Full Title
AP SEDS 2020	Action Plan for the Strategy for education development in Serbia by 2020
CAASS	Conference of Academies of Applied Studies Serbia
CAQA	Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CCIS	The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia
CEENQA	Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
CEEPUS III	Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies
CEP	Centre for Education Policy
CGC	Career guidance and counselling
CIP	Centre for Interactive Pedagogy
CONUS	Conference of the Universities of Serbia
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ENIC/NARIC	European Network of National Information Centres / National Academic Recognition Information Centres
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG	The Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
FEEA	Functional elementary education of adults
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher education institution
IBDP	International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
IBO	International Baccalaureate Organization
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IEQE	Institute for the Education Quality and Evaluation
IIE	Institute for the Improvement of Education
ISC	Intersectoral committee for assessing the needs for additional educational, healthcare and social support
LDE	The Law on Dual Education
LFES	The Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System
LNQF	The Law on National Qualifications Framework

LSG	Local self-government
MoESTD	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia
NAPA	National Academy for Public Administration
NEAQA	National Entity for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education
NEC	National Education Council of the Republic of Serbia
NES	National Employment Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PE	Preschool education
PI	Preschool institution
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Preparatory Preschool Program
PRAEO	Publicly recognized adult education organizer
PRP	Peer review panels
REF	Roma Education Fund
SEDS 2020	Strategy for education development in Serbia by 2020
SIPRU	Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
SQF	National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USI	Unique student identifier
VSE	Vocational secondary education

Introductory note

The Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia until 2020 (SEDS 2020) was adopted at the end of 2012, and in the beginning of 2015 the Government of the Republic of Serbia (RS), after a proposition made by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD), adopted an **Action Plan for the implementation of Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020 (AP SEDS 2020)**.

"The education system is the most important element of the life and development infrastructure of each individual, society and state because its overall effect determines the scope, quality and effects of construction and use of all other systems and resources, as well as the overall quality of life and development potential of individuals and communities." SEDS 2020

This report is a progress report on the implementation of AP SEDS 2020 and builds on the previous two reports, the first of which covered the period from the beginning of 2015 to 2018, and the second was an annual report and covered the progress made during 2018. The reporting period covered by this report refers to the period from January 2019 to July 2020.

The report includes results by activities envisaged in AP SEDS 2020, as well as those results not foreseen in AP SEDS 2020 but were achieved in response to the education system to the needs identified in the period after the adoption of AP SEDS 2020. Additionally, data necessary for contextualization of the situation regardless of the reporting period have been stated in this report, as well as those data that were collected in 2018, but were not available during the writing of the report for 2018, and those data from previous years that are important in order to point out a certain trend.

As the main goals of education development, SEDS 2020 has set:

- 1. increasing the quality of the process** and outcomes of education to the maximum achievable level – the one that results from scientific knowledge about education and reputable educational practice,
- 2. increasing the coverage** of the population at all educational levels, from pre-school upbringing and education, to lifelong learning,
- 3. Achieving and maintaining the relevance of education**, especially that one which is financed from public sources, by harmonizing the structure of the education system with the immediate and developmental needs of individuals, as well as with other RS systems (such as economic, social, cultural, research, etc.), and
- 4. Increasing the efficiency** of the use of all educational resources, i.e., completing education within the prescribed period, with a minimum extension of duration and reduced school dropout.

The report consists of three parts. **The first part** provides an overview of progress in relation to the four major strategic goals mentioned (quality, coverage, relevance and efficiency), **the second part**

discusses each level of education separately, while **the third part** of the report is dedicated to the results of other RS Government action documents, in particular: Action Plan for the Exercise of the Rights of National Minorities (based on the Action Plan for Negotiating Chapter 23)¹, then the Action Plan for the Anti-Corruption Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2013 to 2018² and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the RS³.

It is important to note that, in addition to the fact that the third part of the report is dedicated to the results directly derived from other strategic documents, this part of the report also contains an overview of some activities that are important for the educational context, and are related to the National Employment Strategy for period 2011-2020⁴, the National Employment Action Plan for 2019⁵, as well as the priorities defined in the annual work plans and in connection with some part of the education system such as e.g. Annual plan of adult education in the Republic of Serbia for 2019⁶.

In addition to these main goals, i.e. "pillars" of education, specific development goals have been identified for each part of the system, as well as specific activities given in AP SEDS 2020. These activities (i.e., "actions") are presented in the second part of the report – at the end of each of the levels of the education system for which a review of achievements is given and the actions provided by AP SEDS 2020 (e.g. at the end of the review of preschool education AP SEDS 2020, starting from "PU-PŠ01" – Harmonization of legislation on social care and preschool education with SEDS, etc.), and through the text of the report itself, a reference was made to these actions, wherever it was possible, to link the progress made with the planned action.

In 2019, the MoESTD started drafting a new Education Development Strategy for the period from 2020 to 2027, the basic principles of which were presented in February 2020. Working groups will continue working on the new strategy and during 2020 the text is expected to be available to the public discussion.

We remind you that a state of emergency was introduced on the territory of the Republic of Serbia on March 15, 2020 in response to the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, which caused delays in some activities or their modification, but also the realization or intensification of a number of other activities that, to a greater or lesser extent, coincide with the goals of SEDS 2020.

¹ Available at: <https://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sh/node/21793>

² Revised Action Plan for the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2013 to 2018.

³ Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sh/node/19971>

⁴ National Employment Strategy for 2011–2020 ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 37/2011)

⁵ Government Conclusion 05 Number: 101-12696/2018, dated December 27th, 2018 ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia," no. 105/2018)

⁶ Decision on determining the Annual Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Serbia for 2019: 21 / 2019-3.

I Progress report on achieving the four goals of the Education Development Strategy

1. Increasing the quality of education

1.1. Improving curricula and development of achievement standards

The quality of teaching and learning is a complex concept that depends on the quality of curricula, teaching aids and textbooks, the quality of teachers' work and the intertwining of these elements, i.e., their synergistic effect. Considering that learning is a process, and that the attitude towards all these aspects must not be passive but should be active, this implies constant innovation of each individual while maintaining the whole. Thus, the process of innovating and improving the curricula of teaching and learning and the expected outcomes of education has been a part of development measures for a long time, and in recent years there have been significant activities in these segments in pre-university education. More specifically, the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (LFES) has in 2017⁷ provided the basis for future programs to be oriented towards outcomes and competencies, and key and general interdisciplinary competencies were additionally emphasized. This paradigm shift from content to competencies and outcomes is the basis for the various curricular reform activities that have taken place over the last year and a half.

Preschool education. Preschool education has come to the attention of educational experts after studies have shown that investing in early development and early education brings later benefits in life and creates a solid foundation for an individual's later achievements. Changes in our system in this area have been introduced slowly but over the last two years this level has received the attention it deserves. From a "service" for babysitting and preparation for school, preschool education (PE) is developing into a basic part of lifelong learning and sees the child as an individual with personal needs, but also as a social actor who needs to be trained to live in modern society. After the new Basics of preschool education programs were adopted in 2018, this direction of development received a legal basis with the Rule Book on the basics of preschool education programs⁸ and for the first time in this area, the successive introduction of the application of the new program concept was prescribed, and in 2019, their application began. The first preschool institutions (PI) that started with the implementation were in the territories of Novi Sad, Čačak, Loznica, Pirot, Sremska Mitrovica, Smederevo, Zemun, Vračar, Sremski Karlovci, Arandjelovac and municipality of Aleksinac⁹.

⁷ Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 88/2017, 27/2018 - other laws and 10/2019).

⁸ The Rule Book on the basics of preschool education programs, ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette", no. 16 / 2018-1).

⁹ Support for the implementation of the Fundamentals of the program was provided by the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project within Sub-Component 2.1.a. and UNICEF were chosen as the implementation partner.

Implementation of the basis of the program is supported through various projects. Through the MoESTD's *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care*¹⁰ project, which is realized with funds from the loan of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development¹¹, in the first year of implementation, a trained group of 90 trainers / mentors was established (consisting of 34 university professors, 37 professional associates and 19 educators). Since November 2019, a team of 22 mentors has provided continuous support to 11 PIs through visits and online support, and until the beginning of the state of emergency (March 2020), 54 mentoring visits were realized. The project Support to the reform of the system of preschool education, which is funded by pre-accession (IPA) funds for 2014 (IPA 2014 – Support to preschool education system reform project in Serbia (IPA 2014 – SUPER project)), the support will be provided to strengthen the professional capacity of 50 local self-government units (LGUs) for planning and management of preschool education, because the implementation of the program requires changes in the way work is organized. At the same time, this project provides support for reforms in preschool education, as the initial basis for lifelong learning¹².

For the efficient introduction of the Basics of the program in Preschool education, it is very important that there are a number of projects that base their activities on the same concept, because the essential part of the program is theoretical and value postulates, common understanding and review of personal knowledge and beliefs of practitioners, and in this way a common understanding and reflective practice is built from different aspects. The same first step for all children, in practice, means something different for every child, so practitioners in PE have a difficult task to reduce the differences between children caused by the factors that act, in most cases, outside the education system.

Primary education. The adoption of new curricula has created the basis for curricular reform. The innovation of curricula takes place successively through the classrooms, so that the practice can be adapted and changes can be sent without sudden changes in the process of teaching and learning. The implementation of innovated curricula began in the 2017/2018 school year in the fifth grade, and in 2018/2019 school year the implementation of new curricula for teaching and learning in the first and fifth grade of primary school and the first grade of high school has begun.

With the change in the curriculum in the second cycle of primary education, three new compulsory subjects were introduced – Informatics and Computing, Engineering and Technology and Physical and Health Education, and they are being realized from the 2018/2019 school year in the sixth grade, and from the 2019/2020 school year in the seventh grade.

Project teaching was introduced in the first cycle - the curriculum for the first cycle of education and upbringing prescribed project teaching as a form of educational work and the implementation began in the 2018/2019 school year. Also, during 2020, changes were made to the curriculum for the first

10 The Inclusive *Early Childhood Education and Care* project in Serbia is financed from a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (in the total amount of 47 million euros).

11 In 2019, it is planned to start training for educators and professional associates for the application of the new program concept.

12 Implementation of the project Toward Lifelong Learning began in March 2019 through service contracts - providing professional support to 50 local self-government units in the planning and management of PE, and contracts for the procurement of equipment for 55 preschool institutions (IPA 2014 - Toward Life Long Learning).

cycle – in early 2020, the Rule Book on amendments to the Rule Book on the curriculum for the first cycle of primary education and the curriculum for the first grade of primary education and upbringing was adopted,¹³ which introduced the new school subject Digital World to be implemented, and as such, is in line with the goals related to the development of digital competencies. However, project teaching is not prescribed as one of the other forms of educational work, although it exists as such in the Recommendations for the planning of educational practice, which is part of the mentioned Rule Book.

These changes were, inevitably, accompanied by an amendment to the Rule Book on student assessment, which implementation began in the 2019/2020 school year, and in which the obligation of continuous monitoring of the realization of the prescribed outcomes and standards of achievement is emphasized.

Secondary education. As one of the priority goals for 2019, the continuation of work on the reform of high schools has been set. The first generation of high school students will complete their education in 2021/2022 in accordance with the current reform. The key reform directions relate to: change of the curricular paradigm (development of new curricula and learning programs aimed at achieving outcomes, development of competencies and achievement of standards), electiveness (introduction of 12 new elective programs), interdisciplinarity (overcoming subject boundaries) as well as on the gradual introduction of innovations. Rule Book on the program of teaching and learning for the second grade of high school¹⁴ was adopted in 2019, and the plan and program of teaching and learning for the first grade of high school for students with special abilities in biology, whose application began in 2019/2020, was developed. Although not yet fully completed, an innovated curriculum for the teaching and learning of secondary music education and upbringing is being prepared.

With the mentioned changes, the students also got a richer offer of election programs in the fund of one class per week, from which they could choose at the beginning of a school year ever since 2018/2019. After they have made their choice, in the next school year they can choose the same elective program or another one (these are elective programs that are offered to students of the first and second grade of high school). During the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 school years, in the first and second grade, high school students had the opportunity to study some of the following elective programs: Language, Media and Communication, Individual, Group and Society, Health and Sports, Education for Sustainable Development, Applied Sciences and Art and Design. The realization of these programs and the satisfaction of students will be monitored and in accordance with that, either the choice or the content of the subject will be revised. During 2019, the Institute for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education (IEQE) constructed a questionnaire for this purpose.

Proposals for the curriculum of the first grade of grammar schools for students with special abilities in mathematics, philology, physics, computer science and informatics and the curriculum for secondary music education, as well as for students with special abilities in biology and chemistry,

¹³ The Rule Book on amendments to the Rule Book on the curriculum for the first cycle of primary education and the curriculum for the first grade of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 2/2020).

¹⁴ The Rule Book on the curriculum for the second grade of high school (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 8/2019).

have already been prepared and received a positive opinion from the NEC. Teaching and learning programs of the first grade of high schools for students with special abilities in geography and history, performing and audio-visual arts and sports high school, as well as proposals for teaching and learning programs for the second grade of high schools for students with special abilities in biology and chemistry will be developed in the foreseeable future.

A major challenge for curricular reform is the fact that there are no standards for general and specific subject competencies for individual subjects. Therefore, one of the key activities realized during 2019 is the foundation, work and training for work groups for the revision of general standards of achievement for the end of general secondary and secondary vocational education in the field of general education subjects (Serbian language and literature, mathematics, history, geography, physics, biology and chemistry) and the development of general standards of achievement for the end of general secondary and secondary vocational education for the subjects of psychology, computer science and informatics and music culture. The tasks of the working groups are related to the revision of general and specific subject competence at three levels, revision of the subject area for which the standards are revised, revision of achievement standards by areas and levels, as well as revision of the Teacher's Manual for application of achievement standards. Also, the development of achievement standards for the end of the first cycle continued, for the subject Mother Tongue and Literature (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Croatian). At the beginning of February 2020, the National Education Council (NEC) gave a positive opinion, and revised standards of achievement were prepared for 12 subjects in primary education.

When it comes to secondary vocational education, the development of curricula based on the qualification standard has increased the quality and relevance of vocational education. During 2019, the Qualifications Agency (the Agency) developed eight proposals for qualification standards, and additionally harmonized six existing qualification standards based on the new methodology. In the same year, 11 new curricula were prepared for educational profiles that will be implemented on the basis of the Law on Dual Education, and four new educational profiles were developed, so that currently there are 37 educational profiles that are implemented according to the dual model.

Higher education. During 2018, MoESTD conducted a competition "Development of higher education" for co-financing development projects of higher education institutions. The subject of co-financed projects is, among other things, the development of new and innovation of existing study programs. A total of 44 projects were financed in the competition, of which 4 projects at vocational colleges, but information on the specific implementation of the program is not yet available because the implementation is ongoing. In addition, most of the activities carried out in the reporting period were focused on optimizing the work of the National Entity for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NEAQA) and removing objections to its membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The biggest innovations in the field of quality assurance in higher education relate to the improvement of the process of accreditation of study programs, which is why the following rule books have been adopted:

- The Rule Book on standards and procedure for accreditation of higher education institutions¹⁵;

¹⁵ The Rule Book on standards and procedure for accreditation of higher education institutions ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 13/2019).

- The Rule Book on standards and procedure for accreditation of study programs¹⁶;
- The Rule Book on standards for initial accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs¹⁷.

The following rule books have been adopted:

- The Rule Book on standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment of higher education institutions and study programs¹⁸ and
- The Rule Book on standards and procedure for external quality control of higher education institutions¹⁹.

All programs approved under the new procedure must meet the innovative standards, which means a greater emphasis on the student who is placed in the centre of learning, but also the connection with the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia (SQF).

The new regulations on accreditation have introduced Peer review panels (PRP) composed of three teachers, one student and one business representative, which is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Also, unlike previous practice, now PRPs submit a joint report with a detailed description of the achievement of standards according to innovated indicators.

The method of submitting documentation has also been innovated, which is now in line with the general goal of digitizing the sector. That is, the requirements for the digital method of accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs have been defined, and the introduction of NEAQA 2019 software has replaced the old electronic form for entering and processing accreditation data, with a new, modern electronic form harmonized with new accreditation standards.

A particular challenge remains the fact that NEAQA has not yet regained the status of a full member of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education because the ENQA Board, although noting progress in the field of quality assurance, believes that some essential objections to the work of NEAQA have not yet been resolved. The main objections relate to the (non) fulfilment of the following Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area:²⁰

3.4. Thematic analyses

3.6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

2.1. Consideration of internal quality assurance.

¹⁶ The Rule Book on standards and procedure for accreditation of study programs (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 13/2019).

¹⁷ The Rule Book on standards for initial accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 13/2019).

¹⁸ The Rule Book on standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment of higher education institutions and study programs (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 13/2019).

¹⁹ The Rule Book on standards and procedure for external quality control of higher education institutions (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 13/2019).

²⁰ Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015). Brussels, Belgium. Available at: https://www.nat.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ESG_2015-srp.pdf

2.2. Development of a methodology appropriate to the purpose

2.3. Implementation process

2.7. Remarks and complaints

It is important to mention that NEAQA's membership in ENQA, although an important strategic goal, is not a measure of the quality of higher education as such or a condition for the validity of diplomas obtained at higher education institutions in Serbia. This means that, if a national agency enjoys full membership, its work is fully in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and when recognizing foreign diplomas, stricter or more lenient criteria for recognition of diplomas from a particular country may be applied. For this reason, it is important to emphasize that assessing the work of NEAQA is not the same as assessing the quality of our higher education system, so, although these two things are related, one is not an indicator of the other.

In addition, at the proposal of the Executive Board of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), the General Assembly of this Network at a session held in May 2020, awarded NEAQA with the status of a full member in this organization ²¹.

Adult education. Three directions for improving the quality of adult education defined by the Annual Plan for Adult Education of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for 2019 were the improvement of the competencies of employees and staff engaged in adult education; improving the legislative framework in adult education and improving interdepartmental cooperation in the implementation of strategic goals in adult education; and enhancing international cooperation of educational institutions, employees and working staff in adult education at the European level through European networks and projects. Most of these priorities have been partially or completely met, but unfortunately there is little data on the outcomes of adult education and the quality of evaluating the quality of programs, because with the increase in the number of organizers it is more difficult to collect data, primarily due to different authorities over different organizers. Also, some issues that are relevant for a large number of beneficiaries are still unresolved, such as adult education and vocational training programs in the workplace and recognition of prior learning, as well as the introduction of short training courses to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

Expanding the offer of adult education with quality programs was a priority in 2019, and in order to achieve this goal, we worked in parallel to increase the number of Publicly recognized adult education organizers (PRAEO), but also to ensure the quality of their work. Adoption of the Rule Book on detailed conditions regarding programs, staff, space, equipment and teaching aids for acquiring the status of a publicly recognized organizer of adult education activities²² The adoption of the Rule Book enabled better control of the quality of the organizers and the offer of the program. In 2019, the status of PRAEO was granted to institutions (schools, public universities and other organizations) for 72 training programs aimed at acquiring competencies and qualifications required by the labour market. The quality of adult education was also contributed by the active participation of the RS in

²¹ Available at: <https://www.nat.rs/2020/05/27/nat-punopravni-clan-ceenqa/?script=cir>

²² The Rule Book on detailed conditions regarding programs, staff, space, equipment and teaching aids for acquiring the status of a publicly recognized organizer of adult education activities ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 89/2015).

the EPAL platform, within which the Tempus Foundation during 2019 organized several professional development activities and information webinars.

1.2. Improving the professional development of employees in education

Numerous reform changes implemented in accordance with the AP SEDS 2020 create new needs of the system, and in order for the reform to gain full meaning and proper implementation, it must necessarily be accompanied by the development of human resources. As initial teacher education is still part of those changes that are slowly being introduced in higher education, in 2019 there were no significant changes in that area. That is, much more was invested in professional development and teacher training, which were related to the most important innovations that were introduced into the system and which were an integral part of all development projects.

Support to practitioners in preschool education was aimed at: a) implementation of the new Program and b) strengthening the culture of evaluation and self-evaluation of the work of institutions. In the first year, through the implementation of the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project, a trained group of 90 trainers/mentors was established (consisting of 34 university professors, 37 professional associates and 19 educators). 1,890 employees from all 11 preschool institutions completed the training for the application of the Basics of the program in 2019. In addition to this, additional trainings were organized for employees, as part of the professional training provided by the institution and another 284 employees were trained, and preschool institutions also received mentoring support (54 mentoring visits were realized by March 2020). In addition to the above, there were: two-day training on the new Basics of programs for educational advisors from school administrations (attended by 100 educational advisors) and professional support to mentors through the provision of resources, constant communication with mentors in providing support in solving problems in practice, project Support to the reform of the preschool education system (IPA 2014 – SUPER project). Through the same project, the principals were given the opportunity for training, so an online training on documenting educational work was developed for them, and a training for principals was created in such a way that it supports them and prepares them for taking the license exam.²³

Through the project *Support to the Reform of the Preschool Education System*, a training program for mentors and educators was created and training for mentors “Mentoring in developing an inspiring environment for integrated learning of children” was realized (60 practitioners attended training focused on strengthening the capacity of mentors to work with educators to develop a quality inclusive program based on modern pedagogical concepts in accordance with the Fundamentals of the program). In addition, two two-day workshops were held on the topic “Kindergarten culture as a community of practice” (mentors from 50 preschool institutions were included in the workshops)²⁴.

At the level of primary education, support to teachers has also been realized through several projects. In 2019, the teacher training program for the implementation of learning oriented towards learning

²³The training was created by Institute for the Improvement of Education (IIE) with the support of MoESTD, UNICEF and the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy, and it trained 20 trainers for its realization.

²⁴Available at: <http://www.euzatebe.rs/rs/projekti/eu-za-reformu-sistema-predskolskog-vaspitanja-i-obrazovanja-u-srbiji-super>

outcomes was improved, based on the results of the evaluation from 2018, and 583 trainings were realized, during which 18,084 teachers were trained. A new round of these trainings started in April 2020 via the Internet due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 virus pandemic, and for the first time, teachers of professional subjects in the field of Electrical Engineering and Economics, Law and Administration will be included in these trainings.²⁵ As the strengthening of teachers' competencies for working with students from vulnerable groups in regular classes is still a topic that must be a priority of professional development, special attention was paid to it through trainings realized during 2019. The training Activities for support to all students – differentiation of classes attended by 180 advisors of external associates from all school administrations was also accredited.

To work with students from vulnerable groups, teachers could additionally improve by attending trainings in the field of social inclusion: three trainings for improving the competencies of primary school teachers for working with blind students and “Training for planning, implementing and monitoring measures to prevent dropouts”. As the amendments to The Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (LFES) stipulate that the school is obliged to organize additional classes for students who do not know Serbian enough, MoESTD within the MADAD 2 project implemented training for 100 teachers of Serbian for the application of Standards and Curricula and programs of teaching and learning for Serbian as a foreign language developed in cooperation with IIE.

Given the priority given to digital competencies of teachers, IIE has implemented several different professional development programs for teachers in order to develop their digital literacy: within the project Digital Classroom – Training for the use of digital educational materials – realized 625 trainings attended by 9,492 primary teachers school; Python programming language training - 1,035 informatics teachers in primary schools trained; Training to achieve digital competencies - 3,389 primary school teachers have undergone this training to reach the basic level of digital competencies. The first online conference “Digital Education 2020” was held, the focus of which was on the application of digital tools in communication. The conference was attended by over 5,000 participants²⁶ and on that occasion it was especially emphasized how many opportunities the use of information and communication technologies offers to education.

In 2019, IEQE paid special attention to the quality of teaching in the context of innovations in teaching and innovated standards. Trainings for the application of achievement standards on the Moodle platform continued in order to more successfully implement educational standards of foreign languages in the teaching process for six languages (English, German, Russian, French, Italian and Spanish). 508 teachers completed the training in this cycle. Trainings for teachers who teach in the language of a national minority – *Training Program for Teachers for the Implementation of Teaching Oriented Outcomes* and *Training of Teachers for the Application of General Standards of Achievement for the End of Secondary Education* for the Subject Mother Tongue and Literature were also organized (89 teachers from 65 schools successfully completed the training).

At the level of general secondary and arts education, the capacity for outcome-based education has continued to be strengthened. Based on the experience in the implementation of trainings during 2018, teacher training programs aimed at achieving outcomes focused on learning outcomes and

²⁵ Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/22-4-2020-godine-pocinje-onlajn-obuka-za-realizaciju-nastave-orijentisane-ka-ishodima-ucenja-za-prvi-krug>

²⁶ Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/odrzana-prva-onlajn-konferencija-2digitalno-obrazovanje-2020/>

training programs for teachers of physics and psychology were developed and teacher training for the implementation of teaching oriented towards learning outcomes continued (this training during 2018 and 2019, thousands of teachers, professional associates and high school principals attended). Through six modules, the training of teachers who teach in special IT departments of the first and second grades of the high school was realized (the training was attended by 130 teachers).

As leadership in education is a particularly important aspect of quality, it is important to mention that in 2019, trainings were held for principals according to a four-day program developed by IIE, and in accordance with the Rule Book on training and exams for licenses for directors of educational institutions ²⁷ adopted in 2018.

When it comes to teachers who implement functional primary adult education, the Tempus Foundation organized a conference “Methods and techniques for the development of key competencies in adult primary education” as well as 11 accredited trainings “Basic andragogical skills” for teachers implementing the FPAE program and four webinars in the form of lectures in order to approach and present the opportunities provided by the EPAL platform. Trainings on basic andragogical skills (module 1) were realized for about 260 teachers from 28 schools that implement FPAE, as well as trainings (modules 1 to 7) for engaged staff within PRAEO in order to improve competencies for working with adults.

Opportunities provided by EU programs have also been used in higher education for professional development. Through mobility programs and activities implemented by the Tempus Foundation, teachers had the opportunity for exchanges with colleagues from abroad and were enabled to attend professional gatherings. The Tempus Foundation organized a two-day event of international cooperation activities (TCA – Transnational Cooperation Activities) which was organized for teachers, “Effective practices in STEM (science – technology – engineering – mathematics) education”. During 2019, the Tempus Foundation supported 16 international cooperation events with 38 participants from Serbia, organized by colleagues from other national Erasmus offices.

Through the Erasmus + project, during 2019 the number of funded projects in mobility projects for general, vocational and adult education, institutions and organizations from Serbia were coordinators for 65 projects (25 in general education, 34 projects in vocational and 6 projects in adult education). Our organizations were also partnering in 27 projects (17 in general, eight in vocational and two in adult education), while in all these projects during 2019, a total of 1,612 teachers, students and non-teaching staff from Serbia were involved in mobility. The topics of mobility projects that were most prevalent in general education are innovative curricula and methods and information and communication technologies. In the sector of vocational education, the topic of cooperation of educational institutions with the sector of economy and business was the most represented one.

1.3. Improving the quality and availability of textbooks

²⁷The Rule Book on the training program and taking the exam for the license for the director of the educational institution, (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia –The Educational Gazette”, no. 63/2018).

During 2019 and the beginning of 2020, about 389 decisions were made on approving textbooks, i.e., textbook sets in the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet.²⁸ Catalogue of approved textbooks for the 2019/2020 school year is available on the MoESTD's web-page²⁹ – *The Textbook catalogue for second and sixth grade, and more additions to The Catalogue of textbooks for first and fifth grade.*

During 2019, out of the planned 184 textbooks based on the memorandum and annex of the memorandum between MoESTD, the Institute for Textbooks and eight national councils of national minorities (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Croatian) signed in 2016, 123 textbooks were printed (67%). The needs for new textbooks that will be prepared according to the new curricula have been mapped in the IIE and MoESTD. At the beginning of 2020, the Revised Catalogue of Textbooks in the Languages of National Minorities for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education was published, for the school year 2020/2021 and they were approved according to the new curricula, as well as those textbooks that are valid until the new ones become approved. This catalogue contains 1112 textbooks in the languages of national minorities that will be in use in the 2020/21 school year.

Textbooks for the first four grades of primary school were printed for the Roma language with elements of national culture through the project “Introduction of the Roma language in primary schools in Serbia” implemented by the NGO Centre for Education of Roma and Ethnic Communities from Belgrade and supported by the EU Delegation in Serbia. MoESTD approved textbooks for the elective program Roma language with elements of national culture, and they are included in the Catalogue of textbooks in the languages of national minorities for the 2018/19 school year.

The project Teaching contents through a digital textbook / digital classroom continued in 2019. The total number of classes in which students use digital educational content – digital textbooks is 46,917. During 2019, IIE reviewed 175 textbooks in electronic form, and the total of approved electronic textbooks for the first, second, fifth and sixth grade is 316, used within the Digital Classroom project.

1.4. Improvement in the field of quality evaluation

In the field of preschool education, significant reforms aimed at improving quality have begun, and thus the foundations have been laid for a quality assurance system at this level. The Rule Book on closer conditions for establishing, starting work and performing the activities of a preschool institution has been adopted³⁰ and it prescribes the conditions that a preschool institution must meet in order to be verified to perform activities, MoESTD issues an act on verification of preschool institutions, and the list of verified institutions is available on the MoESTD web-site.³¹

²⁸ Approved textbooks in the language and script of the national minority are presented in the part related to the education of members of national minority communities.

²⁹ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/udzbenici/>

³⁰ The Rule Book on detailed conditions for establishing, starting work and performing the activities of a preschool institution (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 1/2019).

³¹ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/predskolsko/>

The institution can start working when it is determined that it meets the conditions for establishment and start of work and receives a decision on verification. Although these solutions have opened up space for the establishment of a system, a number of practical and legislative issues remain to be resolved. The body for accreditation of preschool institutions and programs provided for in the Action Plan is not prescribed by the current legal framework, so the establishment of a full accreditation system that includes quality control is still waiting for all issues of methodology and competencies to be regulated in detail.

During 2018, national testing of students - seventh grade elementary school students and third grade high school students - was conducted. Testing was conducted on a representative sample of students from 148 primary and 135 secondary schools in three subjects: Mathematics, Physics and History. Unfortunately, the report is not yet available. Serbia also participated in the TIMSS 2019 cycle (during 2018, the Institute for Pedagogical Research conducted a pilot test) - but the results of the research are expected by the end of 2020. Based on the decision of MoESTD, Serbia joined the fifth round of the international survey of reading literacy of fourth grade students, PIRLS 2021. The aim of this research is to collect and analyse data on reading competencies of fourth grade primary school students, as well as data on family and school context on learning to read. During 2019, testing tasks were translated and adapted, a sample was made and communication and cooperation with schools was achieved.

When it comes to evaluating the quality of school work, in 2018, the first cycle of external evaluation of the quality of primary school work was completed.³² The average grade of the general quality of the evaluated institutions ³³ is 2.8 (the lowest grade is 1, and the highest is 4). 70% of schools received a grade of 3 and 4; 4% was graded one and the other schools received a grade of two. The results of the evaluation showed that schools need support in raising the quality of teaching and learning and providing conditions for better educational achievements.³⁴ IEQE also approached the revision of the quality standards of the work of institutions that were completed for this phase by adopting a new Rule Book on the quality standards of the work of institutions³⁵. In 2019, the standards for evaluating the quality of work of institutions were changed and preparatory actions for the new cycle of external evaluation were performed. One of the important legal acts is the adopted Rule Book on evaluating the quality of work of the institution³⁶, which, among other things, prescribes basic criteria for self-evaluation and evaluation, content and manner of publishing the results of self-evaluation and evaluation, as well as the Rule Book on professional and pedagogical supervision³⁷ which regulates the manner of performing professional-pedagogical supervision over the work of institutions,

³² The first cycle began in May 2012.

³³ 1,154 primary schools (music, special and adult primary schools) were evaluated and 1,103 primary schools were analysed.

³⁴ The quality of work of educational institutions in the Republic of Serbia, Institute for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education, Belgrade, 2020.

³⁵ The Rule Book on quality standards of work of the institution ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette", no. 14/2018).

³⁶ The Rule Book on evaluating the quality of work of the institution ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 10/2019).

³⁷ The Rule Book on professional and pedagogical supervision ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 87/2019).

criteria for evaluating the quality of work of the institution, the manner of evaluating the work of an educational advisor, etc. As self-evaluation is as important a process as external evaluation, 98 implementers were trained for the process of self-evaluation of the work of institutions, who later held 192 trainings during which 2,202 teachers were trained to apply the standards.

By participating in the PISA cycle in 2018, Serbia again obtained comparable data on student progress. In January 2020, the results of this research were published,³⁸ showing that in relation to the previous PISA cycle, there are no significant differences in student achievement in our country. While in OECD countries the percentage of functionally illiterate students, depending on the domain of assessment, ranges from 21% to 25%, in Serbia this range is from 38% to 40%. Compared to OECD countries, the competencies of students from Serbia are lower by 48 points on the reading literacy scale, 41 points on the mathematical literacy scale and 49 on the scientific literacy scale, which corresponds to the effect of 1.5 years of schooling in OECD countries. All this placed Serbia on the 45th place out of 79 countries that participated in this round of PISA research. Another important finding for educational policy is that high school students achieve better results compared to their peers in secondary vocational schools, and that between high school students and students attending three-year secondary vocational education profiles, the achievement differs by about 150 points on average. The results of the analysis of the final exam in primary school give a similar warning - in 2019, IEQE prepared a report on the results of the final exam at the end of primary education in the 2018/2019 school year³⁹ and according to these results, more than half of the districts achieve below-average achievements on the test in the Serbian language and the combined test, and that two thirds of the districts have below-average results on the test in mathematics.

As a preparatory activity for the PISA 2021 pilot survey, IEQE undertook the following activities – testing tasks were translated and adapted, a sample was made and communication and cooperation with schools was established.

The establishment of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) is also important for the improvement of the student achievement monitoring system. In 2019, the Rule Book on the Education Management Information System was adopted, which prescribes more detailed conditions and the manner of establishing EMIS, as well as the Rule Book on more detailed conditions in the procedure of assigning a unique educational number.⁴⁰

Activities realized within the project Improving the quality of secondary education through the introduction of final exams (general, artistic and vocational finals and final exam at the end of three years of secondary vocational education and upbringing) – State Matriculation Examination (State Matura), which began in 2019, represent some of the most important activities undertaken in order to more objectively monitor post-secondary achievement. Given the complexity of this reform effort and the need to gradually develop all aspects, procedures and mechanisms to ensure the quality of this exam, MoESTD has decided to postpone the implementation for one year – if the new plan is realized, the state Matriculation examination at the end of secondary education will be conducted in

³⁸ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PISA-2018-IZVE%C5%A0TAJ.pdf>

³⁹ The reports are available on the IEQE web-site - <https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/izvestaj-o-rezultatima-za-skolsku-2018-2019.pdf>

⁴⁰ The Rule Book on detailed conditions in the procedure of assigning a unique educational number (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 81/2019).

2021/2022 school year (children born in 2005 and later can expect to take the new final exam). It is planned that from 2022, the results of the State Matriculation Exam will replace the entrance exams for enrolment in the higher education system, i.e., that the results of the State Matriculation Exam will be integrated into the admission procedures to higher education institutions. IEQE worked on the preparation of tasks for the base of tasks that will be used in the first phase of the implementation of the final exam in general education subjects. 200 assignments in mathematics, Serbian language, physics, history, geography, biology and chemistry were prepared. For 2019, it was planned to prepare tasks for foreign languages and translate existing tasks into the languages of national minorities. In secondary vocational education, final exams are currently realized in accordance with the methodology developed for educational profiles that reach the final year in a given school year, and students of these profiles from 2021 take the final exam according to the new concept (practically a year earlier than most other students of the generation because they are three-year educational profiles). During 2019, a number of consultative activities were realized between MoESTD, IEQE, IIE and the Project team.

When we talk about the dual model in secondary vocational education, the quality assurance system relies on the existing one but also has additional components. During 2019, The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS) adopted amendments to the Rule Book on the organization of the composition and manner of work of the Commission for determining the fulfilment of conditions for conducting learning through work with the employer.⁴¹ In accordance with the Law on Dual Education and the above regulations, in 2019 CCIS realized the accreditation of companies, organized trainings for instructors, established and regularly updated the Register of employers who met the requirements for learning by doing and established a register of signed contracts on dual education. The establishment of these registers enables the transparency of data on companies and schools with which companies have signed agreements on dual education. In order to establish a system for monitoring vocational education, in 2019 the work on creating a proposal for a framework for monitoring and evaluation of the National Model of Dual Education began, with a full set of instruments, whose piloting began in the same year, and in 2020 is expected to continue work on in this field.

During 2018, the Rule Book on standards for self-evaluation and quality assessment of higher education institutions and study programs and the Rule Book on standards and procedure for external quality assurance of higher education institutions were prepared and adopted at the beginning of 2019. Accreditation and quality control after the break that lasted until the establishment of NEAQA's operational capacities was performed through improved procedures and the application of a new methodology. One of the biggest objections to the previous procedure, and at the same time what the evaluations of the accreditation cycle showed, was the way the reviewers worked. In its report, ENQA commends all the novelties regarding the structure of commissions and the selection of reviewers who are no longer anonymous, but points out that even if there is an internal process of evaluating the work of reviewers based on when they are assigned cases – this process is not clear and transparent.

⁴¹The Rule Book on the organization of the composition and manner of work of the Commission for determining the fulfilment of conditions for conducting learning through work with the employer ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 46 of 15th June 2018, 74 of 18th October 2019).

1.5. Development of inclusive education

According to the SORS data, for the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year, 0.87% of the total student population of primary school age (a total of 4,494 students) attend primary schools and classes for students with disabilities. This places Serbia among the countries with the lowest percentage of students who attend primary education outside of typical primary schools. However, in primary schools in Serbia, special classes for children with serious disabilities are still allowed, often combined and there is not enough data on the actual structure of students according to the type of difficulty that these classes attend.

Work on the promotion of inclusive education takes place through several development directions, through national policies, projects of international partners and cross-sectoral cooperation. This mobilization of more resources led to significant steps in 2019. Starting from strengthening the capacity of the system itself, MoESTD is within the project “Improving inclusive education through the activities of the Group for Minority Education, Social Inclusion and Protection from Violence and Discrimination”, which is being implemented within the Work Plan for the period 2019-2020, signed between UNICEF and MoESTD, worked specifically on strengthening the staff of schools for the prevention of dropouts, as well as groups of external associates to support learning for all students through the process of differentiation of teaching. 180 advisors of external associates from all school administrations were trained. An important feature of effective policies aimed at supporting vulnerable groups is the cooperation of the sector, and in that sense, in 2019, in cooperation with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, work was done to improve the competencies of members of the Intersectoral Committee for assessing the needs for additional educational, healthcare and social support (ISC), to assess the need for additional educational, health and social support through the training program “Multisectoral cooperation to quality support for children, students and adults.” Training was realized in two cycles in Nis, Kragujevac, Belgrade and Zrenjanin for about 560 ISC members in the field of education, social protection and health, as well as ISC coordinators and presidents.

At the level of preschool education, activities were mostly focused on increasing the coverage of children from vulnerable groups, primarily Roma. Under the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project, the opening of space for about 17,000 new places for children aged 3 to 5.5 in new, renovated or repurposed facilities in at least 30 cities and municipalities in the Republic of Serbia has begun. It is also planned to provide subsidies for local governments, in order to enable the most vulnerable families to include children aged 3 to 5.5 free of charge in preschool education programs. Another project aimed at strengthening the local community is the project *Support to the Reform of the Preschool Education System* (IPA 14 - SUPER project), which provides support to local actors to connect and achieve a higher level of cooperation to create a synergy of measures aimed at the most vulnerable families.

Although pedagogical assistants have long been part of the system, and as practice shows they play an important role in many schools, their status has not been fully regulated so far, so not all schools in need have been able to receive such support. In 2019, MoESTD adopted the Rule Book on pedagogical assistant and andragogical assistant, which regulates and prescribes the work of

pedagogical assistants for children and Roma students who need additional support in education, then the work of pedagogical assistants for working with children and students with disabilities, as well as the work of an andragogical assistant.

Schools for students with disabilities in the future are also seen as resource centres for typical schools, and those that have been active so far have continued to provide support to typical schools. In "Veljko Ramadanović" school in Zemun, a training of teachers was held for working with children / students with visual impairments and providing support during Braille literacy for 7 teachers who have children who use Braille in their classes.

In 2019, the program *Procurement of textbooks and other teaching aids for primary school students* continued, in order to provide free textbooks, textbook sets and other teaching aids that the school chose for the teaching and learning process in the 2019/2020 school year. In 2019, the coverage of students from socially vulnerable categories (recipients of social assistance) who were identified as users of free textbooks was higher than in the previous year (15.5%) and amounted to 16.5%; and the coverage of the planned schools was 100%.

High school is still not compulsory and for this reason previous levels of education seem to have been more in the focus of inclusive policies but the percentage of students enrolled in the IEP in high schools is growing from year to year. According to EMIS data in the 2018/2019 school year, out of 252,108 high school students (high schools, vocational and art schools), 566 students were educated according to IEP 1 (0.22%), 1,154 students per IEP 2 (0.46%), and 113 students according to IEP 3 (0.04%). For now, support measures during enrolment are reduced to scholarships and an affirmative measure of enrolment in high school for students of the Roma community. In the school year 2019/20. 2,009 Roma students were enrolled through affirmative action, of which 57% were Roma girls. More than 65% of students enrolled through affirmative action, who are beneficiaries of scholarships and have mentoring support, complete secondary education.

With the introduction of the dual model of secondary vocational education, the issue of equality has been transferred from schools to the work context - the obligation for equal treatment of students and access to education is now shared by teachers and instructors in companies. The instructor training program is an integral part of the Rule Book on the training program, closer conditions and other issues of importance for taking the instructor exam⁴² (area 5).

Education of migrant students and students enrolled in the readmission process. In 2019, through the support provided by MoESTD to schools from the MADAD 2 program and the engagement of special external school associates, children from families located in reception and asylum centres were able to attend schools nearby.

In working with migrant students / asylum seekers, most schools applied an adapted approach to teaching, and the specific realization depended on the working conditions and the dynamics of students' transition. Schools also, in large numbers, kept school and pedagogical documentation, which includes a school report for a migrant student / asylum seeker with a summary in English. In

⁴² The Rule Book on training program, closer conditions and other issues of importance for taking the instructor exam ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 70/2018)

September 2019, the enrolment of migrant students in educational institutions continued. Coverage of the system of education of these students in the school year 2019/20 is 97-98%.

Number of migrant students, school year 2019-2020.

School Year 2019-2020				
2019	PS	HS	PPP	Total
September	131	59	18	208
October	124	59	9	192
November	135	51	11	197
December	118	50	5	173

The percentage of migrant students continuing their education in secondary schools is growing from year to year. In the school year 2018/2019, 17% of migrant students continued their education in secondary schools. In the school year 2019/2020, that percentage is 28-30%. MoESTD supported this process by regulating the final exam procedure and the commitment of school administrations to find places for these students in high schools. Educational advisors at school administrations mapped the wishes of eighth grade migrant students in cooperation with schools, then mapped high schools that are close to the centres and where there are vacancies after the second enrolment period, informed high schools about the possibilities of including migrant students in the teaching process and informed migrant parents and children of this possibility.

MoESTD continues to improve the availability and quality of education for migrant students / asylum seekers through a new project "Support to the Migration Management System in the Republic of Serbia" under the Special Measure for Strengthening the Response Capacity of the Republic of Serbia pre-accession assistance (IPA II). The duration of the project is 18 months, January 2020 - June 2021, and the specific goal of the part of the project related to education is to improve the capacity of professionals in the education system to provide adequate support to migrants to create a stimulating and tolerant educational environment.

Schools had the opportunity to implement activities, through grants, specifically tailored to their needs and the students they work with, so over 600 extracurricular activities were held, over 700 additional classes, a large number of individual plans were made and about 800 sets of textbooks and teaching aids were procured. All good practices in schools are documented and published through the Catalogue of Good Practices⁴³ and the online platform.⁴⁴

Students returned under the Readmission Agreement are also a category of students who are especially taken into account given the difficulties they often encounter when joining our education system. During the 2019/20 school year, a total of 77 students, returnees by readmission, 32 girls

⁴³ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MADAD-katalog-dobre-prakse.pdf>

⁴⁴ Available at: www.remis.rshttps://remis.mycpanel.rs/suite1/katalog_dobrih_praksi/

and 45 boys were enrolled in primary schools in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Facilitated enrolment and / or return to school procedures are applied for these students, while the prior knowledge assessment team assesses prior knowledge and follows the inclusion of students in regular classes. The majority of students returned after readmission in the 2019/2020 school year were enrolled in the age-appropriate grade, 70 of them (91%), and thus did not lose the year of schooling, while the rest were enrolled in lower grades according to the results of previous knowledge and ability tests. During the current 2019/2020 school year, students returned by readmission were included in 19 primary schools in school administrations: Belgrade, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Valjevo, Sombor, Čačak, Kruševac, Kraljevo and Zrenjanin. The highest concentration of returnees was recorded in the school administrations of Belgrade, Zrenjanin and Leskovac. Of the enrolled students, 75 received free textbooks, and a special measure of support for returning students is represented by pedagogical assistants who, through their engagement, mitigate the consequences of absenteeism and contribute to the regularity of attending classes. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, through a competition for the use of budget funds, has determined funds for 1 project whose beneficiaries are, among other things, families and returnee students upon readmission.

2. Increasing the coverage of education

Although the Republic of Serbia has almost complete coverage of primary education, a small percentage of children who still remain excluded are concentrated in groups of the population that are considered vulnerable. As primary education is the only compulsory level of education in Serbia, this exclusion is even more visible at the level of enrolment of children from 3.5 to 5.5 years of age in preschool education and in secondary education.

Preschool education. In preschool education, there is a clear difference in coverage in different age groups, but the data also indicate a lack of capacity of institutions to accept all children, so in 2019, 6,740 children remained unenrolled due to overcrowding. In the 2019/2020 school year, children aged six months to three years make up 24%, and children from the age of three until they start school, 76% of the population covered by preschool education. The obligatory preparatory preschool program was attended by 63,773 children, which is 97.36% of children in the appropriate age group (30,959 girls and 32,814 boys). Most of them (55%) attended the preparatory preschool program all day long.⁴⁵

In line with these data, MoESTD focused its activities on increasing the coverage in the age category where it is smaller and on expanding the capacity in accordance with the needs of local governments. Within the project IPA 2014 - SUPER project and the expected result of the project to support the strengthening of professional capacities of LSG, seven three-day trainings were realized⁴⁶ attended by 200 representatives from 50 involved local communities, while the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project began to increase the number of vacancies (construction of new, reconstruction, adaptation and conversion of available facilities and spaces in the local community),

⁴⁵Available at: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2019/Pdf/G20191098.pdf>

⁴⁶ The trainings were realized during October and November 2019 in Brzeće, Šabac, Kragujevac, Niš, Golubac, Titel and Vršac.

especially for children from vulnerable social groups, ages 3 to 5.5 years. In order to meet the diverse needs of families, the Law on Preschool Education has set the legal basis for the adoption of a Rule Book that will further regulate the implementation of various forms and programs of educational work and other forms of work and services provided by preschool, which should contribute introduction of at least a half-day preschool program lasting one school year for all children between 3 and 5.5 years of age. The IPA 14 - SUPER project also supports the drafting of the necessary legislation as part of its activities.

Primary Education. At the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year, the number of students in primary schools was 52.7834 (256,245 girls), and at the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year it was 517,826 (251,835 students), which is 10,008 students less than in the previous school year.⁴⁷ This decline may also be caused by migration and depopulation, but as there are no available data on coverage for the 2019/2020 school year, it cannot be said with certainty that it has remained at the same level.

Bearing in mind that the main challenge is to design and implement mechanisms that can increase the coverage of students from vulnerable groups, and later prevent their dropout from education, in addition to systemic measures that began in previous years, during 2019 various projects were implemented in cooperation with international partners. Only some of them are: "Educational measures in the prevention of child marriage" and "Overcoming differences in equity and increasing access to quality inclusive education for Roma children and other children outside school education" (UNICEF), "Improving the competencies of institutions for prevention and treatment in cases of discrimination" (GIZ), "Together towards high school - Support for children from vulnerable groups in the transition to high school", (Pestalozzi Children's Foundation), and "Quality education for Roma students" (Save the Children). At the beginning of 2020, the project "Partnership for Fair Quality Education" was launched, implemented by the CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy, in cooperation with MoESTD, with the support of the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation, which aims to contribute to Roma and other children, from segregated schools and schools at the risk of segregation, realize the right to quality education.

In order to prevent discrimination and segregation, MoESTD, in addition to the existing anti-discrimination legislative framework, has developed a whole set of accompanying acts.⁴⁸ According to the Rule Book on detailed criteria for recognizing forms of discrimination by an employee, child, student or third party in an educational institution, segregation is recognized as a particularly severe case of discrimination in the implementation of the educational process and if it is present at the school level, it is necessary to include local self-government in order to develop an action plan for desegregation.

In order to strengthen the capacity of all responsible parties in this area, the List of programs of public interest also includes training for teachers "Let anti-discrimination be our inspiration" – prevention

⁴⁷Available at: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Pdf/G20201073.pdf>

⁴⁸The Rule Book on detailed criteria for recognizing forms of discrimination by an employee, child, student or third party in an educational institution ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 22/2016) and the Rule Book on the institution's actions in case of suspicion or established discriminatory behaviour and insults to the reputation, part or dignity of a person ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 65/2018).

and overcoming discrimination in kindergarten and school. The training will be implemented by GIZ and CIP, and the target group are employees in preschool institutions and schools.

With the aim of expanding the network of pedagogical assistants and hiring new ones, an invitation was issued to primary schools to apply for hiring pedagogical assistants on the basis of established criteria. In the same way, in the 2018/2019 school year, a total of 261 pedagogical assistants were engaged in primary schools and preschool institutions.

One of the ideas that developed from the need to optimize school support in some way, developed a model in which schools are selected to represent support for several other schools in the area and this model was piloted during 2019 with the support of UNICEF.⁴⁹ A new model of educating students with a large educational discontinuity or learning difficulties was also piloted. Piloting of the model referred to children older than seven and a half years (who were never enrolled in the first grade, or started and for some reason dropped out of school, as well as migrant children and others who drop out of school) and was conducted at school "Branko Pešić" from Zemun, in cooperation with seven other primary schools in Zemun.

In order to facilitate access to education for foreign citizens, stateless persons and applicants for citizenship, the LFES⁵⁰ now stipulates that they exercise the right to education, under the same conditions and in the manner prescribed by law for RS citizens, but with an important novelty, which is to teach Serbian as a foreign language for children and students, expelled and displaced persons, refugees and migrants and children and students who have been returned to the country on the basis of a readmission agreement and who do not know the language which is taught at the institution. The Qualification Agency, in accordance with the simplified procedure for equalization of certificates, i.e., the request for recognition of diplomas, enabled for 65 (during the school year 2019/2020) students to attend classes more easily.

The practice of providing help and support to students from vulnerable groups⁵¹ through the procurement of textbooks and other teaching aids continued.

High school education. The largest percentage of students in Serbia enrol secondary vocational schools, while high schools and art schools are chosen by about 24% of students.

Secondary education in the Republic of Serbia is not yet compulsory, and its coverage is lower than primary education, although it has shown growth in recent years. What still leaves room for optimism is that the dropout rate in secondary education goes up to 1% per year. As an important step towards the introduction of compulsory secondary education in 2019, a feasibility study was made on the introduction of compulsory secondary education, which indicates that this move would not require

⁴⁹ Project "Overcoming differences in equity and increasing access to quality inclusive education for Roma children and other children outside school education".

⁵⁰ Article 23 Law on Fundamentals of the Education System ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 10/2019, 27/2018 – other law and 6/2020).

⁵¹ Students from socially / financially disadvantaged families (recipients of financial social assistance); students with disabilities and the ones who acquire primary education according to an individual educational plan and students who do not perform educational work according to an individual educational plan, but have the need to adaptation (increased font, Braille, electronic format); the ones who are the third child or every next child born in the family.

new human resources and infrastructure investments, and would significantly reduce school dropout.

Given the way of enrolling in secondary schools, through scheduling based on a wish list, students who want to enrol a secondary school are usually enrolled somewhere, but the risk of dropping out is mostly due to dissatisfaction with enrolled profile (student did not have enough points to enrol in any of the profiles or schools were his first wishes), poor financial situation or poor prior knowledge that they bring from primary school. The coverage of students from vulnerable groups is still far smaller than students from the general population and therefore the measures taken by MoESTD are primarily aimed at supporting not only enrolment but also attendance for these students.

Within the project "Development, implementation and monitoring of a sustainable state mechanism for awarding scholarships to Roma high school students" (IPA 2014), it was possible to increase the number of scholarships for Roma high school students by 500 with mild criteria related to achievement and exemplary behaviour. Through the same project, mentoring support continued for 180 scholarship holders of the Roma Education Fund (REF) who exercised the right to renew the scholarship in the 2019/20 school year, which is extremely important for monitoring students who are enrolled under more favourable conditions. The results so far have shown that in the 2019/2020 school year, 2,009 Roma students were enrolled through affirmative action, of which 56% were Roma girls. It is especially important to point out that the data from MoESTD show that more than 65% of students enrolled through affirmative action and who are beneficiaries of scholarships and at the same time have mentoring support – are finishing high school.

It is estimated that 40% of members of the Roma community attend a functional adult primary education program.

The Rule Book on pupil and student loans and scholarships has also been amended ⁵² in the part of milder criteria for vulnerable social groups - the success criterion for Roma students, students without both parents and students with disabilities has ceased to apply.

As almost 75% of students are currently enrolled in secondary vocational schools, in the reporting period it was crucial to ensure that approach was fair and accessible but also in line with the real needs of the economy. In that sense, the two most important activities were the development of the city / municipal proposal of the enrolment plan and the development of the proposal of the enrolment plan at the level of school administration. Compared to last year, there were no changes in the criteria to be taken into account when creating enrolment in high schools for the 2019/2020 school year, but many activities were dedicated to increasing the coverage of dual education, primarily by encouraging employers to include promotion among students and parents. Thus, the number of dual educational profiles was increased by 37, out of which 4 new educational profiles were created, which are implemented according to the dual model, in accordance with the needs of the labour market, in the fields of information technology, military aviation, construction, textiles and leather. In the period from December 2018 to June 2019, the promotion of the National Model of Dual and Entrepreneurial Education was realized, in which, in addition to schools and companies from the city where the promotion was realized, the participants were also schools and employers. In addition

⁵² The Rule Book on student loans and scholarships ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 46/10, 47/11, 56/12, 75/13 and 111/17)

to promotional activities at the local level, the Week of Dual Education was organized in cooperation with The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS), which lasted from October 21st to 25th 2019, and within which meetings “Dual Education - experiences of German companies in Serbia”⁵³ and “Dual education in Serbia 2019: the role of the private sector” were organized. In order to promote, two conferences were organized: “Dual education - to know what I'm doing”⁵⁴ and “Dual education - knowledge for the future”⁵⁵, organized by MoESTD and CCIS.

To increase the coverage of general secondary education, the measures were more focused on innovating curricula and were closely linked to quality improvement measures to make this type of secondary education more attractive to students. That is, in accordance with the trends in economics and the expressed interest of students, within the framework of high school education in the 2019/2020 school year, there was an increase in the number of specialized IT departments in high schools throughout Serbia, as well as the introduction of specialized departments for biology and chemistry.

It is important to mention that the continuity between primary and secondary education is also recognized by international partners, so the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation started the second phase of the project “Together towards high school - Support for children from vulnerable groups in transition to high school”, where the project focuses, this time, on connecting the primary schools with which it was done during the previous three years with the secondary schools towards which students who are in the risk of not continuing their education after primary education gravitate. This way, continuous support is created around students, and it is especially important to emphasize that the project will test models of cooperation between primary and secondary schools with LSG in ensuring the transition of students from primary to secondary schools and prevention of dropouts from secondary education.

Higher education. A special segment of the State Matriculation Examination Project is dedicated to the preparation of higher education institutions for integrating the results of the future State Matriculation Examination into their candidate admission procedures. Given that higher education institutions have autonomy that includes the conditions for admission of candidates, it is necessary to work intensively with representatives of the academic community in introducing and implementing a major reform such as the State Matriculation Examination, which is already being worked on through the State Matriculation Exam Project – Teachers from higher education institutions are involved in working groups for the preparation of examination material and workshops are planned with the aim of properly informing about the State Matriculation Examination and providing support for integrating the results of the State Matriculation Examination into the procedures of universities and other Higher Education Institutions.

The law provides benefits for students who study in addition to the minimum number of ECTS credits earned in the school year (30 ECTS), as well as a longer duration of student status in the enrolled study program (three times the duration of the regular study program).

⁵³ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/zapocela-nedelja-dualnog-obrazovanja-u-srbiji/>

⁵⁴ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/vise-od-1-000-ucenika-na-konferenciji-o-dualnom-modelu-obrazovanja/>

⁵⁵ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/odrzana-konferencija-dualno-obrazovanje-znanje-za-buducnost/>

When it comes to supporting vulnerable groups of students in 2019, the Rule Book on student loans and scholarships has been amended⁵⁶ and, as already mentioned, in the part of milder criteria for vulnerable social groups – the criterion of success for Roma students is no longer applied, as well as for those students who do not have both parents and students with disabilities. Affirmative measures for enrolment in universities still exist in the form of place norms that are kept for certain groups of students in each program. These are, above all, Roma students and students with disabilities. The Roma National Council points out that despite attempts to make this process transparent and fairer, there are still attempts of abuse. In 2019, this council issued 141 recommendations for the enrolment of Roma students, according to affirmative measures, and in 2019/2020 academic year, 170 young Roma men and women, of whom 120 were enrolled, applied for the use of the Affirmative Enrolment Program at Higher Education Institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia.

Through programs intended for foreign students, new enrolments were also realized: “World in Serbia” for the 2019/2020 academic year with 116 scholarships; “Serbia for Serbs from the region” for the 2019/2020 academic year with 30 scholarships; and through the competition for scholarships of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the school year 2019/2020, for foreign students on the basis of bilateral agreements 73 scholarships were awarded for training at faculties and 44 scholarships for attending a summer school of the Serbian language for 3 weeks.

Adult education. Of all students enrolled in Functional Primary Adult Education, only about half complete all three cycles. This unfavourable picture is caused by various factors. If we talk about the reasons for the participants, they mainly refer to the unresolved issue of transportation (the price of transportation is high because the participants are unemployed, and schools are often far from their place of residence), seasonal work (especially visible to Roma students) and giving up the final exam. However, at the systemic level, there are factors that adversely affect graduation, such as the lack of qualified staff in schools implementing FPAE and the inadequacy of the network of these schools in relation to the number and territorial distribution of adults who need this type of education.⁵⁷ Adoption of the Rule Book on standards of career guidance and counselling services⁵⁸ and The Recommendation for the Implementation of the Plan for the Application of Career Guidance and Counselling, and the Instruction on Methodology for Determining the Need for Professional Development in Public Administration Bodies have supplemented the legislative framework for adult education, which should contribute to better supply planning and adequate programs.

During 2019, in this area, most work was done on regulating the procedures for obtaining a license for PRAEO and expanding their program offer. However, in 2019, schools received accreditation for 8 programs, public universities for 34, and other organizations for 30 training programs, which compared to 2018 represents a decrease in the number of training programs implemented by schools (19 programs in 2018) and increase in the number of training programs implemented by public universities (9 programs in 2018), while the number of programs of other organizations is the same (30 programs in 2018). In accordance with the Government's measures for increasing IT trainings

⁵⁶ The Rule Book on Pupil and Student Loans and Scholarships (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, nos. 18/10, 55/13, 27/18 – other law and 10/19).

⁵⁷ Annual plan of adult education in the Republic of Serbia for 2019. Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/obrazovanje-odraslih/>

⁵⁸ The Rule Book on standards of career guidance and counseling services (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 43/19).

within the framework of non-formal adult education, in 2019, trainings were realized within the retraining program for employees and an invitation for a retraining program for IT intended for persons with disabilities from the city of Belgrade was published.⁵⁹

3. Increasing the relevance of education

The relevance of education viewed through compliance with the immediate and developmental needs of individuals, economic, cultural, research, educational, public, administrative and other systems seems like a clear goal, but in fact it is a continuous process of maintaining relevance rather than achieving a goal. That is, the constant changes in all domains with which education should be in line make the measures focused on relevance constantly monitored, evaluated and revised.

Some instruments, such as the National Qualifications Framework or cooperation with the world of work, are important for all levels of education and are therefore highlighted in this report, and especially the measures implemented at individual levels of the system and related to the innovation of curricula and learning as well as enrolment policy.

3.1. National Qualifications Framework

Law on National Qualifications Framework⁶⁰ (LNQF) as adopted in early April 2018. In the meantime, the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia has been prepared⁶¹ and the Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualifications⁶² was adopted, which will be applied from the day of Serbia's accession to the European Union.

During 2019, the necessary conditions were provided for the smooth functioning of the Qualifications Agency, which took over certain competencies and professional staff from IIE and MoESTD. The internal structure of the Agency, in addition to the mentioned ENIC / NARIC centre, consists of the Centre for Qualifications Development and Support to Sectoral Councils SQF (PRP Centre) and the Centre for Accreditation of Publicly Recognized Adult Education Organizers (PRAEO Centre).

In February 2019, the project "Development of an integrated national qualifications system in the Republic of Serbia" was launched, implemented by the Agency, MoESTD and engaged experts, with the aim of establishing and implementing SQF and harmonizing education and training with labour market needs. Within this project, working groups have been formed to deal with specific development issues. This project is funded by the IPA 2014 program, will last until 2021 and, in

⁵⁹ Available at: <https://itobuke.rs/poziv-za-obuku-prekvalifikacije-za-it-za-osobe-sa-invaliditetom/>

⁶⁰ Law on the National Qualifications Framework in the Republic of Serbia ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 27/2018).

⁶¹ In the meantime, this proposal was adopted, and in January 2020, the Law on the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia was supplemented and amended ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", nos. 27/2018 and 6/2020).

⁶² Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualifications ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 66/2019).

relation to other projects in which the Agency participates (described below), is most directly focused on the activities and needs of the Agency.

The Agency also participates in several national and regional projects (project “Strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions under the Agreement on Education Sector Reform in Serbia – Strengthening the link between employment and social inclusion”, funded by the European Union and lasting until 2022; regional project “Towards regionally based occupational standards” implemented by the Secretariat of the Education Reform Initiative in South East Europe (ERI SEE), funded by the Austrian Development Agency and lasting until 2021; regional project “Effective Partnership for Improved Recognition” funded under Erasmus + program, which will last until 2021; the project “European Quality Assurance Framework in Vocational Education and Training - National Reference Point” (EQAVET - NRP), funded by the European Union, which will last until 2021).

Constitutive sessions of 12 sector councils, to which the Agency provides professional and technical support were also held. During 2019, these sectoral councils adopted the rules of procedure, as well as work programs for 2019 and 2020. At the end of 2019, conducting trainings was planned for members of sector councils to improve the capacity to implement the common goals of SQF, also within the project “Development of an integrated national qualifications system in the Republic of Serbia”, and the first of the trainings was realized in January 2020.

The regulatory framework for the implementation of the SQF has been improved, as the Rule Book on standards for career guidance and counselling services⁶³ was adopted in 2019. Several draft regulations have been prepared (Draft Rule Book on development of qualification standards and Draft Rule Book on the content and manner of keeping the SQF register), and in April 2020, the Rule Book on the content and appearance of the initiative form for developing and adopting qualification standards was adopted.⁶⁴ What follows is the adoption of the above draft regulations and the development of additional bylaws that are missing and necessary to achieve full implementation of the Law on SQF.

In accordance with their competencies, the SQF Council and the Agency adopted several documents during 2019. More specifically, the SQF Council adopted Recommendations for the application of the plan for the implementation of career guidance and counselling services; the Agency's Management Board adopted the Rule Book on compensation for the costs of the procedure for recognition of foreign school certificates and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications for the purpose of employment and on compensation for the costs of the procedure for granting authorization to another organization for the status of publicly recognized organizers of the activities of adult education⁶⁵.

⁶³ The Rule Book on standards of career guidance and counselling services (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 43/2019).

⁶⁴ The Rule Book on the content and appearance of the initiative form for the development and adoption of qualification standards (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 53/2020).

⁶⁵ The Rule Book on compensation for the costs of the procedure for recognition of foreign school certificates and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications for the purpose of employment and on compensation

In addition to activities related to the functioning of the Agency, sector councils and the development of the regulatory framework, work was done on the development and improvement of qualification standards and improvement of SQF implementation – eight new proposals for qualification standards were developed, and six more qualification standards were improved according to the new methodology.

In accordance with the tasks of keeping the SQF Register, the elements that the SQF Register should contain have been defined, and in the next period, it is planned to develop and adopt a software solution, followed by data entry and connection with other registers provided by the Education Management Information System.

3.2. Cooperation with the world of work

The need for employers and other relevant actors from the world of work to be more actively involved in education has long been obvious, given the objections addressed to the education system that it does not prepare sufficiently trained staff or the necessary staff in sufficient numbers.

As this issue is especially relevant at the level of secondary vocational education and higher education, most of the measures taken were at these levels.

The introduction of a dual model of education in secondary vocational education is the most complex reform measure, because it required the establishment of completely new systemic supports, and, in addition to the regulatory framework developed in previous years, CCIS in 2019 worked to provide safe conditions for quality learning in the workplace through the adoption of amendments to the Rule Book on the organization of the composition and manner of work of the Commission for determining the fulfilment of conditions for conducting learning through work with the employer⁶⁶.

In accordance with the Law on Dual Education and the aforementioned Rule Book, during 2019, CCIS realized the accreditation of companies, organized trainings for instructors, established and regularly updated the Register of Employers⁶⁷ who met the conditions for learning by doing, and established a Register of signed contracts on dual education.⁶⁸ The establishment of these registers enables the transparency of data on companies and schools with which companies have signed agreements on dual education.

In order to better harmonize with the needs of both sectors (education and work), at the end of 2019, MoESTD, at the proposal of the Commission for Development and Implementation of Dual Education, formed a working group to amend the Law on Dual Education and the Law on Secondary Education. Proposals for amendments to both laws were adopted in January 2020 at the session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, and the main goal was to make a clear distinction between achieving learning through work in dual educational profiles and profiles that are not. In short –

for the costs of the procedure for granting authorization to another organization for the status of publicly recognized organizers of the activities of adult education ("Off. Gazette of RS", No. 1 / 2020).

⁶⁶ The Rule Book on the organization of the composition and manner of work of the Commission for determining the fulfilment of conditions for conducting learning through work with the employer ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 46/2018, 74/2019).

⁶⁷ Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/registri/>

⁶⁸ Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/registri/ugovori/>

practical classes and professional practice, if they are realized to a greater extent than 25%, are realized as learning through work, in accordance with the Law on Dual Education (more details in the chapter on secondary vocational education).

In cooperation with the RS Government, MoESTD mapped cities and schools in which regional training centres will be established, namely Belgrade, Subotica, Valjevo, Požega, Vlasotince, Kragujevac, Zrenjanin, Vrnjačka Banja and Kula. The intention is to support secondary vocational schools in order to improve the existing and developed new (dual) educational profiles, but also to provide support to secondary schools for the establishment of expanded activities for the implementation of training for the economy. The establishment of the mentioned training centres is expected in the next period.

In addition to the active participation of already motivated and interested employers, additional efforts are being made to increase the number of companies involved in the implementation of dual educational profiles, and in that sense, new significant partnerships have been achieved. One example is where MoESTD signed a Memorandum of Cooperation for a strategic partnership in the field of dual education with the German airline MTU Maintenance Serbia.⁶⁹ The signing of this memorandum ensures the creation of educational profiles in dual education with the needs of the economy and the strategic commitments of the Government of the RS.

The most common topics during 2019 within the Erasmus project, which included schools in Serbia, concerned vocational education and referred to the cooperation of educational institutions with the business sector.

At the level of higher education, as part of improving the process of quality control and accreditation of institutions and programs, by amending the Rule Book on standards and procedure for accreditation of higher education institutions⁷⁰ as a member of the review commission, one expert was introduced for certain areas from the group of employers, professional or professional associations, labour market, chambers, nominated by appropriate organizations.

A legal framework has also been developed for the introduction of short cycles / study programs (SPs) aimed at responding to the acute needs of the economy.

It is important to mention that at the meeting of the Advisory Group for Qualifications Framework in the European Area of Higher Education (EQF) (held in February 2020),⁷¹ SQF became officially associated with the European Qualifications Framework, i.e., the compliance of SQF with the European Qualifications Framework based on the SQF Self-Assessment Report in the field of higher education was positively assessed. Linking the SQF with the EQF in the coming period will require work on amending the existing, i.e., the implementation of new qualification documents that will contain information on the level of SQF and the level of EQF. Also, information on the level of qualification from the EQF will need to be entered in the above-mentioned SQF Register.

⁶⁹ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/potpisan-memorandum-o-saradnji-u-oblasti-dualnog-obrazovanja-sa-nemackom-liderskom-avio-kompanijom-mty/>

⁷⁰ The Rule Book on Standards and Procedure for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 13/2019)

⁷¹ Available at: <http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/2020/02/okvir-kvalifikacija-republike-srbije/>

The Law on the Dual Model of Studies in Higher Education⁷² also recognizes companies as an environment for student learning, together with a higher education institution, and the mutual relationship between a higher education institution and an employer is regulated by a dual model agreement, while the employer-student relationship is regulated by an employment agreement.

The Erasmus project *Implementation of Dual Education in Higher Education in Serbia* conducted a survey among representatives of the economy and came up with data that speak in favour of the need for modernization of higher education. There was still no complete agreement on the manner, how. More than 50% of respondents were small businesses, and 60% of respondents felt that they should be involved in the dual higher education system; risks are recognized in insufficient theoretical knowledge and lack of motivation of students, lack of mentors and inconsistency of academic programs with the needs of companies.

3.3. Aligning curricula and study programs with the socio-economic context

Education is a continuum, and learning should take place throughout life. For this reason, the innovation of teaching and learning programs and study programs, in order for education to be in line with social and economic development, must take place at all levels. Otherwise, students would not be able to consistently build their corpus of knowledge and competencies because there would be discontinuities at some level.

Preschool education as the first level at which the child gets the opportunity for early development of key competencies, but also healthy socio-emotional development, has been improved with the Basics of preschool education programs. The program was adopted with the intention of ensuring continuity in education as well as connecting with the school, family and the local community. The realization of this program was supported by various programs: Kindergartens without Borders 3 and Respect for Differences and Prevention of Violence in Preschool Institutions in Serbia, a project within which the conceptual model of Kindergarten as a safe and stimulating environment for learning and development was created. The *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* and *IPA 2014 – SUPER* projects are specially designed to respond to the specific needs of local communities and thus make the offer of services to preschool institutions relevant for families.

In primary education, in accordance with the already started reforms and priorities in the field of ICT competence development (ICT - Information and Communications Technologies), the curriculum for the first cycle of primary education has been improved, by introducing a new subject in all grades of this cycle – Digital world (annual fund of 36 classes)⁷³ which will start to be applied from 2020/2021 school year.

In addition to the need for the content of curricula in line with the needs of socio-economic development, the organization of teaching and learning itself must respond to new requirements faced by families such as longer working hours, absence of both parents, lack of time for work at

⁷² Available at: <https://www.propisi.net/zakon-o-dualnom-modelu-studija-u-visokom-obrazovanju/>

⁷³ The Rule Book on amendments to the Rule Book on the curriculum for the first cycle of primary education and the curriculum for the first grade of primary education ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette", no. 2/2020)

home, etc. One of the ways to create more space in schools for working with children after regular classes is the work of schools in one shift, where the second half of the day could be used to meet the different educational needs of students, as well as activities that contribute to the development of general interdisciplinary competencies, especially entrepreneurial.

In order for teachers to be able to adequately implement the innovated program, a call for new professional development programs has been announced. The priority areas of this call were: 1) Development of interdisciplinary competencies; 2) Student cooperatives in the system of education – challenges and opportunities; 3) School sports; 4) From book to game – the connection between teaching and learning programs and extracurricular activities.

In general, secondary and art education as well, efforts to make teaching and learning programs relevant were focused primarily on the way in which students can develop competencies and to gradually move away from the focus on the content of specific teaching units. In that sense, we worked on the initially defined teaching and the application of various teaching methods and forms of teaching. This means that a larger number of hours of project teaching, research activities and laboratory exercises are prescribed. Enriching the offer with elective courses is also an important instrument because in this way students can develop personal potentials and explore interests.

For students who have already defined their interests and want to develop as soon as possible in a specific area, the number of special classes in high schools has been expanded in which students with special abilities in computer science and informatics acquire secondary general education and upbringing according to a special curriculum. The possibility has been expanded since 2019 with an offer of 14 additional high schools, which makes a total of 50 high schools founded by the Republic of Serbia, an autonomous province or LSG), and specialized departments for biology and chemistry have been introduced.

A number of high schools are preparing to offer students the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP), which gives students the opportunity to study in a general internationally verified program that is realized as a special pre-university education program for at least two years. During 2019, the Rule Book on the realization of educational work in the high school, according to the program of the international Matriculation Exam⁷⁴, was developed and published, and the amendments to the Rule Book were made in 2020.

Although international models are desirable as part of the supply in the education system, the potential of domestic models of good practice should not be overlooked. Accordingly, in 2019, the Rule Book on the model institution was adopted.⁷⁵ The goal of establishing the model institution is to develop, support, promote and transfer examples of exceptional educational practice, and the role of the model institution is to promote the existing exceptional and innovative practice in a certain area, i.e., aspect of work, through the process of horizontal learning, as well as further improve. The model of institutions will be provided with support in the manner defined by the Rule Book (more details in the chapter on general secondary and art education).

⁷⁴ The Rule Book on the realization of educational work in the high school according to the program of the international Matriculation Exam ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 93/2019-256, 7/2020-84).

⁷⁵ The Rule Book on model institutions ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 10/2019).

In addition to the promotion of good institutions, talented students were also in the focus of decision makers, so in 2019 the Fund for Young Talents awarded 1,512 prizes to high school students for achievements in recognized competitions in the country and abroad, and MoESTD made a decision in 2019 on financial increase of scholarships to young researchers in the field of mathematics, physics, informatics, astronomy, biology and chemistry and awarded 10 scholarships. The students were promoted on the MoESTD web-site, but a broader promotional campaign is also planned, and it would include billboards and other resources in order to raise the motivation of all students for excellence.

The most important measures in secondary vocational education have been discussed in the SQF section and in cooperation with the world of work, but what is important to emphasize is that all relevant actors for the development of qualification standards are involved in the work of Sector Councils and SQF Councils. The development of curricula based on the qualification standard improves the quality and relevance of vocational education, so in 2019, 11 new curricula and 4 profiles were prepared in order to harmonize with the Law on Dual Education. Also, regulations and manuals for 11 Matriculation Exam / final exams have been developed.

After completing one level of education, the way in which we confirm that students have mastered the planned program and that they leave schools with relevant competencies is of key importance. Within the project “Improving the quality of education through the introduction of exams at the end of secondary education” (State Matriculation Exam), the Rule Book on the implementation of the Matriculation Exam (in draft) was prepared and instructions for holding final exams in secondary vocational schools were prepared.⁷⁶ At the end of 2019, IIE published a public call for members of working groups for the preparation of examination materials for certain educational profiles in vocational education in preparation for the final exams in 2020/2021 and the State Matriculation Exam in 2021/2022 within this project.⁷⁷

HEIs have responded to the need for new staff, and in this sense, the increased need for staff to teach in minority languages has led to the creation of new places in the programs. The Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Novi Sad is implementing the Program for Acquiring Competences in the Croatian Language, Culture and Literature with the Methodology of Work within the Centre for Teacher Training. MoESTD, in cooperation with the Higher Vocational School for Educators “Mihajlo Palov”, agreed to issue a certificate of knowledge of the Roma language to graduates who studied in the Roma language, in accordance with the curriculum according to which students studied and graduated, so that they could become teachers directly in schools. In accordance with the Conclusions of the seminar “Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia” for the period October 2017-October 2019, it is planned that the work of the Department of Roma Language at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade will be further strengthened through cooperation with the National Council of Roma minority population in the purpose of education of teachers to work in educational and scientific research activities related to the Roma language and culture, due to the increased interest of students in primary schools for the elective subject Roma language for elements of national culture.

⁷⁶ Available at: <https://matura.edu.rs/dnevnik-aktivnosti/>

⁷⁷ Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/javni-poziv-za-clanove-radnih-grupa-za-izradu-ispitnih-materijala-za-obrazovne-profile-u-strucnom-obrazovanju-2/>

When it comes to study programs, their relevance refers not only to the national context but also to the involvement of universities in regional, European and global trends in science. The process of implementation of international, intercultural and supranational elements or internationalization takes place mainly through mobility programs such as Erasmus +, CEEPUS III (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies), Campus Europae, an international student mobility program implemented under the auspices of the European University Foundation with headquarters in Luxembourg) and others. The Republic of Serbia became a full member of the Erasmus + program in February 2019 and during that year within Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions from Serbia in the competition period for 2019 were approved a total of 39 projects (centralized and decentralized actions), while as partners they participate in more 20 projects. The total value of mobility projects for the field of Higher Education is 2,295,059.00 euros. A total of 693 students and 371 teaching staff participated in mobility projects. When it comes to the topics of strategic partnership projects, the projects are oriented towards the use of innovative teaching methods. Students are given the opportunity to go abroad through the CEEPUS III program, through which during 2018/2019, over 800 scholarship months for our students and more than 500 stays at foreign HEI were realized for our students and staff.

Adult education is probably a part of the education system which in the most immediate way and in the shortest time should provide participants with the competencies and qualifications they need for the labour market, but also the key competencies for functioning in the modern world. For this reason, the fact that in 2019, 310 high schools implemented retraining, additional training and specialization programs that included 8,554 students (which is much less than the number of planned places – 23,772) indicates inadequate planning.

Although PRAEO bases its program offerings on local needs and strives to respond to demand, one problem remains unresolved for years. Namely, despite the belief in mastering the program and acquiring qualifications and professional competencies⁷⁸ there is still a discrepancy between employers and training organizers, because the trainings are not fully recognized by employers and the National Employment Service, i.e., training participants are not given the same employment opportunities as those who have completed formal education, which leads to a decrease in interest in training. Another demotivating factor for adult learners is the fact that a regulation that should define procedures for recognition of prior learning (PRPL) has not yet been adopted, although the first step in that process has been done – the Report on Analytical Review of the document “Concept of development of recognition of prior learning.”⁷⁹

The establishment of a “university” for the third age is still awaited, as well as the development of a program of education and vocational training of adults in the workplace (workplace learning). Although certain institutions that are run as “universities” for the third age exist within other organizations, there is not enough data on students or the quality of the program.

One of the measures aimed at regulating the supply of training to increase the capacity of public administration employees, although planned by the Annual Plan for Adult Education of the

⁷⁸ Regulated by the Rule Book on the type, name and content of forms and the manner of keeping records and the name, content and appearance of forms of public documents and certificates in adult education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 89/2015).

⁷⁹ The document was created in 2015 as a result of secondary vocational education reform projects.

Government of the Republic of Serbia for 2019, has not been planned within AP SEDS 2020. In that sense, the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) in 2019 adopted the Instruction on the methodology for determining the needs for professional development in public administration bodies.⁸⁰

3.4. Enrolment policy at the secondary education level

Secondary education is a great watershed in the education continuum. Once it is complete, students decide whether to continue their education at a HEI, join the workforce, or perhaps change their interests and gain new qualifications. Enrolment planning poses a systemic question of the need for a certain type of educational profile or level, as well as the question of how to take a child down the entire path of education and ensure the continuity of the educational experience. This is why enrolment in secondary schools (general and vocational), i.e. the enrolment policy, must be based on the data from the sectors of economy and industry, as well as on different analyses, taking account of the needs of the individual.

As only the introduction and innovation of curricula is not enough to ensure that students would attend the appropriate programmes, in 2019 the Rule Book on the specific requirements, operation, activities, and composition of the career guidance and counselling team at secondary schools implementing dual education profiles⁸¹. This is very important as career guidance and counselling is not only an instrument to increase education access, but also an important mechanism for the prevention of student attrition from the education system, as well as for better fit between student aspirations and labour market needs. In this connection, the second phase of the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation's project "Together Towards Secondary School – Supporting Children from Vulnerable Groups in the Transition to Secondary School" enhances both the CGC at schools and the collaboration between primary and secondary schools for the purposes of monitoring students at risk of attrition by continuous support measures.

An important set of activities includes planning enrolment locally, with the participation of all relevant actors. The criteria and steps for secondary school student enrolment are defined in the Guidelines for Planning Student Enrolment in Secondary Schools at the Local and Regional Level. In this way, schools in each LSG make sure that a sufficient number of places is secured in the three-year vocational profiles (no less than 15% of all planned places, i.e. at least one class of students) in order to make enrolment available to students who do not meet the threshold for enrolment in four-year profiles.

The plan of secondary school enrolment for the 2018/2019 school year envisages 4,360 places for enrolment in the educational profiles in the national minority languages, and the plan of secondary school enrolment for the 2019/2020 school year envisages a greater number of places than the actual number of students, in order to increase the available choices of national minority language educational profiles for students.

⁸⁰ Instruction on the methodology for determining the needs for professional training in public administration bodies ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 32/2019).

⁸¹ The Rule book on the specific requirements, operation, activities, and composition of the career guidance and counselling team at secondary schools implementing dual education profiles ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 2/2019).

Increasing the number of students enrolling in dual education profiles is also high on the list of priorities in enrolment planning, but the CCIS is also involved in this process as a strategic partner. Based on the guidelines that the MoESTD provides to the school administrations, the CCIS has for the first time provided guidelines for regional chambers of commerce with the aim of creating an educational policy which is in line with the needs of the economy, after which the MoESTD makes the decision on the final profile list together with the CCIS.

3.5. Other measures for increasing the relevance of education

The Erasmus+ project IF4TM (The institutional framework for the development of the third mission of universities in Serbia) is completed. The project aimed primarily at developing and implementing the third mission at universities in Serbia in addition to the existing two missions related to education and research. The third mission is made up of three development components: the transfer of technologies and innovation; continuing education; and the social responsibility of the universities. The universities which are partners on the project revised their internal procedures and documents and organized many activities as part of the third mission during the implementation of the project. The Final Report on the Progress in Implementing the Third Mission in Serbia⁸² was drawn up, presenting individual activities per project objectives at all the universities. Many competitions and workshops⁸³ were also organized as part of the project in 2019, with the aim of stepping up and stimulating the development of entrepreneurship among university students and staff.

4. Increasing education efficiency

The efficiency of the system is an objective in which the other three objectives discussed above, i.e. the 'education pillars', are reflected. An efficient system ought to ensure quality, relevance, and access (as well as equality), with a rational use of resources utilized within the system for the purposes of implementing these objectives. Another aspect of efficiency is internal efficiency, i.e. the rate of completion of different education levels.

4.1. The digitization of education and the Education Management Information System

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a tool that the education system has been waiting for a long time. Each phase of the reform had its establishment as one of the priorities, and parts of it were developed in fragmentary initiatives. In this connection, the Rule Book on the Education Management Information System⁸⁴ was adopted, stipulating the specific requirements for and the procedure for the establishment of the EMIS, the register of institutions, accredited higher education institutions, accredited study programmes, school and higher education institution employees, children, students, adults, and university students, as well as the maintenance, collection,

⁸² Available at: http://www.if4tm.kg.ac.rs/pub/download/15622381188642_D2.6%20v3.pdf

⁸³ The list of activities is available at: <http://www.if4tm.kg.ac.rs/news/>

⁸⁴ The Rule Book on the Education Management Information System ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 81/2019).

entry, updating, and availability of the data entered into registers, in addition to types of statistical reports based on the register data, and the Rule Book on the specific requirements in the unique student number assignment procedure⁸⁵. What will especially contribute to the efficiency of the system is the role of the EMIS in the prevention of attrition. Within the EMIS, indicators were developed for monitoring the accessibility of institutions, as well as the indicators for identifying and monitoring children and students in need of additional support in education. Setting up this database will improve re-directing support from the national to the local level, as well as precision-monitoring each student in the education system. It ought to take its final shape, with all the mechanisms for data use and data-based reporting, by June 2021.

In 2019, the creation of the Framework for Monitoring and Evaluating the National Model of Dual Education and Dual Education Profiles was initiated. The framework will enable the assessment of the quality and efficiency of implementation of dual education. It is currently being improved, so the system will soon have at its disposal another instrument for monitoring the dual model efficiency in the VSE.

The collection of data on the parts of the system which are based on intersectoral cooperation, i.e. dual education (as discussed above), where both the education sector and the sector of economy need to monitor and analyse the data, is becoming increasingly complex as the number of involved parties rises. This is why a data collection format was defined with respect to e.g. the data on the operation of inter-sectoral committees, with experts from different areas at the local level, but in collaboration with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) as a partner coordinating the local level.

In higher education, measures to increase efficiency have not been defined, and the indicators for assessing efficiency have not been developed. A strategy for collecting the data on leaving HEIs found in the reports of specific HEI and SORS statements is being developed.

As the data from the new cycle of Eurostudent studies is not in yet, there is very little information on this education level. At the level of higher education, it is planned to have higher education institution employee registers, as well as a syllabi and curricula data register, a register of accredited programmes, data on programmes, as well as a student register.

The second great undertaking aimed at digitization in education is the introduction of the electronic register (esRegister), which was used in in the majority of schools in 2019, after the completion of the 2017/2018 pilot stage. This innovation was accompanied by targeted training programmes which raised the digital literacy levels of teachers in order to ensure the sustainability of this initiative, as well as laying the foundations for further innovation. In addition to esRegister, the Rule Book on the amendments of the Rule Book on keeping records in primary schools⁸⁶ was adopted, allowing schools to keep electronic and bilingual records. Other rule books regulating document record-keeping were amended to allow a more efficient collection of relevant data and adapt record keeping to what will be collected within EMIS.

⁸⁵ The Rule Book on the specific requirements in the unique student number assignment procedure (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 81/2019)

⁸⁶ The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on keeping records and issuing official documents in primary school (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 56/2019).

The Law on Preschool Education was also amended⁸⁷, bringing this law into line with the amendments to the LFES, especially in the section on keeping records on children at preschool institutions. Further, the Rule Book on types, names, content, and format of record forms and official documents, as well as their keeping, filling out, and issuing by preschool institutions was adopted.⁸⁸

The digitization of teaching and teaching and learning materials gradually changes the traditional teaching process on the hand, but also contributes to the availability of content, better use of resources, and a more rational utilization of the instruments for preparing textbooks and teaching materials, on the other. Until a few years ago, the use of electronic textbooks in primary schools was referred to as a great innovation in what was then the Draft Law on Textbooks, but recently their use has been expanding. In 2019, the implementation of the project *Teaching Materials Via Digital Textbooks* continued, giving priority to using digital educational materials – digital textbooks in teaching, by purchasing and using application codes. So far, a total of 316 electronic textbook have been approved for grades one, two, five, and six of primary education. They are/will be used as part of the project *The Digital Classroom*.

Distance learning. The initiation of electronic and distance learning was recognized as an important measure in supporting students who for some reason have difficulties accessing education. This model should greatly increase the efficiency of the adult education system, given the big differences in what the attendees/users need and what they can do (those who would attend training, but the physical distance is preventing them), but it has not been developed as yet. Nonetheless, from the start of the state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MoESTD has managed to organize distance teaching for primary and secondary schools by using platforms and national frequencies. As these activities have only just been carried out and there is no full feedback from all the stakeholders regarding the success of such teaching, the success of this process cannot be gauged, but what can be said is that it certainly was the start of the development of distance learning in Serbia.

4.2. The institutional network

The optimization of the network of institutions is a process that has gone on for many years. While in some cities it has been accomplished, it is still incomplete at the national level. As the demographic and economic profile of the country changes, the set criteria are revised, with each modification requiring a repeated analysis of the system capacity and discussions on the desirable changes. The Regulation on the Criteria for Passing Legislation on the Preschool and Primary School Networks⁸⁹ stipulates that a Public Primary School Network Act is passed by LSGs based on these criteria. As a form of support, and for the reasons that 37% of LSGs did not have the capacity to pass the act in 2019, the MoESTD organized specialist conventions and meetings with the representatives of local

⁸⁷ The Law on Preschool Education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 18/2010, 101/2017, 113/2017 – other law, 95/2018 – other law and 10/2019).

⁸⁸ The Rule Book on types, names, content, and format of record forms and official documents, as well as their keeping, filling out, and issuing by preschool institutions (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 63/2019)

⁸⁹ The Regulation on the criteria for passing legislation on the preschool and primary school networks (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 21/2018).

self-governments with the aim of preparing them for passing the act on optimizing the preschool and primary school institution network in line with the Regulation.

In the optimization of the school network, the minority rights are consistently protected, first and foremost the right to education in the native language. The language of instruction is seen as a separate criterion, and the opinion and suggestions made for each locale, school, and class by the competent national minority council are respected in the process of making decisions on setting up classes with fewer students than is prescribed. In the 2018/2019 school year, 103 requests for setting up classes with fewer student numbers were approved (80% of what was submitted).

In mid-March, the Regulation on the Criteria for Passing Legislation on the Public Secondary School Network was adopted⁹⁰. Nine criteria were defined: the economic criterion, the criterion of equality, availability, organization, status, demographics, geography, culture, and optimization. These criteria were implemented in the 2019/2020 school year. According to the new secondary school network⁹¹, in 2019 107 general secondary schools implement general education programmes; 39 secondary art schools implement general and art education programmes; 44 combination schools implement general and vocational, as well as general and art, programmes. Based on this act, decisions were made on the merging of 14 secondary schools (four of which are general secondary schools.) The decision on the public secondary school network in Vojvodina merged four secondary schools into a single school⁹². What is new is that as of the 2019/2020 school year the programmes of different education levels or multiple different areas of activity can be implemented in three education centres.

A similar initiative was introduced with the aim of improving the quality and efficiency of the VSE. The Government of the Republic of Serbia and the MoESTD started the activities of founding ten regional training centres which should support teaching in vocational secondary, dual, and informal education through training, additional training, and retraining of staff in line with the needs of the labour market. The centres will be founded for the following economic areas: 1) mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and computer science (mechatronics); 2) industrial production (textiles, chemistry, and typography; food processing); 3) transport, logistics, wood processing, and construction; 4) health and social security; and 5) tourism, hospitality, and similar services. According to the MoESTD data, in 2019 cities and schools in which regional training centres would be developed were identified in addition to the areas.

4.3. Financing education

Steps to change the pre-university education financing system were not taken in the reporting period, but increasing sums are earmarked for education from the national budget in recent years. The Law

⁹⁰ The Regulation on the Criteria for Passing Legislation on the Public Secondary School Network ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 21/2018-9).

⁹¹ The Decision on the Public Secondary School Network ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 49/2018-3, 62/2018-5 and 94/2018-4).

⁹² Available at: http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/mladi/obrazovanje/spojene-cetiri-srednje-skole-u-apatinu-i-novom-knezevcu_1029657.html

on the 2019 Budget with Projections for 2020 and 2021 envisages a further increase of funds.⁹³ The external funding sources include loans and donations, and donors and loan-providers mostly direct them to the implementation of the SEDS 2020 objectives, such as available and high-quality preschool education, as well as lifelong learning. So far, 14 million RSD have been paid into the Serbian budget from the Sectoral Budget Support programme. In 2019 alone, a total of 7.4 million euros was approved, and used for the following: training 20,000 teachers in implementing outcome-oriented teaching and introducing innovative teaching practices; 700 Roma secondary school students received scholarships as a form of support; 250 pedagogical assistants were hired as support for teaching at preschool institutions and primary schools; and the National Qualifications Framework was established and referenced with the European Qualifications Framework.

It is important for an additional synergy between funding and transparency in all processes to link financing more tightly to the new education strategy, as currently there is only fragmented information on expenses which is difficult to interpret and compare with the implemented reform activities.

The MoESTD and its indirect users are still not included in the Budget Execution Information System (BEIS), which is part of the public finance management system, itself including the processes and procedures conducted via electronic communication with the Treasury Administration at the Ministry of Finance. Joining this system will enable monitoring of all indirect users of the central government level⁹⁴.

In early 2020, the Committee of the Republic of Serbia made the decision to open a public competition for permanent positions in education⁹⁵. The hiring process will be implemented in several phases in 2020. This decision abrogates the measure of banning hiring, introduced in 2013.

⁹³ The Law on the 2019 Budget of the Republic of Serbia ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 95/2018 and 72/2019).

⁹⁴ The Government of the Republic of Serbia (2019). The Fiscal Strategy for 2019 with Projections for 2020 and 2021. Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Fiskalna-strategija-za-2019.-godinu-sa-projekcijama-za-2020.-i-2021.-godinu.pdf>

⁹⁵ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/vladina-komisija-odobrila-prvi-ciklus-zaposljavanja-u-prosveti-za-oko-5000-ljudi/>

II The report on the progress made according to levels of education

1. Preschool education

1.1. The basic information on preschool education, the current situation, and the context

Preschool education (PE) is of direct social interest and refers to the education provided for preschool children (aged six months to primary school entry age). It is implemented in preschool institutions, which performs the activities of diet, care, preventive health protection, and social protection in addition to education. In this sense, there is integrated care for children at preschool institutions at the conceptual and practical level.⁹⁶ Preschool education is implemented in accordance with the legal framework. At this education level, the *preparatory preschool programme* is also implemented in the year preceding entry into primary school, either full-day or half-day, with the aim of preparing children for entry into primary school.

Although an increase in preschool education access⁹⁷ has been recorded since the adoption of SEDS⁹⁸, the current rate of access is still not satisfactory, including the access to compulsory preparatory preschool programme which should stand at 100%.

The SORS data indicate that preschool education was organized in 2019 in 466 preschool institutions and 2,842 buildings (162 public institutions and 2,426 buildings, and 304 private institutions and 416 buildings); further, 224,563 children attended preschool education programmes organized in 9,874 education groups. Of this number, 48% are female, and 52% male. Children aged six months to three years make up 24%, and children aged three to school entry age 76%. Compulsory preparatory preschool programme was attended by 63,773 children, making up 97.36% (30,959 girls, and 32,814 boys). The majority (55%) attended the preparatory preschool programme on a full-day basis. In addition, the data for 2019 reveal that the number of children who were not enrolled due to full capacity utilization stands at 6,902⁹⁹.

The most recent available data on the quality of preschool institution operation is related to the results of the first cycle of preschool institution (PI) evaluation, implemented between 2014 and 2018, and evaluating 150 preschool institutions from all school administrations. The average general quality score for preschool institutions stands at 3.3 (the lowest score is 1 and the highest

⁹⁶ The Law on Preschool Education ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 18/2010, 101/2017, 113/2017 – other law, 95/2018 – other law and 10/2019).

⁹⁷ The access of children to preschool education is monitored by the data at the national level (SORS data) and the data collected by school administrations (collected in late July).

⁹⁸ The annual increase in access is evident as a result of an improved legal framework, the enhanced capacity of public (state) preschool institutions, the implementation of the public-private partnership measure, organizing campaigns for early inclusion of children in the education system. Further, it should be noted that the increase in access was also helped along by the implemented projects, some of which being *Improving Preschool Education in Serbia (IMPRES)* and *Nurseries Without Borders – 3*. These projects were implemented between 2011 and 2018 and contributed, among other things, to increasing the spatial capacity, which in turn enabled greater inclusion of preschool age children.

⁹⁹ Available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-Latn/oblasti/obrazovanje/predskolsko-vaspitanje-i-obrazovanje>

4). The best scores were given to the atmosphere and social relations seen in terms of ethos quality, and the worst to standard of children monitoring (3.2), which was not implemented in 36.7% of the institutions. It was also observed that the institutions were not sufficiently successful in aspects related to personalization and work adaptation, and monitoring children's progress. The results of the external evaluation of preschool institutions can be a good starting point for planning the further development of this education level, as well as for developing different forms of support on the part of MoESTD (the school administration)¹⁰⁰.

Framework for the evaluation of preschool institutions was revised with the adoption of the Rule Book on preschools quality standards¹⁰¹, the first part of which defines them. The act stipulates four areas in which, based on 15 standards and 64 indicators, the quality of the services offered by a PI is assessed. Especially significant for the quality improvement was the adoption of the Rule Book on the standards of competences for preschool teachers and their professional development¹⁰².

The Rule Book on Preschool Curriculum Framework¹⁰³ is the first act in the area of preschool education that stipulates successive implementation of the new curricular concept, in order to timely provide the necessary professional support to PIs. An integral part of the Rule Book is a list of cities/municipalities with the defined dynamic plan for the mandatory implementation of PCF (the plan envisages the beginning of the implementation on 1st September 2019, until 1st September 2022).¹⁰⁴

When it comes to equality, for years two negative trends have been perceived: differences between local self-governments (LSGs) as regards the access to preschool services for both children from general population and those from Roma settlements in Serbia (who are mostly excluded from the preschool system). As there are no other, more recent data on the access to preschool education of children from Roma settlements, the findings of the *MICS*¹⁰⁵ study from 2014 were used as a reference, showing that 6% of children aged 36–59 months of age living in Roma settlements is involved in the organized preschool programmes in the early childhood, while 63% of them attend or attended the Preparatory Preschool Program. The sixth cycle of *MICS*

¹⁰⁰ Available at: http://vrednovanje.ceo.edu.rs/sites/default/files/izvestajiEE/2020_Rezultati_spoljasnjeg_vrednovanja_predskolskih_ustanova_2014-2018.

¹⁰¹ The Rule Book on preschools quality standards ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette", no. 14/2018)

¹⁰² The Rule Book on the standards of competences for preschool teachers and their professional development ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette", no. 16/2018).

¹⁰³ The Rule Book on Preschool Curriculum Framework ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette", no. 16/2018).

¹⁰⁴ New Preschool Curriculum Framework (PCF) was adopted in 2018 as a result of the activities initiated in 2015, metaphorically themed "The Years of Accent". The objective of PCF is a holistic development and the well-being of children through integrated approach to learning, interconnection of play and other activities, and building meaningful relationships with peers and adults in an inspirational space. It is a unique conceptual ground for the development of the curriculum for working with children since the nursery age until their transition to a primary school, as well as for setting the criteria for monitoring and evaluation of preschool services and the betterment and development of a PI and this educational branch as a whole. The new concept of educating children of preschool age is harmonized with modern theoretical approaches in the area, the relevant educational policies documents, local and international good practice examples and the values founded on the years long tradition of preschool education in Serbia.

¹⁰⁵ The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF (2014). 2014 MICS research on the position of women and children in Serbia from and 2014 MICS research on the position of women and children in Roma settlements in Serbia – Final Report. Belgrade, Serbia: The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF.

research in Serbia run in 2019, through joint cooperation of the Delegation of EU to the Republic of Serbia, UNFPA, UNICEF and SORS, but the findings are still not available.

The year 2018 saw the adoption of the Decree on the criteria for passing the act on the network of public PIs and the act on the network of public primary schools¹⁰⁶, as a precondition for optimizing the network of PIs and the undertaking of the activities planned under the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project¹⁰⁷ in Serbia and the *Support to preschool education system reform project in Serbia* (IPA 2014 – SUPER project).

1.2. Progress achieved in the reporting period

1.2.1. Quality

Amendments and addenda to the Law on Preschool Education¹⁰⁸ (PU-PŠ01) were adopted and the said law harmonised with the amendment and addenda to the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System, especially pertaining to keeping records on children enrolled in preschool institutions. Keeping records is stipulated in detail by the **Rule Book on types, names, content, and format of record forms and official documents, as well as their keeping, filling out, and issuing by preschool institutions¹⁰⁹, which prescribes its successive mandatory use in line with** the dynamic plan for the introduction and implementation of the new Preschool Curriculum Framework. The following activities were undertaken with the view to properly applying this Rule Book: printing templates for record keeping, as well as templates of different educational documents (the print run is determined by the number of preschool institutions that implement the new PCF as of 1st September 2019); sending information to education inspectors and education advisors as a means of providing support to preschool institutions in the process of implementation of the new methods of keeping records and issuing documents on educational activities; a two-day training for educational advisors – external evaluators on the new PCF (100

¹⁰⁶ Decree on the criteria for passing the act on the network of public PIs and the act on the network of public primary schools ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 21/2018).

¹⁰⁷ *The Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project is implemented by MoESTD, supported by the World Bank, with the view to increasing the access to, the quality and equality of preschool education for every child since their birth until 6.5 years of age, especially for children from vulnerable backgrounds. The project is set on opening 17,000 new preschool spaces for children aged 3–5.5 years of age in newly built, renovated or repurposed facilities in at least 30 cities and municipalities in the Republic of Serbia from the ranking list provided. The said ranking list of cities and municipalities is based on the data provided by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, MoESTD, SROS and international organisations (UNICEF, OECD and other). Two basic criteria for the ranking were: the estimated need for the available preschool spaces (based on the number of newly born children in the territory of a city/municipality, the number of children involved in different preschool programmes, and the number of children still waiting to enter the system); and the social and economic profile of the local self-government (economic indicators, such as the level of income, pension and budgetary funds of the city/municipality, population growth rate, unemployment rate and the level of education). Additional criteria were the number of families with children aged 3–5.5 that receive some kind of financial social assistance and the percentage of children of Roma nationality aged 0–14 years of age.

¹⁰⁸ The Law on Preschool Education ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", nos. 18/2010, 101/2017, 113/2017 – other law, 95/2018 – other law, 10/2019 and 86/2019 – other law).

¹⁰⁹ The Rule Book on types, names, content, and format of record forms and official documents, as well as their keeping, filling out, and issuing by preschool institutions ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 63/2019).

out of 120 educational advisors from all school inspectorates attended the training). In addition to the above-mentioned, as part of the IPA 2014 – *SUPER Project*, an application for electronic educational record keeping will be created and made available.

Regulations were passed regarding the evaluation of the quality of preschool institutions in line with the Preschools Quality Standards adopted in 2018 (**PU-PŠ03**), while in 2019 the Rule Book on preschool quality evaluation¹¹⁰ was introduced, stipulating basic criteria for self-evaluation and evaluation, as well as the contents and the method of making the results of self-evaluation and evaluation public. The same year saw the adoption of the Rule Book on professional and educational supervision¹¹¹, regulating the methods of professional and educational supervision of educational activities within an institution, preschool quality standards, the methods of evaluating the activities of educational advisors, etc.

The activities undertaken as part of the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project* (Sub-component 2.3.6.) were aimed at improving the process of evaluation as part of the support to the implementation of the revised preschool quality standards. The following activities were undertaken, among others: researching the preschool institutions' self-evaluation practice (the resulting report with the recommendations has served as the basis for the preparation of the Guidebook on self-evaluation of preschool institutions); devising a methodology for gathering data on the PI quality; one-day conference for all educational advisors on the application of the devised quality evaluation tools; "Preschool Institution ID" – preschool report card developed aimed at gathering data for the "Dositej" app; selecting and hiring 30 licensed evaluators for conducting preschool quality baseline survey. For the purpose of preparing a baseline study, data gathering has been started in the selected sample of 25 PIs operating under 12 different school inspectorates (making 15.43% of the total number of public PIs)¹¹². In the said 25 PI, the evaluators visited 187 preschool facilities and interviewed around 2,500 persons (parents and PI staff, administration included). The collected data will make up the Baseline Study, important for monitoring the Project Development Objective, and the whole system alike (application of the revised quality framework, instruments for quality evaluation, as the basis for its systematic use and possible improvement)¹¹³.

The Preschool Curriculum Framework (PCF) has been in use as of 1st September 2019 (PU-PŠ04)¹¹⁴ in preschool institutions in the cities of Novi Sad, Čačak, Loznica, Pirot, Sremska Mitrovica, Smederevo, the Belgrade municipalities of Zemun and Vračar, and the municipalities of Sremski Karlovci, Arandjelovac and Aleksinac. The implementation of PCF is supported by the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project* and UNICEF in the capacity of an implementation partner. In the first year of its implementation, a group of 90 trainers/mentors (consisting of 34 university professors, 37 expert associates and 19 preschool teachers) was established and trained. In 2019, exactly 1,890 employees from all 11 PIs received the training for the implementation of PCF. Additional training for the staff was provided as part of

¹¹⁰ The Rule Book on preschool quality evaluation ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 10/2019).

¹¹¹ The Rule Book on professional and educational supervision ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 87/2019).

¹¹² According to the data gathered by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) and MoESTD (Dositej), there were 162 active public preschool institutions in the 2018/2019 school year, while the number of facilities offering preschool services totalled 2,464.

¹¹³ The information and data provided in this passage are gathered from MoESTD.

¹¹⁴ The activity under this code was undertaken in 2018, with the adoption of the Rule Book on Preschool Curriculum Framework.

professional development organized by a PI, which resulted in another 284 trained employees. As of November 2019, the team of 22 mentors has offered continuous support to the 11 PIs through conducting visits and online as well. Until the state of emergency was declared (in mid-March 2020), 54 mentoring visits were made.

The following activities were also undertaken: a two-day training on the new PCF for educational advisors from school inspectorates provided (100 educational advisors participated); lending professional support to mentors by providing them with resources, as envisaged in the mentoring support plan, and establishing continuous communication channel with mentors so as to offer them support in resolving practical issues (supported by the *IPA 2014 – SUPER Project*). The draft documents prepared are yet to be discussed and revised (UNICEF has drafted the framework for monitoring the quality of the support scheme, together with the supporting instruments; the draft concept of supervising mentors; the draft concept of and 5 scenarios for horizontal exchange between PIs in the same phase of PCF implementation; the training schedule for peer learning of practitioners to become trainers).

As part of the *Inclusive Childhood Education and Care* project, an online training on documenting the educational activities has been made available at the IIE's web-site, and the training course created for PI principals, for taking the professional license exam¹¹⁵.

March 2019 saw the start of the *Support to Preschool Education System Reform in Serbia Project* (IPA 2014 – SUPER project), financed from the 2014 EU pre-accession funds (March 2019 – March 2021), with the following results expected: providing support to increasing professional capacities of 50 local self-governments in preschool education planning and managing; building professional competencies of practitioners for practicing inclusive preschool education; improving legal framework in the area of preschool education, in line with LFES, the Law on Preschool Education, and the Preschool Curriculum Framework. As part of the second deliverable, *the training course was created for mentors and preschool teachers and the training of mentors themed "The role of mentorship in creating inspirational environment for children integrated learning" provided* (the training was attended by 60 practitioners and was focused on strengthening the capacities of mentors for working with preschool teachers on developing high-quality inclusive programme based on modern pedagogical concepts in line with PCF, as well as on strengthening the capacities of mentors for introducing changes in early childhood education and care). In addition, *two-day workshops were provided* focusing on "Kindergarten culture as a community of practice" (with participation of mentors from 50 PIs). In these workshops, mentors used the topic to deal with the issues of developing integrated learning approach, towards the implementation of the new curricular concept¹¹⁶. Also, as part of the same project, 56 PIs (50 of them participating in IPA 2014 – SUPER project) were provided with didactics, IT equipment and furniture¹¹⁷, which will additionally support the implementation of the quality inclusive preschool education.

With the view to increasing the quality and the conditions for work in PIs, and supporting the implementation of the current projects focused on developing and furnishing PIs, the **Rule Book on specific requirements for founding preschool institutions, starting the activities and**

¹¹⁵ The training was created by IIE, with the support from MoESTD, UNICEF and the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy; 20 trainers were trained.

¹¹⁶ Available at: <https://www.euzatebe.rs/rs/projekti/eu-za-reformu-sistema-predskolskog-vaspitanja-i-obrazovanja-u-srbiji-super>

¹¹⁷ The funds were provided from 2014 IPA fund.

offering preschool services¹¹⁸ (PU-PŠ01) was adopted as a priority, stipulating **conditions that a PI needs to meet in order to be verified as a preschool institution. The prescribed conditions include space, furniture, didactics and staff. Based on this act and the evaluation of the curricular document, MoESTD issues a PI verification act; the full list of verified institutions is available at the MoESTD's web-site¹¹⁹.** Upon receiving the Decision on verification and starting the activities, a PI (both public and private) is subject to professional, educational and inspection supervision, i.e. it enters the quality monitoring system.

Adoption of this regulation does not imply the implementation of the activity on establishing the preschool institution and curricula accreditation entity (PU-PŠ05). The existence of such entity is not stipulated by the current legislation, thus denying the legal framework for undertaking the said activity. For the same reasons, the PI accreditation activity (PU-PŠ06) cannot be undertaken. Establishing the preschool programmes accreditation system should, prior to or simultaneously with it, solve several conceptual, legislative and practical issues, such as the desired kind of the accreditation concept, the necessary kind of harmonization of the existing legal framework, the method of securing the monitoring of the services provided, the authority of MoESTD as opposed to the authority of IEQE and IIE, etc.

1.2.2. Access

As in previous years, MoESTD has supported activities that contribute to the increased access to preschool education, particularly for children aged 3–5.5 (PU-PŠ07), at the same time making significant contribution by means of the on-going projects aimed at the adaptation and furnishing adequate spaces in local self-governments, with the view to increasing the preschool access and strengthen professional capacities of the LSGs and PIs staff.

Implementation of the activities under the projects *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)* and *Support to Preschool Education System Reform in Serbia (IPA 2014 – SUPER project)* have led to the achievement of the activity defined as **establishing a local system of social care for children and preschool education (PU-PŠ08).**

Introduction of minimum half-day preschool education programme for all the children aged 3–5.5 in the period of one school year is another activity from the Action Plan (PU-PŠ02) that was in progress during 2019. The Law on Preschool Education set the legal framework for enactment of the rule book that will regulate in more detail the conditions for offering different forms and curricula of educational and other types of activities and services provided by preschool institutions. To that end, a working group has been set up and the draft regulation prepared. Given the need to improve the concept of diversifying the curricula and services in the area of preschool education, as well as considering the real potential of its application, the drafting of this secondary legislation **will be supported by experts as part of the IPA 2014 SUPER project.**

1.2.3. Relevance

¹¹⁸ The Rule Book on specific requirements for founding preschool institutions, starting the activities and offering preschool services ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – Educational Gazette", no. 1/2019).

¹¹⁹ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/predskolsko/>

The relevance of preschool education was also increased through the improvement of primary and secondary legislation, especially in the areas such as preschool quality evaluation, keeping records and issuing educational documentation, verification of preschools, quality standards for preschool teachers, while particularly significant was the adoption of the Preschool Curriculum Framework and the Standards of Competencies for Preschool Teachers. These documents are stepping stones to further development of preschool education system based on modern notions of children, PIs and PE system. The new approach reinforces the continuity of education which relies on lifelong learning and competence development, as well as through building strong links with school, family and local community.

The following projects were particularly significant for the establishment and full implementation of the new Preschool Curriculum Framework: *Kindergartens without borders*³¹²⁰ (details on this project were presented in the previous reports); *Respecting differences and preventing violence in preschool institutions in Serbia*, the project implemented by the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and UNICEF that also introduced the conceptual model themed *Kindergarten as a safe and stimulating environment for learning and development*, as well as the Preschool Teacher Handbook – *Kindergarten as a safe and stimulating environment for learning and development* (published in 2019)¹²¹.

The relevance of preschool education will also be increased through activities to be performed under the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project, by promoting inter-sectoral cooperation on the local self-government level, and the *IPA 2014 – SUPER* project, by developing local strategies and action plans, optimization of network of preschool institutions, etc.

1.2.4. Efficiency

The network of preschool institutions is characterized by the following: insufficient spatial capacities for the expected access rate, large number of children in groups, especially in local self-government administrative centres, etc. Particularly important for the optimization of the network was the adoption of the *Decree on Criteria for Passing the Act Decision on Network of Public Preschool Institutions and Act Decision on Network of Primary Schools*¹²². Pursuant to the Decree, LSG passes an act decision on the network of preschool institutions in its territory. Prior to passing this decision, LSG must prepare a study containing a network development plan based on the population growth rate, and considering the migration trends in the LSG for the period of five and eight years. Consent to the act decision is issued by MoESTD. With the support from the *IPA 2014 – SUPER* project and following a relevant training, civil servants in 50 LSGs are drawing up a draft act decision on optimization of the network of preschool institutions with the help of mentors from the project.

¹²⁰ The project contributed to the better quality of social care for children and better preschool services through strengthening capacities of local self-governments to cooperate with preschools and other actors in order to create conditions for wider access of children to quality preschool services.

¹²¹ The handbook is available at:

https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/13976/file/vrtic_kao_podsticajno_okruzenje_vodic.pdf

¹²² Decree on Criteria for Passing the Act Decision on Network of Public Preschool Institutions and Act ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 21/2018).

Improved efficiency of preschool education is also dependent on the adoption of the **Rule Book on types, names, content, and format of record forms and official documents, as well as their keeping, filling out, and issuing by preschool institutions**¹²³, as well as on the activities performed by MoESTD with the aim to support preschools in their use of templates and keeping of pedagogical documentation (printing of templates, instructing education inspectors on how to provide support to preschools, etc.).

1.3. Priorities in 2019 – achievement overview

Priority 1 – Preparation of the framework for drafting a bylaw that will regulate in more detail the keeping of records and issuing pedagogical documentation on educational activities, in accordance with the requirements of the new curricular concept, and the preparation of a draft Rule Book on the requirements for offering different forms and curricula of educational and other types of activities and services provided by preschool institutions.

Fulfilled. In 2019, the authorities passed the **Rule Book on types, names, content, and format of record forms and official documents, as well as their keeping, filling out, and issuing by preschool institutions, followed by supporting activities for preschools. Draft Rule Book on requirements for offering different forms and curricula of educational and other types of activities and services provided by preschool institutions has been drawn up and submitted to consultants working within IPA 2014 – SUPER project for further improvement.**

Priority 2 – Monitoring and supporting the implementation of activities under the Component 2 of the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project (Strengthening the quality of preschools services).

Fulfilled. Continuous monitoring and support during the implementation of the planned activities (providing comments to reports, documents and outputs, participation in the working group for the improvement of the Preschool Facilities Furnishing Catalogue).

Priority 3 – Monitoring the territorial coverage and access of children to institutional preschool education.

Fulfilled. Continuous monitoring and preparation of the Report on Territorial Child Coverage and Access to Preschool Education and Care in 2018/2019. In cooperation with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Division for Demography, data was collected on the number of live births (up to 6.5 years of age), for the purpose of analysing the access of children aged 6 months to the age of primary school enrolment, based on the SORS report.

Priority 4 – Determination of the fulfilment of prescribed conditions related to preschool curricula in the process of PI verification, or to preparatory preschool curricula in the process of verification of primary schools for its delivery.

Fulfilled. Continuous activity on preschools verification; preschool curricula delivered by other organisations or persons approved, as well as the education and care services delivered by primary schools to children in the year prior to their enrolment to primary school.

¹²³ The Rule Book on types, names, content, and format of record forms and official documents, as well as their keeping, filling out, and issuing by preschool institutions ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", no. 63/2019).

Priority 5 – Support to preparation and implementation of preschool projects and initiatives in order to increase children’s access to education and expand the programmes offered; cooperation with relevant expert associations, representatives of the academic community, competent institutions, representatives of trade unions, civil society organizations.

Fulfilled. Continuous activity made through regular consultations with partner institutions and organisations for the purpose of monitoring, as well as providing recommendations and solutions for on-going issues and challenges in implementation. As part of the cooperation with the relevant trade unions, Commission has been set up for monitoring the application of a special collective contract for employees in public PIs. At the request of the Working Group for Preschool Education, established under the purview of the Prime Minister’s Office (composed of representatives of line ministries: education, labour, public administration and local self-government, finance, as well as representatives of relevant trade unions), instructions have been prepared for principals of PIs, as well as recommendations for solving obstacles encountered on site. There is continuous communication with representatives of expert associations, both during the preparation of secondary legislation, and when organizing professional gatherings.

1.4. Priorities in 2020

Priority 1 – Preparation of the framework for regulations drafting, particularly regarding the issue of requirements and criteria for setting the economic price of preschool education per child; offering different curricula and forms of activities provided by preschool institutions; defining competency standards for expert associates in preschools. As required, participation in developing the draft strategic document SEDS 2027.

Priority 2 – Monitoring and supporting the implementation of activities under the Component 2 of the *Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* project (Strengthening the quality of preschools services).

Priority 3 – Monitoring of the territorial coverage and access of children to institutional preschool education.

Priority 4 – Determination of the fulfilment of prescribed conditions related to preschool curricula in the process of verification of preschool institutions, or to preparatory preschool curricula in the process of verification of primary schools for its delivery.

Priority 5 – Support to preparation and implementation of projects and initiatives in the preschool education activity in order to increase children’s access to education and expand programme offered; cooperation with relevant expert associations, representatives of the academic community, competent institutions, representatives of trade unions, civil society organizations.

Actions from SEDS 2020 AP:

PU-PŠ01	Harmonisation of legislation on social care and preschool education with SEDS
PU-PŠ02	Introduction of minimum half-day preschool education programme for all the children aged 3–5.5 in the period of one school year

PU-PŠ03	Definition and adoption of Preschool Quality Standards
PU-PŠ04	Development and adoption of the Preschool Curriculum Framework
PU-PŠ05	Establishing the preschool institution and curricula accreditation entity
PU-PŠ06	Accreditation of preschool institutions and their curricula
PU-PŠ07	Increasing the access to education for children aged 3–5.5, as well as introducing equity of access
PU-PŠ08	Establishing a local system of social care for children and preschool education

2. Primary education

2.1. The basic information on primary education, the current situation, and the context

In line with the Constitution and the laws regulating this education level¹²⁴, primary education is compulsory, lasts eight years, is implemented in two educational cycles¹²⁵, and is completed by a final examination, which is organized and realized at the national level.

According to the SORS data¹²⁶, there were 517,826 students (251,835 of them being female) in primary education at the beginning of the 2019/2020 school year.

According to the same source, the education process was realized in 1,136 central schools and 2,132 regional/satellite units in the 2019/2020 school year. The process included 517,826 students (251,835 of them being female). The central schools had 465,907 students, and the regional/satellite units 51,919.

The educational process was realized by 52,599 teachers¹²⁷ (38,480 of them are female), of whom 27,647 are employed full-time.

The total of 167 schools for children with disabilities were attended by 4,494 students (1,546 of them are female), with 2,040 teachers (1,683 are female), of whom 1,384 are employed full-time.

The table below compares some of the most important parameters for the previous and current school year. The parameters reveal a trend of declining numbers in primary education as a result of demographic trends, as well as the consequent reduction in teacher numbers. The number of central schools is higher and the number of regional/satellite units lower, which may indicate the primary school network optimization activities.

An overview of the number of students, schools, and teachers for the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 school years

2018/2019 school year			2019/2020 school year		
Total student numbers	Number of central schools and regional/satellite units	Total teacher numbers	Total student numbers	Number of central schools and regional/satellite units	Total teacher numbers
527,834	1,132 central schools and	52,948	517,826	1,136 central schools and 2,132	52,599

¹²⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 98/2006), the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law), 10/2019, 27/2018– other law and 6/2020), and the Law on Primary Education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia” No. 55/2013, 101/2017, 10/2019, and 27/2018 – other law).

¹²⁵ The first cycle means class and subject teaching and includes grades one, two, three, and four; the second cycle means subject teaching, and includes grades five, six, seven, and eight.

¹²⁶ Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/11020301?languageCode=sr-Cyrl>

¹²⁷ The data on teachers is available at:

<https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/11020201?languageCode=sr-Latn>

	2,187 regional/satellite units			regional/satellite units	
Total number of students with disabilitie s	Number of schools	Total teacher numbers	Total number of students with disabilitie s	Number of schools	Total teacher numbers
4,719	175	1,963	4,494	167	2,040

Source: SORS

The most recent available data on primary school performance quality date as far back as 2018, when the first round of educational institution external evaluation was completed, and when a total of 1,154 schools were evaluated (this number includes 25 primary music schools, 19 special-status schools ¹²⁸, five adult education schools, and two schools for primary and secondary education). Based on this, the IEQE published a report on the external evaluation of primary school performance (refers only to 1,103 primary schools). The average general quality score for the evaluated primary schools (1,103) is 2.8 (the lowest score is 1, and the highest 4). The score of four was given to 16.4%, three 51.1%, two 28.6%, and one 3.9%. The greatest number of schools were given the score of three across all of the 16 school administrations (the school administrations included in round one of the external evaluation); the Kruševac and Čačak school administrations had no schools receiving the score of four; and the school administration of Jagodina as many as 40% of the schools was given the highest score. Further, no schools from the Kragujevac and Čačak school administration territories received a score of one. The results of the evaluation showed that schools were mostly in need of support for raising the teaching and learning quality, as well as for providing the conditions for better educational attainments.

The performance quality of educational institutions can also be monitored through the achievements of students which are checked at the national and international level. At the national level, after over a decade, 2018 saw the implementation of the *national testing of students* (on a sample): grade seven students' performance in mathematics, history, and physics was tested. The results of the testing are not available yet.

From 2003, the Republic of Serbia has regularly participated in the international student achievement assessments – TIMSS (*Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*) and PISA (*Programme for International Student Assessment*). TIMSS assesses student attainments in the areas of mathematics and natural sciences in grades four and eight, while PISA assesses fifteen-year-olds' reading, mathematics, and science literacy.¹²⁹

In the most recent TIMSS cycles (2011, 2015, and the current one from 2019), the study was conducted only in grade four of primary school. According to the most recent available data of the

¹²⁸ The term 'special status' was taken from the report below:
http://vrednovanje.ceo.edu.rs/sites/default/files/izvestajiEE/2020_Rezultati%20spoljasnjeg%20vrednovanja%20skola_2012-2018.pdf

¹²⁹ The large majority of students who participate in the testing are in year one of secondary school. However, given the nature of the PISA testing, it can be said that it mostly measures the total competences developed up until that point in schooling, i.e. eight years of primary education and an incomplete year of secondary education.

TIMSS study conducted in 2015, 518 points in mathematics and 525 points in natural sciences rank the students from Serbia above the average standing at 500 points on the scale. These attainments are on a par with the results of students from other, economically more developed nations, but also far behind the most successful countries included in the study. The conclusions on the 2019 state of the art cannot be drawn as the results of the most recent round of the study are not available yet.

After six years¹³⁰, Serbia participated in 2018 in the PISA international assessment of student attainment (the most recent participation before that was in 2012), with the results published in 2019. The study included 8,442 fifteen-year-old students (mostly year one of secondary school), who were assessed on their performance in mathematics, science, and reading, in addition to financial literacy and general competence, which were assessed for the first time. The results put Serbia in the 45th place out of 79 participating countries. The average attainments of the Serbian students are as follows: 448 points on the mathematics literacy scale; 439 points on the reading literacy scale; and 440 points on the science literacy scale. This is below the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average of 500 points. Compared to the 2012 results, there was no significant progress, i.e. the student attainments are unsatisfactory.

The primary education final examination should also indicate the primary school-level education quality. However, the data cannot be used without much reservation as a measure of national level attainment quality, mostly for methodological reasons. The average attainments for the entire student population in the Republic of Serbia who took their final examination in 2018 indicate that the students were most successful in the combined test (with the average attainment standing at 12.60 points), followed by the Serbian language test (average attainment at 11.99 points), and least successful in the mathematics test (average attainment at 10.04 points). The 2019 data indicate that the situation had changed – the students were most successful in the Serbian language test (11.92 points), followed by the combined test (11 points), but they were once again least successful in the mathematics test (10.46 points).

The activities geared towards ramping up education quality at the pre-university level include the following: changing the laws and by-laws, e.g. for the first time, the LFES stipulates as education quality elements, among other things, the key lifelong learning competences and general intersubject competences for the end of the compulsory primary education and secondary education¹³¹; drawing up new, outcome- and competence-oriented curricula and syllabi; teacher training geared towards new approaches to teaching and learning (the training commenced in the second semester of the 2017/2018 school year, as a basic activity of the first measure in the Sectoral Budget Support (SBS)¹³² and is continually implemented for the purposes of training all the teachers within the system).

In collaboration with the IIE, the MoESTD began in 2017 to innovate the syllabi and curricula for the second cycle of primary education. The innovated syllabi include three new compulsory subjects – Information Technology and Computer Science, Technology, and Physical and Health Education, and have been implemented starting from the 2017/2018 school year (in said year, implementation began in grade five, and in the 2020/2021 school year they will be implemented in

¹³⁰ Serbia did not participate in 2015.

¹³¹ Article 11–12 of the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 10/2019, 27/2018 – other law and 6/2020).

¹³² Sectoral Budget Support (Sectoral Reform Agreement), which is financed from the EU pre-accession funds for 2016 – IPA 2016.

grade eight, which is the last year of implementation). The implementation of the innovated syllabi was accompanied by the amended rule books on the curriculum.

In addition to the innovated syllabi and curriculum for the second cycle, from the 2018/2019 school year new syllabi and curricula for grades one and five of primary school and year one of general secondary school started to be implemented. New syllabi and curricula are based on learning processes and outcomes, as well as on the development of student competences.

2.2. Progress made in the reporting period

2.2.1. Quality

As specified above, a TIMSS study of student attainment was conducted in the first half of 2019 on a representative sample of grade four students. The study was carried out at the national level by the Institute for Educational Research, and the results are not available yet.

Serbia joined for the first time the fifth round of the international study of reading literacy for grade four students - PIRLS 2021 (*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*)¹³³. The aim of the study is to collect and analyse data on reading competences of grade four primary school students, as well as data on the family and school context impacting on learning to read. The MoESTD entrusted the IEQE with the study, and the IEQE signed in May 2019 an agreement with the Institute for Educational Research with the aim of jointly preparing and conducting the study PIRLS 2021 in Serbia. In 2019, the testing tasks were translated and adapted, the sample was constructed, and communication and collaboration were initiated with the schools.

The innovated syllabi and curricula for the second cycle of primary education were implemented in the 2018/2019 school year in grades five and six, and in the 2019/2020 school year in grade seven. In the next, 2020/2021 school year, they will be implemented in grade eight as well (the last year of application). The implementation of the innovated syllabi and curricula was accompanied by the amended rule books of the curriculum. In 2019, the grade seven¹³⁴ and grade eight¹³⁵ curricula for primary school were adopted,

In the reporting period, the rule books on the curricula for grades three and four were adopted¹³⁶. The new curricula for grade three will be implemented from the 2020/2021 school year, and for grade four from 2021/2022 school year. The same year saw the adoption of the rule

¹³³ The international study conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) from the Netherlands and Boston College from the USA. The study is conducted in five-year cycles. In Serbia, the study is conducted by IEQE in partnership with the Institute for Educational Research.

¹³⁴ The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on the curriculum for grade seven of primary education ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - The Educational Gazette", no. 3/2019 and 12/2019).

¹³⁵ The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on the curriculum for grade eight of primary education ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - The Educational Gazette", no. 10/2019).

¹³⁶ The Rule Book on the curriculum for grade three of primary education ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - The Educational Gazette", no. 5/2019 and 11/2019) and the Rule Book on the curriculum for grade four of primary education ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - The Educational Gazette" no. 11/2019).

books on the curriculum for grade seven¹³⁷ (the implementation begins in the 2020/2021 school year), grade eight¹³⁸ (the implementation begins in the 2021/2022 school year), grades seven and eight for mathematically gifted students¹³⁹ (the implementation in grade seven begins in the 2020/2021 school year, and in grade eight in the 2021/2022 school year).

Further, the rule books regulating the primary ballet and music education were adopted¹⁴⁰, as well as the new rule book on student assessment¹⁴¹, whose implementation began in the 2019/2020 school year and which emphasizes the obligation of continued monitoring of the achievement of the prescribed outcomes and achievement standards.

In early 2020, a new Rule book on the amendments to the Rule Book on the syllabi for the first cycle of primary education and the curriculum for grade one of primary education¹⁴² was adopted, whose implementation begins in the 2020/2021 school year. Based on this rule book, a new subject was introduced in the first cycle – *Digital World*, and *project-based teaching* is not prescribed as one of the forms of educational work, which does not mean that schools may not plan and implement project tasks (emphasized in the *Recommendations for Planning the Educational Practice*, which is a section of the above rule book). **The adoption of the new syllabi and curricula lays the foundation for implementing the curriculum reform, envisaged in the current education strategy and applicable laws.**

A bylaw was adopted regulating the specific requirements for founding, commencement of operation, and activities of primary schools¹⁴³, as well as the Rule book on the amendments of the Rule Book on keeping records in primary schools¹⁴⁴, which allows schools to keep electronic and bilingual records.

Activities aimed at amending laws and bylaws have contributed to the implementation of the campaign on harmonizing laws and bylaws in primary education with SEDS (PU-OŠ01).

Teachers and schools have also received support in the implementation of new syllabi and curricula through professional development programmes for teachers, specialists, and principals – *The Teacher Outcome-Oriented Teaching Training Programme*¹⁴⁵. In 2019, the programme was improved based on the results of the analysis of trainings completed in 2018 (the analysis of the

¹³⁷ The Rule Book on the curriculum for grade seven of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 5/2019 and 1/2020).

¹³⁸ The Rule Book on the curriculum for grade eight of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 11/2019 and 2/2020).

¹³⁹ The Rule Book on the syllabi for mathematically gifted grade seven and eight students of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 12/2019).

¹⁴⁰ The Rule Book on the syllabi and curriculum for primary ballet education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 7/2019) and the Rule Book on the syllabi and curriculum for primary music education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 5/2019).

¹⁴¹ The Rule Book on student assessment in primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 34/2019).

¹⁴² The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on the syllabi for the first cycle of primary education and the curriculum for grade one of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 2/2020).

¹⁴³ The Rule Book on the specific requirements for founding, commencement of operation, and activities of primary schools (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 5/2019).

¹⁴⁴ The Rule Book on the amendments of the Rule Book on keeping records in primary schools (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 56/2019).

¹⁴⁵ The programme is on the Public Interest Programmes list – available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/lista-programa-od-javnog-interesa-koje-resenjem-odobrava-ministar/>.

evaluation questionnaires) and **583 trainings were implemented, during which 18,084 teachers were trained.** A new round of these trainings starts in late April 2020 online, due to the corona virus pandemic, including for the first time vocational subject teachers in the areas of Electrical Engineering and Economics, law, and administration.¹⁴⁶

With a view to improving teaching and learning, the professional development programme for those employed in the area of education has been accredited as a public interest programme – *Activities for Supporting All Students – Differentiation of Instruction*. The programme aims to plan and implement differentiated instruction which supports the learning and improvement of all children. As many as 180 external advisors from all the school administrations have been trained as part of this programme.

With a view to improving teachers' digital competences, the IIE has organized and implemented multiple professional development programmes for teachers, which have been accredited as public interest programmes; specifically: within the project *Digital Classroom – Training in the Use of Digital Teaching Materials* – a total of 625 trainings were held, attended by 9,494 primary school teachers; *Training in the Python Programming Language* – 1,035 primary school computer science teachers were trained; *Training for Attaining Digital Competences* – 3,389 primary school teachers completed this training in order to attain the basic level of digital competences.

IEQE implemented the training in the application of attainment standards in primary school foreign language teaching. The training was held online on the Moodle platform in two cycles, with the aim of successfully implementing the educational standards in the teaching process, for 6 languages (English, German, Russian, French, Italian, and Spanish). The training was completed by 508 teachers in the second cycle.

In April 2020, **the first online conference *Digital Education 2020*** was held, focusing on the implementation of digital tools in communication. The conference was organized by EdTech Centre Western Balkans¹⁴⁷, partnering up with: MoESTD, IIE, IEQE, SIPRU, CCIS, and the Petlja Foundation, with the help of the companies *Microsoft* and *Oracle*. The first day of the conference saw 2,500 attendees, and the second day, broken down by sector: primary and secondary education – 1,400 participants; pre-school education – 400 participants; and higher education – 120 participants¹⁴⁸.

Due to the corona virus pandemic, teaching in practical applications of teachers' digital competences has been organized online in Serbia since mid-March 2020.

In the reporting period, 548 decisions were made regarding the approval of textbooks or textbook sets in the Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet (433), as well as in the languages and alphabets of the national minorities (115). The catalogues of the approved textbooks are available on the MoESTD web-page¹⁴⁹ – *The Catalogue of textbooks for grades two and six of primary education – the 2020/2021 school year*, and the *Revised catalogue of textbooks*

¹⁴⁶ Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/22-4-2020-godine-pocinje-onlajn-obuka-za-realizaciju-nastave-orijentisane-ka-ishodima-ucenja-za-prvi-krug>.

¹⁴⁷ A civil society organization.

¹⁴⁸ Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/odrzana-prva-onlajn-konferencija-2digitalno-obrazovanje-2020/>

¹⁴⁹ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/udzbenici/>

in the languages of national minorities for pre-school, primary, and secondary education – the 2020/2021 school year.¹⁵⁰

The implementation of the project **Teaching Materials through the Digital Textbook**, which started in 2028, continued, aiming primarily at the use of digital educational materials, i.e. digital textbooks in teaching, through purchasing and use of application codes. So far, **a total of 316 electronic textbooks have been approved**, for grades one, two, five, and six of primary education. The textbook will be used within the project *Digital Classroom*.

In 2018, 2,000 laptops and projectors, with laptop and projector cases, were provided to schools where teachers interested in using digital textbooks for grade one and five are employed (selected based on a public competition), The practice continued in 2019 as well. The total number of equipped classrooms in 2019 was not available at the time of writing the report.

In 2019, in collaboration with the national minority councils, the IEQE developed the attainment standards for the subject *Native Language* (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Rusyn, Slovakian, and Croatian) for the end of the first cycle of primary education.¹⁵¹ The revised attainment standards for 12 primary education subjects were prepared (at this point in time this is an internal IEQE document). The above activities have contributed to the implementation of the campaign *The Application and Improvement of Educational Standards (PU-OŠ02)*.

A new round of external evaluation of institutions started in the autumn of 2019 based on the adopted bylaws improving the evaluation process. In addition to the acts prescribing institutional quality standards in 2018¹⁵², acts regulating the process of evaluating institutional operation¹⁵³ and specialist educational oversight¹⁵⁴ are also important for regulating this area. The Rule Book on preschool quality evaluation prescribes, among other things, the basic criteria for self-evaluation and evaluation, and the content and publication of the self-evaluation and evaluation results, while the Rule Book on specialist educational oversight regulates specialist educational institution oversight, and the criteria for the evaluation of the institutions and educational advisors, etc.

In order to properly implement the adopted bylaws, the IEQE developed a self-evaluation training programme in collaboration with the MoESTD (public interest training), and a training plan in collaboration with the school administrations. The attendees were teams of three from primary and secondary schools receiving training in the implementation of the institutional self-evaluation process. A total of 98 implementers were trained, who conducted 192 training sessions providing training for 2,202 teachers.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PRELIM-KATALOG-MANJINE-2020-21.pdf>

¹⁵¹ The NEC gave a positive opinion regarding this document in early February 2020. Its publication in the official gazette is forthcoming.

¹⁵² The Rule Book on preschool quality standards (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 14/2018).

¹⁵³ The Rule Book on preschool quality evaluation (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 10/2019).

¹⁵⁴ The Rule Book on specialist educational oversight (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 87/2019).

¹⁵⁵ The data obtained from the IEQE.

As stated above, primary education is completed by taking the final examination, which is organized and conducted in line with the laws and bylaws¹⁵⁶ at the national level. The organization and implementation of this examination is improved continuously, as testified by the Specialist Instructions for Administering the Final examination (internal document) – the most recent instructions were for the 2018/2019 school year (May 2019). In line with its powers, the IEQE prepares a detailed examination report after the examination is held, which is available on the Institute’s web-page (reports for all the years in which the examination was held).¹⁵⁷.

*The report on the results of the final examination at the end of primary education in the 2018/2019 school year*¹⁵⁸ was published in 2019, and contains a report on the examination taken by students whose teaching was delivered in Serbian, as well as a report relating to the students whose teaching was delivered in one of the eight national minority languages. In June 2019, the examination was taken by 67,543 students and the results of the examination broken down by the examination language are provided in the table below.

The student attainment in the June 2019 final examination.

Final examination language	No of students who took the examination	Average attainment in Serbian / native language	Average attainment in mathematics	Average attainment in the combined test
<i>Serbian</i>	63,544	11.92	10.46	11
<i>Albanian</i>	611	12.04	11.79	11.08
<i>Bosnian</i>	1,424	8.77	10.43	10.75
<i>Hungarian</i>	1,498	8.70	9.40	8.69
<i>Romanian</i>	79	9.21	9.03	9.85
<i>Rusyn</i>	49	11.80	9.28	9.90
<i>Slovakian</i>	304	10	9.99	9.74
<i>Croatian</i>	29	11.76	9.97	9.50
<i>Bulgarian</i>	5 ¹⁵⁹			
TOTAL	67,543			

Source: IEQE/MoESTD

The analysis of the final examination results indicates that the attainment of over one half of the district is below average in the Serbian and combined tests, and that two thirds of the district have below-average results in the mathematics test.

Due to the corona virus pandemic, the mock final examination planned for the last week of March 2020, was postponed. Because of this, the MoESTD organized online testing for grade eight students in April 2020, as a preparation for the final examination. The activities that the MoESTD

¹⁵⁶ The Rule Book on the final examination programme in primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette, no. 1/2011, 1/2012, 1/2014, 12/2014 and 2/2018).

¹⁵⁷ Available at: <https://ceo.edu.rs/istraživanje-i-vrednovanje>.

¹⁵⁸ Available at: <https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Извештај-о-результатима-завршног-испита-на-крају-основног-образовања> and <https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/izvestaj-o-rezultatima-za-skolsku-2018-2019.pdf>.

¹⁵⁹ Due to the small number of students, the student attainment for this national minority was not analysed.

conducts in collaboration with partners (primarily the IEQE) contribute to the campaign *The Analysis of the Experience and Improving the Final Examination in Primary Schools (PU-OŠ07)*.

Establishing the Education Management Information System (EMIS) is also important in improving the student attainment monitoring system. In this reporting period, **the Rule Book on the Education Management Information System was adopted**¹⁶⁰, prescribing the following: the specific requirements for and the establishment of EMIS; the register of the institutions, accredited higher education institutions, accredited programmes of study, the employees of the institutions and higher education institutions, children, students, adults, and university students, maintenance, collection, entry, updating, and availability of data; as well as the types of statistical reports based on the register data. In addition to this rule book, **the Rule Book on the specific requirements in the unique student number assignment procedure was adopted** in the same year ¹⁶¹.

Every school year, in collaboration with the professional associations of teachers, the MoESTD organizes competitions and reviews based on the specialist instructions and the competition and review calendar. In December 2019, the minister in charge of education promulgated the *Specialist Instructions for Organizing Competitions and Reviews for Primary and Secondary School Students* and the *Calendar of Competitions and Reviews for Primary School Students* for the 2019/2020 school year. The instructions contain all the elements important for organizing and holding competitions and reviews, as well as student evaluation procedures, student and teacher awards, and funding. A novel element is reporting, which obliges the organizer to provide a report one week after a competition, in a form available from the official MoESTD web-page (<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/prosveta/osnovno-obrazovanje-i-vaspitanje/>). The competitions and reviews are financed from the state budget and the funds provided by organizers. All of the above activities contribute to the campaign *Establishing a Unified System of Student Awards for Good Educational Attainment at the Level of the Republic of Serbia (PU-OŠ08)*.

2.2.2. Relevance

The first years and decades of the new millennium have brought to mankind an ‘explosion’ of scientific and technological discoveries, new knowledge and skills and new professions. In these new circumstances it was necessary to bring the mission of education in line with the needs of the individual and the society at large, as well as with the needs of the 21st century economy. The alignment of the education process and the scientific, technological, and socio-economic changes points to its relevance, i.e. to what extent the education system meets the needs of the individual and the society, and to what extent it prepares the individual for life and work / for adapting to a time of rapid and frequent changes. Relevance is also seen with respect to how well the education system defines educational outcomes in reference to the competences necessary in the 21st century, and how successful the education system is in attaining these outcomes.

The findings of the PISA international student attainment studies are also important for education relevance, as they allow strategic decisions, important for the development of the system, to be made based on empirical data on student attainment and schooling conditions. As stated above, the Republic of Serbia was one of the 79 participating states in the 2018 PISA study, and the

¹⁶⁰ The Rule Book on the Education Management Information System (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 81/2019).

¹⁶¹ The Rule Book on the specific requirements in the unique student number assignment procedure (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 81/2019).

results of the students from Serbia are considerably below the OECD average, i.e. they are not satisfactory.

The LFES indicates a clear focus of the educational process on student competence development, as testified by the syllabi and curricula based on (oriented towards) learning outcomes and processes, as well as the development of general intersubject competences (it is the duty of every teacher to develop student competences in every class; every principal must set up a team for the development of intersubject competences and entrepreneurship at the school level¹⁶²).

In 2019, activities aimed at improving education relevance in the Republic of Serbia continued. In this connection, **the syllabi for the first cycle of primary education were improved by introducing a new subject in all the grades of this cycle – *The Digital World*** (annual total – 36 45-minute classes)¹⁶³. The syllabus for the subject *The Digital World* states that, ‘The teaching and learning objectives of the subject *The Digital World* are developing students’ digital communication in order to prepare them for a safe and proper use of digital tools for learning, communication, cooperation, and development of the algorithmic style of thinking.’ The new syllabi for the first cycle of primary education will be implemented from the 2020.2021 school year, and will be applicable to the students starting their primary education in that year.

The project *Enhanced Single-Shift Operation* also contributed to the development of student competences. This MoESTD project began on 1 September 2019 and includes 204 primary schools. The aim of the project is to engage via single-shift operation in the activities which meet the diverse educational needs of students, contribute to the development of general intersubject competences, especially the entrepreneurial competence. The project activities contribute to the implementation of the campaign *Strengthening the Educational Role of Schools (PU-OŠ06)*.

Important activities were conducted in **the prevention of violence in schools via numerous training programmes aimed at enhancing the school capacity for the prevention of digital violence, violence in sports activities, gender-based violence, violence in multicultural environments, etc.** Many tens of thousands of students, teachers, and parents were involved in these training programmes.

A new rule book was adopted ratifying the Protocol of the Institutional Response to Violence, Abuse, and Neglect¹⁶⁴. In early 2020, the handbook *Towards a Safer and More Stimulating School Environment*¹⁶⁵ was published as part of the project “Integrated response to violence against women and girls in Serbia II”, implemented by UN Women and UNFRA UNDP, in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Serbia, led by the Coordination Body for Gender Equality. It is a result of the experience gained in the implementation and evaluation of “Schools Without Violence”.

With the aim of strengthening the professional competences of teachers, the MoESTD announced in November 2019 a **public call for the selection of organizers and implementers of public interest professional development programmes in 2019**. The priority areas in this public call

¹⁶² Article 130, paragraph 14, item 5 of the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System.

¹⁶³ The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on the syllabi for the first cycle of primary education and the curriculum for grade one of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 2/2020).

¹⁶⁴ The Rule Book on the protocol of the institutional response to violence, abuse, and neglect (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 46/2019).

¹⁶⁵ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/grupa-za-prevenciju-nasilja/>

were as follows: 1) The development of intersubject competences; 2) Student cooperatives in the education system – challenges and opportunities; 3) School sports; 4) From books to play – the links between the curriculum and extracurricular activities. The MoESTD set aside 17 million RSD for this public call. Six programmes were approved, three of which involve the priority area of The Development of Intersubject Competences, one the priority area of Student Cooperatives, one the priority area of School Sports, and one the priority area From Books to Play. All the selected organizers must implement the project activities by 31 August 2020.

2.2.3. Access

According to the 2019 SORS data, access to primary education stood at 97% in 2018¹⁶⁶. According to SEDS, the minimal target value is 98%, and the ideal access is 100%. The results of the MICS 2014 study¹⁶⁷ also indicate a near universal access to primary education in the general population; however, at the same time, the data indicate that 15% of the children of the appropriate age from Roma settlements are outside of the education system. The 2017 regional study looking at the status of the Roma in the West Balkans reveals similar data – 84% of the children from Roma settlements attend primary school. At the start of the 2018/2019 school year, the number of students in primary schools stood at 527,834 (of whom 256,245 were female), and at the start of the 2019/2020 school year at 517,826 (of whom 251,835 were female), which is 10,008 fewer than in the previous school year.¹⁶⁸ At the start of the 2019/2020 school year, the total number of children with disabilities stood at 4,494 (which is 0.87% of the total student population) in untypical primary schools. This puts Serbia among the countries with the lowest percentage of students who receive primary education outside of typical primary schools.

The SEDS also aims to keep primary school attrition below 5% of the student generation. The projections based on SORS data indicate that the attrition figures fall within that range. However, the methodology of calculating the attrition numbers is not optimal yet (the difference between the number of students at the start and at the end of a school year), nor are the practices of institutional student number reporting entirely reliable. Therefore, precise and valid data on the rate of primary education attrition is not available.

The training in planning, implementing, and monitoring the measures for attrition prevention (accredited in 2018, and on the public interest programme list) has been attended so far by approximately 500 teachers.

The MoESTD supports the project *Together Towards Secondary School – Supporting Students from Vulnerable Groups in the Transition to Secondary School*, implemented by the Centre for Education Policy with the support of the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation. The project aims to increase the number of students from vulnerable social groups continuing their education in secondary school. The first phase of the project (2017-2019) is complete, and the second phase has started (2020-2022).

A bylaw was adopted regulating and prescribing the work of the pedagogical assistant for Roma children and students in need of additional support in education, as well as the work of the pedagogical assistant for children and students with disabilities, and the work of the

¹⁶⁶ Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/1109?languageCode=sr-Latn>.

¹⁶⁷ The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF (2014). A study of multiple indicators of the status of women and children in Serbia 2014 and A study of multiple indicators of the status of women and children in the Roma settlements in Serbia 2014, Final Report: Belgrade, Serbia: The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF.

¹⁶⁸ Available at: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Pdf/G20201073.pdf>.

andragogical assistant.¹⁶⁹ This rule book provides specific requirements for the work, degree and type of education, and training programme for pedagogical and andragogical assistants. The rule book will be implemented after the Government acts regulating the job classification catalogue and the salary coefficients for pedagogical assistants are harmonized.

The MoESTD continued to implement in 2019 the project *Procurement of Textbooks and Other Teaching Materials for Primary School Students* with the aim of providing free textbooks, textbook sets, and other teaching materials that schools selected for the teaching and learning process in the 2019/2020 school year. In this way, providing help and support continues for: students from socially vulnerable families (social welfare beneficiaries); students with disabilities (who receive primary education in line with an individual education plan and those who receive primary education without an individual education plan, but who need to adapt (increased font, the Braille alphabet, electronic format); students who are a third or any subsequent child. In 2019, the access of students from socially vulnerable categories (social welfare beneficiaries) identified as users of free textbooks was higher than in the previous year (15.5%) and stood at 16.5%, with the planned school access at 100%.

This year as well, the Veljko Ramadanović School in Zemun hosted the *Teacher Training Programme for Working with Children/Students with Disabilities and Providing Support for Mastering the Braille Alphabet* for 7 teachers who have children using the Braille alphabet in their classes. Class teachers were empowered to provide support for the visually impaired students in spatial ability and Braille alphabet literacy.

The trial programme for the implementation of the transitional model of preparing children aged above seven and a half for inclusion in education is implemented by the “Branko Pešić” School in Zemun in collaboration with seven primary schools in Zemun. The trial programme supports the inclusion in education of children aged above seven and half who were never enrolled in grade one, or who started their schooling but stopped for some reason, as well as the children of migrants and others leaving school early. The transitional model proposed within the Trial Programme ought to allow this group of children to realize their right to education in a way that is in their best interest and which takes into account their specificities and the context in which they live. The implementation of the Trial Programme was supported by UNICEF through the project *Overcoming Differences in Fairness and Increasing Access to Quality Inclusive Education for Roma Children and Other Children Outside of School Education*.

All the above activities are implemented by the MoESTD in collaboration with domestic and international partners with the aim of providing full access to primary education for students, as well as preventing student attrition, which is also a campaign contained in the AP – *Reducing the Student Attrition Rate in Primary Education (PU-OŠ04)*.

2.2.4. Efficiency

In recent years and decades, Serbia has been recording a population decline, as testified by the SORS data. According to the most recent census (2011), Serbia has a registered population of 7,186,862, and in 2018 – the latest available data – the estimated size of the population stood at 6,982,804¹⁷⁰. The population growth rate is negative, and depopulation is also evident in the number of students in the primary education system.

¹⁶⁹ The Rule Book on the pedagogical assistant and andragogical assistant (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 87/2019).

¹⁷⁰ Available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/vesti/?a=18&s=1801>

A table overview of student numbers in the last four years:

The 2016/2017 school year	The 2017/2018 school year	The 2018/2019 school year	The 2019/2020 school year	Total fewer enrolled
545,234	539,147	527,834	517,826	27,408

Source: SORS

The reduction in student numbers requires change in the primary school network, which is still out of step with the population changes. The following is especially indicative of the school network being out of step: a great number of small schools in central urban environments; teaching organized in *combination classes* (which are characteristic for regional/satellite units of a central school in remote rural areas), in which students of different grades are together and are taught by the same teacher. Teaching and learning in such classes are a challenge and are generally of poorer quality than in the ordinary class structure.¹⁷¹

In line with Article 104 of the LFES, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has passed a Regulation on the Criteria for Passing Legislation on the Preschool and Primary School Network¹⁷². Acts on the public primary school network are passed by the local self-government based on the criteria established by the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Before passing acts on the public primary school network, an LSG must draft a study containing the network development plan prepared on the basis of the children and student population growth trends, as well as migratory movements in the LSG for public primary schools for a period of four and/or eight years. Acts on the public primary school networks are approved by the MoESTD. **In 2019, the MoESTD organized specialist conventions and meetings with the representatives of local self-governments with the aim of preparing them for passing the act on optimizing the preschool and primary school network in line with the Regulation on the Criteria for Passing Legislation on the Preschool and Primary School Network** (34.75% of the LSGs were not prepared to pass an act in line with the Regulation on the Criteria for Passing Legislation on the Preschool and Primary School Network, i.e. they were not ready to work on the optimization process). The above activities are in line with the campaign *Optimizing the Primary School Network (PU-OŠ03)*.

The introduction of the *electronic register* (officially referred to as esRegister, which is short for 'electronic system register'¹⁷³) has contributed to an increase in efficiency in the following areas: keeping records of students and their activities in the education process; teachers' administrative work (all the needed records are found in a single location); parents' monitoring of their child's progress, etc. Further, the implemented solution allows parents to individually review student records via the internet.

The pilot project of *the implementation of the electronic register* (initiated in the 2017/2018 school year) has become one of the most important projects in the 2018/2019 school year. The teachers' digital literacy level was raised and a long-term sustainability of the process of education system digitalization was secured via a strategic approach and targeted training programmes.

¹⁷¹ According to the MoESTD materials regarding the school network rationalization.

¹⁷² Regulation on the criteria for passing legislation on the preschool and primary school network ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 21/2018).

¹⁷³ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/elektronski-dnevnik-esdnevnik/>

2.3. The 2019 priorities – an assessment of fulfilment

Priority 1 – Adopting the primary school grade curricula which had not been adopted yet.

Fulfilled. The curricula for all primary education grades have been adopted, which also contributes to the implementation of the campaign *Harmonizing Laws and Bylaws in Primary Education with SEDS (PU-OŠ01)*.

The following rule books have been approved:

- The Rule Book on the curriculum for grade three of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 5/2019 and 11/2019);
- The Rule Book on the curriculum for grade four of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 11/2019);
- The Rule Book on the curriculum for grade seven of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 5/2019 and 1/2020);
- The Rule Book on the curriculum for grade eight of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 11/2019 and 2/2020);
- The Rule Book on the syllabi for mathematically gifted grades seven and eight students of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 12/2019);
- The Rule Book on the syllabi and curriculum for primary ballet education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 7/2019);
- The Rule Book on the syllabi and curriculum for primary music education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 5/2019);
- The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on the syllabi for the first cycle of primary education and the curriculum for grade one of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 2/2020).

Priority 2 – Implementing the final examination at the end of primary education.

Fulfilled. In the 2018/2019 school year, the final examination was held with certain difficulties (the mathematics test was repeated as it was determined that it had been available to students prior to testing). The examination was held in line with the current legislation; proposals were prepared on how to improve the final examination administration procedure in the upcoming school year. The results of this examination are available on the web-page of the Institute for the Education Quality and Evaluation¹⁷⁴. The analysis of the final examination, conducted by the IEQE as per its remit, is a contribution to the campaign *The Analysis of the Experience and Improving the Final Examination in Primary Schools (PU-OŠ07)*.

Priority 3 – Professional development of teachers, preschool teachers, and specialists in the implementation of new curricula.

Continuous implementation. In line with Article 4 paragraph 2 of the Rule Book on continuous professional development and career promotion of school teachers, preschool teachers and expert associates (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 81/2017 and 48/18), in 2019 the Minister for Education, Science, and Technological Development made a decision that 19 (nineteen) professional development programmes for educators be given the status of public interest programmes. The programmes relate to implementing new curricula, and are published on the official internet presentation of the Institute for the Education Quality and Evaluation.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Available at: <https://ceo.edu.rs/izveštaji-o-realizaciji-i-rezultatim/>

¹⁷⁵ Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/lista-programa-od-javnog-interesa-koje-resenjem-odobrava-ministar/>

Priority 4 – Adopting bylaws based on the Law on Primary Education.

Continuous implementation. In 2019, the bylaws were adopted based on the Law on Primary Education, which also contributes to the campaign *Harmonizing Laws and Bylaws in Primary Education with SEDS (PU-OŠ01)*. The following rule books were approved:

- The Rule Book on student marking in primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 34/2019);
- The Rule Book on the specific requirements for founding, commencement of operation, and activities of primary schools (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 5/2019);
- The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on keeping records and issuing official documents in primary school (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, no. 56/2019).

Priority 5 – Developing entrepreneurship as an intersubject competence.

Continuous implementation. This priority is implemented by means of professional development of teachers; the teaching and learning process, especially the subject *Technology*; extracurricular activities and the project *Enhance Single-Shift Operation*, which contributes to the implementation of the campaign *Strengthening the Educational Role of Primary School (PU-OŠ06)*.

Priority 6 – Approving textbooks and textbook sets in line with the new syllabi and curricula.

Continuous implementation. New textbooks have been approved for all the subjects in grades one, two, three, five, six, and seven of primary education. The following catalogues have been published:

- The catalogue of textbooks for grades one and five of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 2/2019);
- The catalogue of textbooks for grades two and six of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 6/2019);
- The supplement to the catalogue of textbooks for grades one and five of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 9/2019 and 11/2019);
- The catalogue of textbooks for grades three and seven of primary education (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 2/2020);
- The Rule Book on the amendments to the Rule Book on the textbook plan (“The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – The Educational Gazette”, no. 11/2019).

Priority 7 – The implementation of the project *Free Textbooks*.

Fulfilled for the 2019/2020 school year, which has contributed to the campaign *Reducing Student Attrition Rate in Primary Education (PU-OŠ04)*.

The planned percentage of socially vulnerable students (social welfare beneficiaries) entitled to obtain free textbooks stands at 16.5% of the total 2019 primary education student population, thus exceeding the target value of 15.5%. The planned percentage of schools which have been authorized to expand their library stock by publications relevant to education was attained in full (100%) in 2019.

Priority 8 – The implementation of the project *Teaching Materials Via Digital Textbooks / Digital Classrooms*.

Continuous implementation. The priority objective of this project is the use of digital educational materials – digital textbooks in teaching, via the procurement and use of application codes. The planned total number of teachers for whom the digital educational materials - digital textbooks, which they use in teaching via the application codes - have been procured stands at 12,000. The approach to procuring digital educational materials – digital textbooks was changed, so that these materials were procured for class teachers and all the students in their classes, for five subjects in class teaching, whereas digital textbooks were procured for subject teachers for the students in five classes that the teacher works with.

2.4. The 2020 priorities

Priority 1 – Preparing the expert argumentation for the drafting of bylaws. Participation, as required, in the development of the draft strategic document SEDS 2027.

Priority 2 – Activities geared towards the adoption of the financial plan of the Sector for Preschool and Primary School Education for 2020, as well as the plan of priority funding areas for the period 2021-2023.

Priority 3 – The implementation of the project *Procuring Teaching Materials for Students, Attendees, and Institutions*, by achieving two objectives: 1) Providing free textbooks for students from the socially most vulnerable groups, at the target value of 17% of the total student population; 2) Allocating textbook and other teaching materials for the expansion of primary school library stock, for 100% of the primary schools.

Priority 4 – The implementation of the project *Teaching Materials Via Digital Textbooks / Digital Classrooms* by achieving the objective of using digital educational materials – digital textbooks, by procuring and using application codes. The planned total number of teachers for whom the digital educational materials - digital textbooks, which they use in teaching via the application codes - stands at 12,000.

Priority 5 – The implementation of the programme activity *Supporting the Teaching Process in Primary Schools in the AP Kosovo and Metohija* with the aim of providing transportation for the students and staff in the AP Kosovo and Metohija until the end of the 2019/2020 school year, i.e. until and including June 2020. The target 2020 percentage of students and staff for whom transportation is planned is 100%.

Priority 6 – Monitoring the financial aspect of all the programme activities / projects of the Sector for Preschool and Primary School Education in line with the Financial Plan of the Sector for 2020, by implementing the 2020 budget.

Campaigns for the SEDS 2020 AP:

PU-OŠ01	Harmonizing Laws and Bylaws in Primary Education with SEDS.
PU-OŠ02	The Application and Improvement of Educational Standards.

PU-OŠ03	Optimizing the Primary School Network.
PU-OŠ04	Reducing the Student Attrition Rate in Primary Education.
PU-OŠ05	Evaluating Student Educational Attainment.
PU-OŠ06	Strengthening the Educational Role of Primary School.
PU-OŠ07	The Analysis of the Experience and Improving the Final Examination in Primary Schools.
PU-OŠ08	Establishing a Unified System of Student Awards for Good Educational Attainment at the Level of the Republic of Serbia.

3. General secondary and secondary art education

3.1. The basic information on the general secondary and secondary art education – the current situation and the context

Starting from the 2018/2019 school year, general secondary education has undergone the first major overhaul in the last 20 years. In line with the current reform, the first generation of general secondary school students will finish their schooling in the 2021/2022 school year, which is when they will be taking the re-conceptualized matriculation examination, i.e. the secondary school exit examination. In addition to its certification and selection functions, **the third function of the exit examination, as an external examination, is evaluation, and the results obtained will allow monitoring and important but as-yet missing insights into the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the entire secondary education.**

In the 2019/2020 school year, the percentage of general secondary school students stood at 26.7% of the total secondary school numbers, and of secondary art students at 2.4%. For the period starting from the 2010/2011 school year, **a trend of steady but very mild increase in the general secondary education percentages can be detected**, while the secondary art education percentages remain nearly unchanged. The current share of general secondary and secondary art education stands at 29.1% (according to the SEDS 2020, the target share is 39%).

In order to understand the context and the current situation of general secondary and secondary art education, it is important to point out the results of external evaluation of these schools as part of the first cycle of evaluation. The IEQE published in early 2020 the report *The Quality of Operation of the Educational Institutions in the Republic of Serbia – The Results of External Evaluation of Schools in the First Cycle*¹⁷⁶, which included all the schools in Serbia. The first external evaluation cycle was completed in the six years between 2012 and 2018¹⁷⁷ and is the most recent available data on the quality of operation of these educational institutions. The average quality assessment score for all secondary schools stands at 2.8.

As regards the distribution of the general quality assessment scores for general secondary schools, it is estimated that 68.3% of general secondary schools are the so-called ‘good schools’ (marks 3 and 4), while nearly a third of the evaluated general secondary schools have an unsatisfactory quality of operation (marks 1 and 2). More specifically, the dominant general quality assessment score is 3, and the unsatisfactory quality of operation was found in the smallest number of general secondary schools, followed by those with exceptional quality (mark 4 – 13.5%; mark 3 – 54.8%; mark 2 – 27.9%; and mark 1 – 3.8%). In terms of quality areas, general secondary schools attain the standard with the least difficulty in the areas of Ethos, Work Organization, and Management and Resources, and with the greatest difficulty in the areas of Teaching and Learning, Educational Attainment, and Student Support. The standards most difficult to attain (at the highest level) for most general secondary schools include those relating to student progress monitoring, formative assessment, an appropriate degree of personalization, as well as an adequate system of support for students from vulnerable groups. It is important to

¹⁷⁶ The report is available on the official IEQE web-site: <http://vrednovanje.ceo.edu.rs>

¹⁷⁷ In the entire evaluation cycle, a total of 437 secondary schools were evaluated (271 VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS, 104 general secondary schools, 35 combined schools, and 27 secondary art schools). It is important to note that the results relating to the art schools were left out of the analysis due to the small number of schools, and can be the topic of a separate report; also, the report mostly presents summary results for secondary vocational schools and general secondary schools.

note that almost the same conclusion is reached for secondary vocational schools and primary schools. It is indicative that, according to the evaluators' assessments, at the level of all secondary schools, only 14.4% stimulate at the highest level the students' educational progress, i.e. continually contribute to the students' success.

The second cycle of external evaluation (which started in October 2019 according to the revised methodology and standards) will enable the monitoring of progress made by schools with respect to the previous period.

In the context of the analysis of the quality of the entire education system, including general secondary education and secondary art education, as well as of the current situation, it is important to note that in late 2019 the results of the PISA study were published¹⁷⁸. The sample contained 6,602 students¹⁷⁹, aged fifteen¹⁸⁰, from 190 schools.

Compared to the previous PISA cycle, no significant trends were identified in the student attainment in our country. Serbia ranked 45th out of 79 countries which participated in the PISA study. **One of the conclusions of this study is that due to the low functional literacy level for a large number of students, the continuation of schooling, employment, and professional development will be challenging.** While in the OECD countries the percentage of such students ranges, depending on the domain of evaluation, between 21% and 25%, in Serbia it ranges between 38% and 40%. The results presented in this study reveal that in Serbia the average student attainment on the mathematical literacy scale stands at 44 points, on the reading literacy scale at 439, and on the scientific literacy scale at 440 points (average student attainment in the OECD countries is 500 points). Compared to the OECD countries, the competences of Serbian students are lower by 48 points on the reading literacy scale, 41 points on the mathematical literacy scale, and 49 on the scientific literacy scale, which corresponds to the effect of 15 years of schooling in the OECD countries. Similar results are obtained when the attainment is compared to the EU member state averages. With respect to the other reference countries from the region, the attainment of Serbian students is higher than the attainment of students from Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and lower than the attainment of students from Croatia, Slovenia, and Hungary. The socio-economic status of students can account for 8% of the variance in the attainment on the reading scale and 9% of the variance on the mathematical literacy scale. This data point indicates that the socio-economic status of the Serbian students is tied less to student attainment than in the OECD countries, which points to a greater fairness of our education system. The results also revealed that every third student does not reach the level of basic literacy (38% on a scale of reading literacy, 40% mathematical, and 38% scientific).

In interpreting the above results, it is important to note that (independent of the school type) general secondary school students have much better results than their peers in secondary vocational schools. The differences in attainment between the general secondary students and

¹⁷⁸ The report on the results of the PISA study was prepared in collaboration between the MoESTD, IEQE, the Open Society Foundation, the Institute for Psychology, and the OECD. The report is available from the following link : <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PISA-2018-IZVE%C5%A0TAJ.pdf>

¹⁷⁹ When the students who did not do tests from these three domains, but did take the tests in global and financial literacy, are taken into account, the number of the tested students stands at as many as 8,442, from over 200 schools.

¹⁸⁰ In Serbia, the largest number of fifteen-year-olds are enrolled in year one of secondary school, a smaller number are in year two, and some are in grade eight of primary school. Most students aged 15 is in year one of secondary school (84%), while 13% are in year two, and only 3% are in grade eight of primary school. Most fifteen-year-olds attend a secondary vocational school (74%), while every fourth fifteen-year-old attends a general secondary school (23%).

students of three-year vocational schools are large – the attainments differ by about 150 points. The attainment of general secondary school students is statistically significantly higher both in the domain of mathematics and reading literacy, compared to the attainment of students from secondary vocational schools. As an illustration, it is important to note that on the scale of reading literacy a total of 13% of students of general secondary schools are below level 2, compared to 25% of art school students, 25% of secondary medical school students, and as many as 89% of students of three-year secondary agricultural schools.

In the context of general secondary and secondary art education, the results certainly justify and speak in favour of a need to introduce the current reforms. The cumulative effect of the reforms and their effectiveness at this education level will be able to be checked in future PISA tests, as well as via more frequent national studies which are expected in the upcoming period. A wide array of data collected in PISA studies offer a detailed picture of the quality, as well as the fairness and conditions in which the student are schooled and grow, which makes the data an important resource in creating long-term educational policies geared towards improving the entire education system and the quality of general secondary and secondary art education.

3.2. Progress made in the reporting period

3.2.1. Quality

The continuation of work on the reform of secondary schools has been set as one of the priority goals for 2019. The key reform directions that were successively introduced in 2019 relate to the following: **curriculum paradigm shift** (development of new teaching and learning programmes aimed at achieving outcomes, development of competencies and achievement of standards), **electives** (introduction of 12 new elective programmes with the aim of establishing better interdisciplinary connections, developing functional knowledge, better preparation of students for further education, as well as greater student satisfaction with the education system), **interdisciplinarity** (overcoming subject boundaries by linking different disciplines into meaningful wholes with the aim of developing students' functional knowledge and competencies), as well as **gradual introduction of innovations** (i.e. gradual preparation of schools, teachers and students for a new curricula) .

In the function of carrying out activities related to the harmonization of laws and by-laws with the Strategy in the field of general secondary education and art education (PU -SO01) during 2019, planned continuity was achieved. After the new Rulebook on the curriculum for the first grade of gymnasium came into force in 2018, over the course of 2019 the **Rulebook on the curriculum for the second grade of gymnasium**¹⁸¹ was adopted. The programmes for the third and fourth grade of the gymnasium received a positive opinion from the National Education Council (NEC), and their preparation for publication in the form of a rulebook is in the final phase. **Over the course of 2019, a curriculum was prepared for the first grade of gymnasiums for students with special abilities in biology. The preparation of the curriculum for the**

¹⁸¹ Rulebook on the curriculum for the second grade of gymnasium, ("Official Gazette of the RS - Education Gazette", No 8/2019).

teaching and learning in secondary music education and upbringing has also been initiated.

During 2020, proposals of the curriculum for the first grade of gymnasiums for students with special abilities in mathematics, philology, physics, computer science and informatics and the curriculum for secondary music education were prepared and received a positive opinion of the NEC, while teaching and learning programmes for the first grade of gymnasium for students with special abilities in geography and history, performing arts, audio-visual arts and sports and proposals for teaching and learning programmes for the second grade of gymnasium for students with special abilities in biology and chemistry shall be developed in the coming period. **Challenges in this regard relate to the lack of standards and general and specific subject competencies for individual subjects** (e.g. psychology, philosophy, sociology, and so-forth).

A key feature of all reformed curricula so far is the focus on the learning process and outcomes, and not on the content of the subject, whose function is to achieve outcomes that are defined as functional knowledge of students in order to forecast what the student will be able to do, undertake, perform and/ or execute thanks to the knowledge, views and skills that he/she has built and developed during one year of learning a specific subject. The programmes conceived in this way imply that the achievement of outcomes leads to the development of students' competencies, both in relation to general and specific subjects, as well as to general interdisciplinary and key ones. **By reviewing the outcomes given within the individual programmes of teaching and learning according to subjects, it can be observed how foundations are laid for the development of competencies that students should have at the end of general secondary education.**

Starting with the 2018/2019 school year students are able for the first time to choose elective programmes throughout their schooling, which should contribute to increasing the quality, relevance, efficiency and coverage of education in gymnasiums. The opportunity for active choice enables gymnasium students to independently create a part of their education in accordance with their interests, needs and the offer of the school, which, among other things, expects greater student engagement as well as better achievements.

During the 2019/2020 school year, I and II grade high school students had the opportunity to study some of the following elective programmes: Language, Media and Communication, Individual Group and Society, Health and Sport, Education for Sustainable Development, Applied Sciences and Art and Design. These subjects are taken through one class per week (annual fund of 37 hours). The student is obliged to choose two elective programmes for the school year. The programmes chosen in the first grade can be changed by the student in the second grade. With the introduction of these six elective programmes, a total of 15% of the curriculum in the first two grades has an elective character. In the next two school years, within the offer for III and IV grade, including two hours per week, a number of new elective programmes shall be introduced in the educational practice: Education for Sustainable Development, Art and Design, Applied Sciences 1 (directed towards medical sciences), Applied Sciences 2 (directed towards technical sciences), Fundamentals of Geopolitics, Economics and Business, Religions and Civilization, Methodology of Scientific Research and Modern Technologies. The student is obliged to choose two elective programmes in the third grade that he/she shall study for two years, namely, in third and fourth grade. The key characteristics of all these programmes are the interdisciplinary character and

focus on achieving outcomes and developing competencies through various active methods such as project teaching, research activities and so-forth.¹⁸²

The implementation of reform processes in 2019 also included support for schools for the realization of new teaching and learning programmes. IIE has prepared and implemented training courses to improve leadership skills, according to OECD and EU recommendations. The leadership skills of 300 training leaders have been improved to implement new outcome-oriented teaching and learning programmes. The training of teachers for the implementation of classes oriented towards learning outcomes continued (such training was attended by thousands of teachers, professional associates and high school principals in 2018 and 2019)¹⁸³ - through a three-day training programme aimed at developing competencies for planning and achieving classes and teaching focused on outcomes that include: an introduction to the new concept of teaching and learning programmes; global, operational planning and lesson preparation; methods, techniques and activities aimed at learning and outcomes; project-related teaching; entrepreneurship; elective programmes and monitoring and evaluation of learning. Through six modules, training of teachers who teach in special IT classes of the 1st and 2nd grade of gymnasium was implemented (the training course was attended by 130 teachers). In addition, IIE conducted a Python programming language training course for 218 gymnasium computer science teachers. **Starting with 2020, the conceptualization and implementation of training courses has also been envisaged for the realization of mentoring support to schools, which can be considered very significant, effective and so far, at the system level, a missing type of support.**

As regards the activities of **refining the existing educational standards and application (PU-S002)** and training for teachers in general secondary education, in 2019 the Institute for Education Quality and Valuation (IEQV) conceived and implemented a training course for teachers who teach the subject Mother tongue and literature with the aim of implementing educational standards in the teaching process for eight languages (Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Bosnian, Slovak, Hungarian and Croatian) in the most successful manner possible. For the purpose of achieving more successful communication with teachers who teach Mother Tongue and Literature - the training programme was implemented directly, in cooperation with National Councils of National Minorities. 89 teachers from 65 schools successfully completed the training course.

As leadership in education is a particularly vital aspect of quality, over the course of 2019 trainings were **held for principals according to a four-day programme developed by the Institute for the Improvement of Education (IIE), and in accordance with the Rulebook on the training programme and exam for acquiring a license for director of an educational institution**¹⁸⁴. The goal of the training course is to train principles to acquire competencies in

¹⁸²The feature of these programmes is that they are semi-structured, which enables a greater degree of autonomy of teachers who are offered literature to more easily conceptualize teaching, whereby their application should result in greater student satisfaction with education. Over the course of 2019, IEQV drafted a questionnaire that had the main goal of examining students' satisfaction with new elective programmes in order to monitor the first experiences and assessments related to the implementation of elective programmes, whereby more comprehensive monitoring of students' effectiveness and satisfaction with elective programmes is planned for 2021 when the first generation of students has graduated.

¹⁸³Based on the experience in the implementation of training courses during 2018, teacher training programmes for achieving classes focused on learning outcomes have been improved, while training programmes for physics and psychology teachers have been developed.

¹⁸⁴Rulebook on the training programme and exam for acquiring a license for director of an educational institution, ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - Education Gazette", No 63/2018).

accordance with the standards of competencies, whereby by mastering this programme, the heads of educational institutions are become prepared to obtain a license¹⁸⁵. At the end of 2019, 117 principals of primary and secondary schools from the territory of Belgrade were provided training. According to the plan of MoESTD and IIE, all school principals in Serbia shall be invited to attend this training of systemic importance by 2020. **Since 2019, MoESTD has started organizing exams for acquiring a principal's license, which also includes principals of gymnasiums and art schools.**

The results of external evaluation of the quality of work of educational institutions are also a key source of data on the quality of work in gymnasiums and art schools. **The second cycle of this process according to revised standards and procedures commenced over the course of 2019.** Based on the overall experiences related to external evaluations during the first cycle, the methodology, procedures, standards, indicators and instruments were revised with the aim of its continuous improvement, which resulted in the following: reduction of scope - the number of areas, standards and indicators, setting higher requirements in terms of quality of work compared to the first cycle; establishment of a development principle of indicator evaluation (in the first cycle - the principle achieved/ not achieved, and in the second cycle the evaluation of the indicator achievement is realized on the basis of a four-point scale), and thus a different methodology for performing general evaluation of school quality (which, among others, does not imply a division of standards into key, selected and additional any more, giving them all the same status). This process was also implemented with the aim that its nature in terms of changes be such as to ensure coherence between the framework for the first and second cycle in order to enable the process of monitoring progress and reviewing the quality of school work between two cycles. **What was missing in this process was the adaptation of the concept to the specificities of art schools.**

The introduction of a second cycle was preceded by two particularly significant activities implemented in 2019 - the adoption of a new Rulebook on evaluating the quality of work in institutions¹⁸⁶, as well as the provision of training to all educational advisers relating to the conduct of external evaluation according to the revised methodology, standards and indicators. Training for the implementation of the second cycle of external evaluation for all educational advisers engaged in education institutions, was jointly organized and realized by MoESTD and IEQV as one of the priority activities for 2019. During 2019, training dedicated to self-evaluation of the quality of school work was accredited as training of public importance, whereby a detailed plan and programme for self-evaluation training intended for three-member teams from primary and secondary schools was prepared with the aim of improving the competencies of employees in primary and secondary education in terms of self-evaluation. 98 implementers were trained, who realized a total of 192 training courses and trained 2,202 teachers.

IEQV shall continue with regular annual consultations with educational advisers in order to: examine obtained results on an annual level, apply horizontal learning and improve the entire process. Over the course of 2019, IEQV continued with the implementation of the project "*Support*

¹⁸⁵This training course, among other things, prepares the leaders of educational institutions for portfolio development, planning and implementation of research work (whose concept and results are presented in the license exam).

¹⁸⁶Rulebook on evaluating the quality of work in institutions, "Official Gazette of the RS - Education Gazette", No 10/2019). This rulebook regulates all key issues regarding the overall methodology, procedures, methods of implementation, as well as evaluation and obligations and responsibilities of all participants in the external evaluation process. In addition, it aims to ensure the transparency of this process for all stakeholders.

to schools after the process of external evaluation". At the end of 2019, the training course for educational advisers and advisers-external associates was organized, which shall in the second semester of the 2019/2020 school year support a total of 42 primary and secondary schools that have not achieved the appropriate level of quality standards (empowerment of employees to achieve reflexive practices, self-evaluation of teaching and learning, effective development planning, as well as cooperation and horizontal learning among colleagues equal in terms of position and education).

At the level of general secondary and art education, no external national survey is currently being conducted. An important activity within the Action plan for the Implementation of the Education Development Strategy in Serbia/AP SEDS relates to the development of a final exam system in secondary education: general, art and vocational graduation (**PU-S005**), while **over the course of 2019 work was intensified on the development and operationalization of the concept of state graduation, which shall have a certification, selection and evaluation function** (which is especially crucial for assessing the quality of general vocational and art education). The key starting point in this regard is the already adopted Rulebook on the programme of general and art graduation¹⁸⁷, as well as the Rulebook on the programme of professional graduation and the final exam¹⁸⁸. With the aim of ensuring the quality of the organization and implementation of the external graduation exam at the beginning of 2019, the implementation of the three-year project "State Graduation" (IPA 2015) began with the aim of providing support to system institutions in organizing and further operationalizing state graduation. The various components of this project relate to support in the implementation of a wide range of activities in the phase of preparation, piloting and realization of this exam (defining the organizational model for exam preparation and exam taking, harmonization of the legal and institutional framework, preparation of instruments and manuals, development of standards for curriculum, training of working groups, informing the educational and general public, preparation of higher education institutions, preparation of trial tests, and so-forth). In the last phase, as a result of the project, an analysis of the conducted pilot tests and a formulation of recommendations for the implementation of state graduation are expected.¹⁸⁹

In the function of evaluating student achievement or learning outcomes (**PU-S004**), IEQV implemented preparatory activities for the PISA 2021 research pilot - testing assignments were translated and adapted, a sample was prepared, hence subsequently communication and cooperation was established with schools.

3.2.2. Coverage

¹⁸⁷Rulebook on the programme of general and art graduation ("Official Gazette of the RS - Education Gazette", No 1/2017).

¹⁸⁸Rulebook on the programme of professional graduation and the final exam ("Official Gazette of the RS - Education Gazette", No 1/2018).

¹⁸⁹The key implemented activities include the formation, work and training of working groups for the preparation of test material, as well as the establishment of working groups dedicated to revising general achievement standards for the end of general secondary and secondary vocational education for 8 subjects and 3 subjects under development (psychology, music culture and computer science and informatics), as well as many other realized activities: analysis of the needs for improving the capacity of various actors, functional analysis of the capacity of key system institutions (IEQV and IIE), analysis of procedures and practices for enrolment in faculties, feasibility study of the state graduation brochure for all key participants in this process, specifications of the information system for the realization of state graduation, and so-forth

The data shows that over the course of 2019, as in the previous period, there was very little progress in increasing coverage - during the 2019/2020 school year, of the total number of students in gymnasiums, 26.7% attended profiles in the field of Culture, while 2.4% attended Art and Public Information. Overall, this amounts to about 29% of students attending general secondary and art education, which is still significantly less than the target - 39%.

In order to influence the increase in coverage, the already mentioned measures have been implemented, which, in general, are initially related to improving the quality of education in gymnasiums (in the first place, these are the already mentioned outcome oriented teaching and learning programmes aimed at developing competencies, as well as elective programmes). Also, within the framework of education within gymnasiums in the school year 2019/2020, **there was an increase in the number of specialized IT departments in gymnasiums throughout Serbia, as well as the introduction of specialized departments for biology and chemistry, as well as geography and history.**

Most of the measures related to increasing the coverage of secondary education are general, namely they are not specifically targeted at a certain type of secondary school. In that sense, the application of affirmative measures for enrolment of Roma students in high schools, which are regulated through an adequate legal framework and show good results, has a prominent place. The Rulebook on pupil and student loans and scholarships is in force¹⁹⁰, which prescribes more lenient criteria for pupils without parental care, pupils with disabilities and pupils belonging to the Roma national minority. With the announcement of the competition for the award of student scholarships to high school students in the RS, an information campaign on milder criteria for Roma students has continued.

In accordance with the recommendations of the SEDS, over the course of 2019 an analysis was conducted relating to the feasibility of introducing a compulsory secondary education status, in which various international models of introducing compulsory secondary education were analysed and presented, various data related to education in Serbia was analysed (number of schools, students, teachers, demographic trends, financial expenditures for education from the central and local level, and so-forth), while views of various stakeholders (representatives of schools, professional institutions and parents) were presented. Different models have been proposed as a starting point for future decision-making.

3.2.3. Relevance

The increase in the relevance of general secondary and art education is reflected primarily in the established continuity of the application of new legal and programme documents aimed at outcomes-oriented teaching, namely the development of student competencies. Among other things, a larger number of hours of project teaching, research activities and laboratory exercises should contribute to the aforementioned. **Increasing the relevance of education and strengthening the educational function of schools (PU-S007)** can be observed by emphasizing the development of interdisciplinary competencies through the introduction of elective programmes and their interdisciplinary character.

With the aim of further modernizing general secondary education, there has been an increase in the number of special classes in gymnasiums in which students with special abilities in through computer science and informatics acquire secondary general education and upbringing according

¹⁹⁰ The Rulebook on pupil and student loans and scholarships ("Official Gazette of the RS - Education Gazette", No 46/10, 47/11, 56/12, 75/13 and 111/17).

to a special curriculum (this possibility has been expanded since 2019 within an additional 14 gymnasiums, which makes a total of 46 schools with 52 classes founded by the RS, autonomous province or a local self-government).

In the context of the introduction of specific evaluation systems in art education (PU-S006), it is significant to mention the process of improving entrance exam procedures in art schools, which resulted in the separation of students' identities and achieved results, as well as that Professional Instructions for conducting entrance exams for the 2019/2020 school year have been created.¹⁹¹ In order to achieve equality in education, guidelines have been adopted for adjusting entrance exams for students with disabilities.¹⁹²

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) has been introduced into several gymnasiums in Serbia. Over the course of 2019, three gymnasiums were authorized, teacher training was financed and implemented, and classrooms were equipped in accordance with IBO (International Baccalaureate Organisation) standards¹⁹³. The Rulebook on the realization of educational work in gymnasiums according to the international graduation programme¹⁹⁴ has been adopted, regulating all issues of significance for the realization of this general educational internationally verified programme that is realized as a special pre-university programme of education for at least two years (organization of educational work, conditions for student enrolment, programme and exams, assessment, issuance of public documents, conditions for teachers, funding, and so-forth).

The Rulebook on the model of institutions¹⁹⁵ has been adopted, which has created systemic opportunities for support to institutions that achieve exceptional educational practice in accordance with the general principles and goals of education and upbringing in Serbia. The goal of establishing a model institution is to develop, support, promote and transfer examples of exceptional educational practice, which can provide guidelines for advancements and planning the development of various levels of the education system. The role of a model institution is to promote the existing exceptional and innovative practice in a certain area, i.e. aspect of work, transfer it through the process of horizontal learning and further improve on it. The Rulebook regulates the conditions for acquiring the status of a model institution, while an expert instruction is in the process of being drafted as a form of support to institutions for initiating and implementing the procedure for acquiring the status of a model institution.

Over the course of 2019, the **Rulebook on closer conditions in terms of space, equipment and teaching aids for the realization of the curriculum of teaching and learning in high gymnasiums**¹⁹⁶ was adopted.

One of the measures to support students who achieve high achievements in AP SEDS 2020 is defined as the **establishment of a unique system of rewards and awards for high school**

¹⁹¹Professional instructions for conducting entrance exams are available on the MoESTD website::

<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/upis-ucenika-u-srednju-skolu-2019-20/>

¹⁹²Guidelines for adjusting entrance exams are available on the MoESTD website::

<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/upis-ucenika-u-srednju-skolu-2019-20/>

¹⁹³ These are the Tenth Gymnasium "Mihajlo Pupin" in Belgrade, the Gymnasium "Jovan Jovanović Zmaj" in Novi Sad and the Gymnasium "Svetozar Marković" in Niš.

¹⁹⁴Rulebook on realization of educational work in gymnasiums according to the international graduation programme ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 93/2019-256, 7/2020-84).

¹⁹⁵The Rulebook on a model institution ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 10/2019).

¹⁹⁶The Rulebook on closer conditions in terms of space, equipment and teaching aids for the implementation of the curriculum of teaching and learning in gymnasiums ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 11/2017, 2013/2019).

students for good educational achievements (PU-S008). Over the course of 2019, the Foundation for Young Talents awarded 1,512 prizes to high school students for their achievements in recognized competitions in the country and abroad. **During 2019, the MoESTD adopted a decision to financially increase scholarships for young researchers** - students of final grades (III and IV) of high school who have shown the ability to engage in research work and have both won one of the first three places at international knowledge Olympiads (world, European or Balkan), in the fields of mathematics, physics, informatics, astronomy, biology and chemistry and been awarded 10 scholarships. The results of exceptional students in our country are regularly promoted on the official website of the MoESTD, while the national framework for evaluating the quality of work of educational institutions envisages public promotion of results achieved by students and teachers at the school level. As part of the promotion of students' results, in addition to the public campaign, billboards are planned to be set up across the country to promote their results.

In the context of considering the relevance of education within gymnasiums, it is vital to emphasize that, according to the data of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, a total of 91.8% of gymnasium students continue their education at universities.

3.2.4. Efficiency

In mid-March 2018, the Regulation on the criteria for adopting acts on the network of public secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia¹⁹⁷ was adopted. Nine criteria have been identified: economic, the criterion of equality, accessibility, organizational, status, demographic, geographical, cultural and optimization criteria that have been applied in the school year 2019/2020. The established criteria enables the creation of a more rational network of secondary schools, the merging of small schools into one institution (the minimum number of students is set at 200, under certain conditions).

For the needs of passing an act on the network of schools, a field analysis of the network of secondary schools has been realized. The act, namely the Decision on the network of public secondary schools¹⁹⁸, was enacted in June 2018 and amended over the course of August and December of the same year. According to this decision, 107 gymnasiums are implementing general education and upbringing programmes in 2019; programmes of general and art education and upbringing are realized by 39 secondary art schools; programmes of general and vocational education and upbringing, i.e. general and art education and upbringing are realized by 44 mixed schools. The decision envisages that from the school year 2019/2020, programmes at different levels of education and upbringing or several different areas of work shall be realized in three educational centres.

Based on this act, decisions were made to merge 14 secondary schools, of which 4 are gymnasiums, which achieved the rationalization of the number of employees in general affairs.

The next steps in 2020 refer to the continuation of horizontal rationalization and pilot vertical rationalization of the school network (i.e. creation of educational centres), as well as continuous monitoring of the efficiency of the school network in order to evaluate nine criteria and measure the effects of previous measures.

¹⁹⁷ Regulation on the criteria for adopting acts on the network of public secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 21/ 2018-9).

¹⁹⁸ Decision on the network of public secondary schools ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 49/2018-3, 62/2018-5 and 94/2018-4).

3.3. 2019 Priorities – Fulfilment Assessment

Priority 1 - Activities on the implementation of graduation

Fulfilled. The realization of the project State Graduation (IPA 2015) has started and planned activities on the operationalization of the concept of State graduation have been realized. Given the complexity of this reform endeavour, the MoESTD has decided to postpone the start of the implementation of state graduate exams for a year. Continuation of started activities in the following period can be considered a high priority.

Priority 2 - Continuation of education reform within gymnasiums

Fulfilled. During 2019, the successive introduction of the reform of gymnasium education continued in accordance with key reform directions such as: curricular paradigm shift, interdisciplinarity, selectivity and gradual introduction. Necessary by-laws have been adopted to support the implementation of reform processes and training has continued on the implementation of new outcome-oriented curricula, according to an improved concept based on previous experiences and OECD and EU recommendations. Continuity in the implementation of elective programmes was achieved, while the IEQV conducted a survey of student satisfaction with elective programmes in the function of monitoring the implementation of key reform directions. More comprehensive monitoring of the effectiveness of the current reform processes is planned after the graduation of the first generation of students who shall complete their gymnasium education in accordance with the current reforms envisaged for the 2021/2022 school year.

Priority 3 - Continued introduction of the IB International Baccalaureate programme

Fulfilled. An additional direction of work on increasing the relevance of general secondary education can be considered the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) in several gymnasiums in Serbia. Several state-managed gymnasiums are in the process of authorization, teacher training for the implementation of the programme has been funded, while the payment of financial grants for equipping cabinets in accordance with IBO standards has also been envisaged. All key issues related to the introduction of the international graduation programme are regulated by appropriate regulations adopted in 2019.

Priority 4 - Introduction of new artistic profiles (digitization of design educational profiles)

Partially fulfilled. For this reporting period, there is no data on the activities achieved in the direction of digitization of design educational profiles. Relevant activities realized within the framework of art education refer to the launched initiative for the development of qualification standards for the educational profile of digital media associate, as well as for students with special abilities for performing arts and audio-visual arts.

Priority 5 - Dissemination and support to IT departments in gymnasiums

Fulfilled. With the aim of additionally modernizing general secondary education and improving relevance and quality, there has been an increase in the number of special classes in gymnasiums in which students with special abilities for computer science and informatics acquire secondary general education and upbringing according to a special curriculum. Since 2019, this possibility has been expanded with an offer within an additional 14 gymnasiums, which makes a total of 46 gymnasiums founded by the Republic of Serbia, an autonomous province or a local self-government.

3.4. Priorities for 2020

Priority 1 - Activities on the implementation of graduation (trial graduation, teacher training, software solutions)

Priority 2 - Continuation of gymnasium education reform

Priority 3 - Implementation of the IBO programme

Priority 4 - Outcome-oriented programmes for secondary art education

Activities from the Action plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Education Development in Serbia/AP SEDS 2020:

PU-S001	Harmonization of laws and by-laws with the Strategy in the field of secondary general education and art education
PU-S002	Refining existing educational standards and application
PU-S003	High school network optimization
PU-S004	Evaluation of students' educational achievements
PU-S005	Development of a final exam system in secondary education: general, art and vocational graduate exams
PU-S006	Introduction of specific evaluation systems in art education
PU-S007	Strengthening the educational function of secondary schools
PU-S008	Establishment of a unique system of rewards and awards for high school students for good educational achievements at the level of the Republic of Serbia (organized by the MoESTD)
PU-S009	Establishing a unified public system of funds and foundations to encourage the gifted and talented

4. Secondary vocational education

4.1. Basic information on secondary vocational education and upbringing, the current situation and context

Secondary vocational education and upbringing (SVEU) in Serbia is regulated, in addition to the Law on Foundations of the Educational System (LFES) and other special laws, namely by the Law on Secondary Education¹⁹⁹, as well as the Law on Dual Education²⁰⁰, which was adopted at the end of 2017, and began to apply from the 2019/2020 school year. In addition to these two laws for secondary vocational education, it is also significant to mention the Law on National Qualifications Framework in the Republic of Serbia²⁰¹, which regulates certain areas that are important for the development of quality vocational education, such as the development of qualification standards on the basis of which curricula is created for vocational education.

SVEU represents the largest part of secondary education in Serbia. According to SORS, over the course of the 2019/2020 school year, there were a total of 311 secondary vocational schools, 52 mixed schools (secondary vocational school and gymnasium) and four mixed schools (secondary vocational school and secondary art school)²⁰², while 249,855 students attended vocational secondary schools.

In addition to the MoESTD, the body responsible for dual education is the Commission for Development and Implementation of Dual Education of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, which was established on the basis of the Law on Dual Education in 2018 in order to implement and improve dual education and prepare a three-year evaluation of achieved results²⁰³.

4.2. Progress achieved in the reporting period

4.2.1. Quality

The quality of work of schools in RS, including vocational schools, is presented in the Report on External Evaluation of Schools in the First Evaluation Cycle (2012-2018), which was published by IEQV at the beginning of 2020²⁰⁴. The results show that 18.1% of secondary vocational schools achieve the highest grade of general quality of work (grade 4), namely that grade 4 is given to a significantly lower percentage of schools compared to the percentage of schools that achieve grade 3, which is 52%. The percentage of schools that do not achieve the expected quality of work (i.e. that received grades 2 and 1) shows that there is a lot of room for improvement - even more

¹⁹⁹Law on Secondary Education ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 55/2013, 101/2017, 27/2018, 6/2020).

²⁰⁰Law on Dual Education ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 101/2017, 6/2020).

²⁰¹Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 27/2018, 6/2020).

²⁰²Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/11030104?languageCode=sr-Latn#>

²⁰³ Decision on establishing the Commission for Development and Implementation of Dual Education ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 5/2018).

²⁰⁴437 secondary schools from 16 school administrations participated in the external evaluation, more precisely 271 secondary vocational schools, 104 gymnasiums, 35 mixed schools and 27 art schools. The quality of school work was assessed on the basis of 30 quality standards related to seven key areas of school work.

than a quarter of schools received a grade of 2 (26.2%) and a grade of 1 was received by 3.7% of the schools²⁰⁵.

The results of the last PISA survey were presented in 2019 and show that more than 80% of students who attend three-year educational profiles do not reach the basic level of functional literacy in the field of mathematical and reading literacy. In the case of students with four-year educational profiles in secondary vocational schools, the percentage of students who do not reach the basic level of functional literacy is between 25% and 60% on the scale of reading literacy and between 28% and 66% on the scale of mathematical literacy. The difference in achievement is especially large between students who attend gymnasiums and students with three-year educational profiles in secondary vocational schools, amounting to approximately 150 points. However, additional analyses have shown that students' achievements do not depend on which school they attend (namely, whether they attend a gymnasium or vocational secondary school), but that the differences in achievement presented are more a consequence of students of similar or the same social-economic status enrolling into similar "types" of schools (so students of higher socio-economic status enrol in gymnasiums and students of lower socio-economic status enrol into secondary vocational schools). Another finding that shows that social-economic status plays a very crucial role in choosing a high school is that those students who have a high achievement and a low social-economic status at the same time, attend vocational schools more often than high gymnasiums.²⁰⁶

According to the Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia, the initiative for the development and adoption of qualification standards shall be submitted to the Qualifications Agency (Agency), which reviews the initiative and submits a recommendation on the development of qualification standards to the relevant sectoral council, after which the sector council passes a decision on accepting the initiative and drafting a proposal for qualification standards. After accepting the initiative, the Agency prepares a proposal for qualification standards and submits it to the NQFS Council for determination, and finally the MoESTD, on the proposal of the NQFS Council, issues an act adopting the qualification standards and thus submits it to the Agency for entry into the NQFS Register.

All relevant actors for the development of qualification standards are involved in the work of the sector councils and the NQFS Council. Of particular importance for secondary vocational education is the involvement of employers' representatives in the decision-making process on qualification standards (**PU-ST07**), which then forms the basis for the development of curricula for vocational programmes/ profiles (**PU-ST03**). **During 2019, the Agency drafted several documents that describe in more detail the procedures for the development and adoption of qualification standards** (draft rulebook on the development of qualification standards, draft rulebook on the content and manner of keeping the NQFS Register and the draft rulebook on the content and appearance of the initiative form for development and adoption of qualification standards). The Rulebook on the content and appearance of the initiative form for the

²⁰⁵ The key areas of school work that need additional improvement in secondary vocational education have been identified, namely teaching and learning, in particular in the areas of developing monitoring and evaluation of student work in accordance with a formative approach, as well as the quality of differentiation and individualization of teaching. The best assessed key standards of school work quality are school ethos, namely school safety and the development of cooperation at all levels. Available at: http://vrednovanje.ceo.edu.rs/sites/default/files/izvestajiEE/2020_Rezultati%20spoljasnjeg%20vrednovanja%20skola_2012-2018.pdf

²⁰⁶ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PISA-2018-IZVE%C5%A0TAJ.pdf>

development and adoption of qualification standards was adopted in April 2020²⁰⁷. The Agency also worked on the development of a proposal for a new methodology for the development of qualification standards, the adoption of which is expected over the course of 2020.

Over the course of 2019, the Agency developed eight proposals for qualification standards in accordance with the identified needs of the economy (economic technician; legal and business technician; industrial tailor; thermal and cooling devices serviceman; chemical and pharmaceutical production technician; mechanical technician for motor vehicles; hairdresser; dental technician) while the new methodology improved six qualification standards (baker; butcher; dairy; waiter; cook; confectioner). **The total number of educational profiles with the standard of qualifications in the school year 2019/2020 was 95, which is an increase of 19 profiles compared to the previous school year.**

A series of educational profiles have been modernized through the school system over the course of many years, however, they were not the subject of acquiring qualification standards. Innovations have occurred in several areas of work, with a significant coverage of enrolled students, in particular in the field of economics, law and administration (economic technician and legal and business technician), but also in other areas of work: construction, electrical engineering, personal services, mechanical engineering and metal processing, transport, textiles and leather and health and social protection. Some educational profiles within the mentioned areas of work are realized according to the dual model of education. This process is continuous and it shall resume to be one of the priorities over the course of 2020.

The database of qualifications located on the NQFS website²⁰⁸ has the entry of 34 qualifications at the third level of NQFS and 61 qualifications at the fourth level of NQFS. All registered qualifications, from these two levels, have a developed qualification standard. Other qualifications are in the process of being entered. The list of qualifications, among other things, enables the standardization of examinations for acquiring qualifications, considering that qualifications are entered in the register with determinants that provide concise information on qualifications and are sufficient for their basic recognition and transparency **(PU-ST01)**.

The development of curricula based on a qualification standard improves the quality and relevance of vocational education. According to the data of IIE, during 2019, 11 new curricula and four educational profiles have been prepared in order to harmonize with the Law on Dual Education, whereby rulebooks and manuals for 11 graduate exams/ final exams have been developed. Modernization of educational profiles is a continuous process that shall continue to be one of the priorities in 2020.

Over the course of 2019, IIE conducted several cycles of training for teachers of secondary vocational schools that were focused on the area of teaching directed towards learning outcomes. Furthermore, through the GIZ project "Reform of Secondary Vocational Education", a large number of professional training courses were implemented for teachers, which were aimed at using modern teaching methods in vocational education, training for instructors in companies involved in dual education, as well as training for school principals in connection with modern management in vocational education. The focus of these trainings was on over 50 schools involved in the project, namely those schools that have been implementing some of the dual

²⁰⁷Rulebook on the content and appearance of the initiative form for the development and adoption of qualification standards²⁰⁷ ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 53/2020).

²⁰⁸ Available at: http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/baza-kvalifikacija_2/

educational profiles since 2014 (locksmith welder, electrician, industrial mechanic, motor vehicle mechanic, networks and plants electrician and fashion tailor).

In addition to the development of plans and programmes for vocational education, IIE has also prepared general instructions for strengthening the educational role of schools through the improvement of extracurricular activities.

Final exams are currently conducted in accordance with the methodology developed for educational profiles that reach the final year in a given school year (**PU-ST01**). In January 2019, MoESTD launched, with the financial and technical support of the EU (IPA 15), the project "Improving the quality of education through the introduction of examinations at the end of secondary education" (State Graduation Project, 2019-2021), which aims to support the education system in terms of introducing a state graduation exam at the end of secondary education.

Over the course of January 2019, the Government of the RS established a Commission for monitoring activities for the introduction of the state graduation exam. During 2019, IIE published a public invitation for members of working groups for the drafting of examination materials for educational profiles in secondary vocational education under the framework of preparing for the implementation of final exams in 2020/2021 and vocational graduation exams in 2021/2022²⁰⁹. Moreover, various analyses have been prepared on the readiness of the education system for the introduction of state graduation exams, with the aim of providing the most adequate support to the education system²¹⁰. In the second half of 2020, about 50 vocational secondary schools shall participate in the first pilot state graduation examination. According to the MoESTD, the generation that enrolled into high school in the 2018/2019 school year shall be the first to take the new national standardized exams at the end of secondary education.

Over the course of 2019, the process of developing and implementing of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) began, which shall enable an overview of the entire course of student education through the Unique Education Number (UEN) (PU-ST08). The Rulebook on the Unified Education Information System²¹¹ and the Rulebook on detailed conditions in the procedure of assigning a unique education number²¹² have been adopted. The establishment of the EMIS enables modernization of education system management, monitoring and decision-making based on data, all in order to ensure an efficient and quality-based system of education and upbringing. Within the EMIS, there shall be an exchange of data between all relevant actors involved in the education system. The vision is that the system becomes connected to other state administration systems, such as the Central Registry of Compulsory Social Insurance, which shall enable the monitoring of graduates within the labour market and provide the necessary basis for directing the education system in line with labour market needs. EMIS will be integrated with all registers and sub-registers for which the Agency is responsible. The MoESTD is implementing this project in cooperation with the Office for Information

²⁰⁹ Available at: <https://zuov.gov.rs/javni-poziv-za-clanove-radnih-grupa-za-izradu-ispitnih-materijala-za-obrazovne-profile-u-strucnom-obrazovanju-2/>

²¹⁰ Available at: <https://matura.edu.rs/dnevnik-aktivnosti/>

²¹¹ Rulebook on the Unified Education Information System ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 81/2019).

²¹² Rulebook on detailed conditions in the procedure of assigning a unique education number ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 81/2019).

Technologies and E-Government²¹³ and the expectations are that the EMIS shall become functional in 2020²¹⁴.

During 2019, IEQV continued to support schools in the process of self-evaluation. After developed training courses for self-evaluation in cooperation with the MoESTD, a detailed plan and programme for the implementation of self-assessment training was prepared for three-member teams from primary and secondary schools. 98 implementers were trained, who realized a total of 192 training courses. The training was successfully completed by 2,202 teachers, which greatly raised the competencies of employees in primary and secondary education in the field of self-evaluation **(PU-ST08)**.

The National Employment Action Plan for 2019 recognizes the reform of vocational education as one of the measures to improve the quality of the workforce and as an investment in human capital²¹⁵.

Dual Education²¹⁶. The implementation of the Law on Dual Education commenced at the start of the 2019/2020 school year. Legislation in the field of dual education clearly defines the roles, tasks and responsibilities of all actors involved in the development and implementation of dual education **(PU-ST09)**. The aforementioned also ensures the involvement of employers in all processes of planning, development and implementation of dual education, all in order to increase the quality and relevance of vocational education **(PU-ST07)**. The Rulebook on detailed conditions, manner of work, activities and composition of a career guidance and counselling team in a secondary school that implements educational profiles in dual education²¹⁷ was adopted over the course of 2019, which completed the set of rulebooks that the MoESTD was supposed to adopt according to the Law on Dual Education. This rulebook defines, among other things, continuous monitoring of satisfaction and motivation among students and employers during learning through work, support for pupils and parents in accordance with the specific needs of pupils, organizing counselling activities with each pupil, cooperation between the career guidance and counselling team and the primary school professional orientation team. The possibility of linking education and the labour market in supporting students to master career management skills and make the best career decisions has also been recognized. All educational profiles that are realized according to the dual model have a qualification standard and a curriculum based on outcomes **(PU-ST03)**.

During 2019, work continued on involving employers in the realization of dual education. SCC adopted the Rulebook on the organization of the composition and manner of work of the Commission for determining the fulfilment of conditions for learning through work with an

²¹³ Available at:

<https://www.ite.gov.rs/extfile/sr/3681/Konkursna%20dokumentacija%20ISP%2013062019.pdf>

²¹⁴ Available at: <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/435508/Najveca-reforma-srpskog-obrazovanja-pocinje-u-martu#!>

²¹⁵ Available at:

http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/nacionalni_akcioni_plan_zaposljavanja_2019.pdf

²¹⁶ According to data from the MoESTD.

²¹⁷ Rulebook on detailed conditions, manner of work, activities and composition of the career guidance and counselling team in a secondary school that implements educational profiles in dual education ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 2/2019).

employer²¹⁸. In accordance with the Law on Dual Education and the aforementioned Rulebook, during 2019, SCC accredited companies, organized training courses for instructors, established and regularly updated the Register of Employers²¹⁹ that met the requirements for learning through work and established a register of signed contracts on dual education²²⁰. The establishment of these registers enables the transparency of data on companies and schools with which companies have signed agreements on dual education.

In order to improve the quality of dual education and monitor its implementation, the Commission for the development and implementation of dual education has adopted a Master Plan for the implementation of the Law on Dual Education, which supports the planning and implementation of reform processes. An integral part of the Master Plan is the risk analysis on the path of implementation of this reform²²¹, and in this regard, six thematic working groups have been established as a mechanism for coordinating the implementation of dual education and overcoming identified risks that should become active in 2020. Over the course of 2019, work began on creating a proposal for a framework for monitoring and evaluating the National Model of Dual Education and Dual Education Profiles through the project “Support to the Development and Establishment of a National Model of Dual Education”, which is being implemented with the support of the Swiss Government **(PU-ST08)**.

At the end of 2019, amendments to two laws regulating secondary education were initiated - the Law on Secondary Education (LSE) and the Law on Dual Education, which shall be discussed in more detail in the part related to relevance.

4.2.2. Coverage

The number of students who enrol in secondary school after finishing primary school has not changed in the last two school years, it is approximately 93%.²²² As stated in the introductory part, secondary vocational education and upbringing makes up the largest part of the secondary education and upbringing system with 73.3% in the 2019/2020 school year.

In the 2018/2019 school year, 201 educational profiles were realized in the system of secondary vocational education. Of this number, 130 educational profiles were in the four-year duration, while there were 71 educational profiles in the three-year duration.

Over the 2018/2019 school year, the most popular educational profiles, in terms of students' interests, were in the fields of “economics, law and administration” (12.7%), “electrical engineering” (11.3%), “health and social protection” (9.5%), “mechanical engineering and metal processing” (8.9%) and “trade, catering and tourism” (7.9%). However, there is a difference between boys and girls in the preferences of educational profiles from certain areas of work that they enrol. Compared to boys, girls were more likely to enrol educational profiles in the fields of “textiles and leather”, “health and social protection” and “personal services”, while boys were more likely to enrol educational profiles in the fields of “electrical engineering and mechanical

²¹⁸Rulebook on the organization of the composition and manner of work of the Commission for determining the fulfilment of conditions for learning through work with an employer (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No 46/2018, 74/2019).

²¹⁹Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/registri/>

²²⁰ Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/registri/ugovori/>

²²¹Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/dualno-o/>

²²²Presented in figures: school year 2018/2019, 71,675 students graduated from primary school, while 66,827 students enrolled in secondary school, while in the 2019/2020 school year 69,859 students completed primary school, while 64,827 students enrolled in secondary school.

engineering" and "metalworking". The following table shows the areas of work, the number of enrolled students and separated data for girls.

Number of students by areas of work at the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year

Area of work	Total number of students	Total number of girls (percentage)
Agriculture, food production and processing	14183	6606 (46.58%)
Forestry and wood processing	2576	821 (31.87%)
Geology, mining and metallurgy	1023	350 (34.21%)
Mechanical engineering and metal processing	22492	3019 (13.42%)
Electrical engineering	28425	2528 (8.89%)
Chemistry, non-metals and graphics	8921	5839 (65.45%)
Textiles and leather	3294	2676 (81.24%)
Geodesy and civil engineering	6286	2277 (36.22%)
Traffic	12745	4167 (32.70%)
Trade, catering and tourism	19951	10555 (52.90%)
Economics, law and administration	31892	21079 (66.09%)
Hydrometeorology	211	133 (63.03%)
Culture, art and public information	5925	4070 (68.69%)
Health and social protection	23846	18160 (76.16%)
Other (personal services)	3226	2561 (79.39%)
Military schools	473	146 (30.87%)

Source: SORS, 2019.

The situation was similar in the 2019/2020 school year, namely the most popular educational profiles were in the field of "economics, law and administration" (12.3%), "electrical engineering" (11.6%), "health and social protection" (9.5%), "mechanical engineering and metal processing" (9%) and "trade and catering" (7.9%).

Planning enrolment in secondary schools is a process within which numerous activities are organized that affect the offer of educational profiles in vocational education and the network of vocational schools that should be harmonized with the needs of the economy. At the end of 2018, the MoESTD sent Guidelines for planning student enrolment in secondary schools at the local and regional level for the 2019/2020 school year to all school administrations, which defines the criteria and steps in planning enrolment of students in secondary schools. The following table shows the criteria that should be taken into account when organizing enrolment in secondary schools.

Overview of criteria for planning the secondary school enrolment policy for the 2019/2020 school year

School-level criteria	Local self-government level criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of classes at the school level should not be increased in relation to the plan for the 2018/2019 school year. Exceptions are environments that have a significant increase in the number of students completing primary education. ▪ As regards to schools in which the realization of enrolment during the 2018/2019 school year was such that departments could not be formed in accordance with these instructions, it is necessary to rationalize. ▪ Plans must be set to combine classes exclusively for three-year educational profiles within the same field of work and according to the 15 + 15 principle. Profiles may be combined only if both have a qualification standard, or if both are without a qualification standard. ▪ The number of part-time students older than 17 years of age, who are enrolling in high school for the first time, should be planned very rationally, in accordance with realization in the previous year, and only for educational profiles that the school plans to enrol as regular. ▪ Secondary schools for students with disabilities should plan enrolment in accordance with the number of students completing primary education under the IEP 2 programme and the size of the groups prescribed by law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The increase includes gymnasium-general secondary education, wherever there are preconditions and organizational possibilities for the aforementioned. ▪ Where there are realistic opportunities, the planned number of departments with educational profiles related to information and communication technologies and enrolment into educational profiles based on a qualification standard should both be increased. ▪ Plans should be set to increase the coverage of students who are educated according to the dual model in accordance with the prescribed criteria and the provided support of companies for learning through work. ▪ The number of groups/classes/ departments in music and art schools should not increase in relation to the plan for the 2018/19 school year, along with an analysis of last year's enrolment realization. ▪ Combining classes in art schools in the field of art is possible only according to the principle of 10+10 or 7+7+7/14+7. ▪ The number of planned places at the level of the / school administration should not exceed 3% in relation to the number of 8th grade students who finish primary school in the area of the same district/ school administration. ▪ High uniformity of planned places should be ensured in relation to the number of students completing primary education between different districts under the jurisdiction of the same school administration. Deviations of 1% are

	<p>allowed with explanations (migration, student dormitories, unique schools, and so-forth).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A sufficient number of places in three-year educational profiles should be envisaged due to the minimum threshold for enrolment in four-year educational profiles. A local self-government unit must have at least 15% of envisaged places for three-year educational profiles (at least one department). ▪ Educational profiles lasting three years should not be replaced by those lasting four years. ▪ When planning enrolment, take into account the availability of education for boys and girls.
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Source: MoESTD

Some of the criteria that are of particular importance for vocational education are that all local self-governments should plan a sufficient number of places in three-year educational profiles (at least 15% of envisaged places, namely at least one class) in order to enable enrolment of students who do not reach the minimum threshold for enrolling four-year profiles and ensure the availability of educational profiles for both boys and girls when planning to offer educational profiles. Special emphasis is placed on the priorities of the MoESTD, which are reflected in encouraging schools to increase the planned number of classes in educational profiles related to information and communication technologies and enrolment in educational profiles based on qualification standards, as well as in the increase of coverage of students studying under the dual model in accordance with the prescribed criteria and the provided support of companies for learning through work.

Dual Education. In the 2018/2019 school year, 2,969 students were enrolled in the first grade of dual education, while a total of approximately 4,500 students were educated according to this model. In the 2019/2020 school year, about 2,600 students enrolled first grade according to the dual model of education, which resulted in an increase in the total number of students in the entire system of dual education to about 7,000²²³. According to data from the Competition for enrolment of students in the first grade of secondary school in the Republic of Serbia for the 2019/2020 school year²²⁴, 72 schools offered enrolment in the first grade that also included profiles that are implemented according to the dual model, whereby the entire system of secondary vocational education and upbringing includes 104 schools that carry out classes according to the dual model. Over the course of 2019, the total number of companies that received accreditation was about 150²²⁵, while approximately 220 Certificates of fulfilment of conditions for the implementation of learning through work with an employer were issued, given that one

²²³According to data from the MoESTD.

²²⁴ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-2020-KONKURS-ZA-UPIS-U-SREDNJI-SKOLU.pdf>

²²⁵Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/registri/>

employer can be accredited for several educational profiles. The number of companies that were included in dual education during the 2019/2020 school year was 460, which increased the total number of these companies to about 800 (including those that started participating even before the full implementation of the Law on Dual Education).

Amendments to the Law on Dual Education²²⁶ (early 2020) define more precisely the dates, steps in planning the enrolment policy and the role of MoESTD and SCC (**PU-ST09**). Planning the enrolment of students in secondary schools according to the dual education model demands additional coordination and inclusion of employers in the process of planning the offer for dual educational profiles (**PU-ST07**), while the SCC is recognized as one of the key actors in this process as each planned educational profile that shall be realized according to the dual model must be supported by an adequate employer so that each pupil who is being educated according to the dual education model is provided with a place to learn through work in an accredited company. During the planning of the enrolment policy for the 2019/2020 school year, on the basis of guidelines sent by MoESTD to school administrations, SCC sent guidelines to regional chambers of commerce for the first time in order to create an educational policy in accordance with the needs of the economy (**PU ST05**). MoESTD in cooperation with SCC adopts the final decision on the offer of educational profiles that will be implemented according to the dual model (**PU-ST07**).

As of 15 January 2020, a total of 1,113 instructors attended training courses organized by the SCC according to the Law on Dual Education, which is a prerequisite for taking an instructor exam (licensed instructor is a condition for accreditation of a company for conducting work-based learning) (of the overall number of trained instructors, 157 were trained through the GIZ project "Reform of secondary vocational education").

4.2.3. Relevance

By linking the NQFS with the European Qualifications Framework, qualifications acquired in Serbia become visible and comparable with qualifications acquired in other countries, primarily EU countries, thus facilitating the mobility of those citizens who want to continue their education, training or employment in another country (**VA-NOK**).

At the beginning of 2020, the Law on Dual Education and the Law on Secondary Education were amended²²⁷. The most significant change is making a clear distinction between the way of achieving the same educational profile according to the dual model and the non-dual model (in accordance with the Law on Secondary Education), namely the main change concerns the scope of practical training/ professional practice achievement with employers. Thus, the Law on Secondary Education now prescribes that practical classes/ professional practice implemented combined partly in school and partly with the employer may be realized with the employer in the amount of 25% of the total number of hours of practical classes and professional practice, regarding which the school and the employer must conclude a contract starting from the 2020/2021 school year, whereby these contracts are submitted to the SCC for registration. Practical classes/ professional practice, if realized to a greater extent than 25%, are implemented as learning through work, in accordance with the Law on Dual Education. Exceptions are health

²²⁶Law on Dual Education ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 101/2017, 6/2020).

²²⁷ At the end of 2019, the MoESTD, at the proposal of the Commission for the Development and Implementation of Dual Education, established working groups to amend both laws. Proposals for amendments to both laws were adopted over the course of January 2020 at the session of the RS National Assembly: Law on Dual Education ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 101/2017 and 6/2020) and the Law on Secondary Education, ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 55/2013, 101/2017, 27/2018 and 6/2020).

care institutions and social protection institutions (founded by the RS, an autonomous province, a local self-government unit) where practical classes/ professional practice for educational profiles in the field of health and social protection are implemented. These laws clearly define the roles, responsibilities and tasks of all actors involved in secondary vocational education (**PU-ST09**).

The Department for Secondary Education and Adult Education of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, in accordance with amendments to the Law on Secondary Education, is preparing a Rulebook on practical teaching and professional practice in secondary schools, which shall regulate the following:

- The manner of conducting classes through exercises, practical classes and professional practice when it is conducted at school, with the employer and in combination, partly at school and partly with the employer;
- Content and elements of the contract that the school and the employer conclude in cases when practical classes and professional practice are conducted with the employer in the amount of 25% of the total number of hours of practical classes and professional practice;
- Other issues related to the implementation of practical classes and professional practice.

The Law on Dual Education²²⁸ stipulates that the provisions of this law apply to both crafts and specialist education, as well as education for work lasting two years (PU-ST02). Apart from this legal provision, there is no data on plans for further activities in the field of crafts education.

Dual Education. The implementation of the dual model of education provides a more efficient response of the education system to the needs of the economy and the labour market, technological changes and the demand for new competencies. Over the course of the 2019/2020 school year, the total number of educational profiles in dual education was 37, of which four were new. All educational profiles that are realized according to the dual model are in line with the needs of the economy, whereby they have a developed qualification standard and a curriculum based on outcomes (**PU-ST03**). New educational profiles for the 2019/2020 school year are as follows:

- Construction machinery operator;
- Industrial tailor;
- Thermal and cooling devices serviceman;
- Air traffic information and communication systems security technician.

MoESTD signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the German airline MTU Maintenance Serbia in order to strategically partner in the field of dual education²²⁹, which ensures the creation of educational profiles in dual education in accordance with the needs of the economy and strategic commitments of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

Involvement of employers in the process of creating educational profiles and their realization is becoming increasingly represented and systematically regulated. The significance of connecting the world of labour and the world of education is also reflected in the topics of projects within the Erasmus + programme: The most common topics during 2019, in the vocational education sector, were related to cooperation between educational institutions and the business sector.

1.2.4. Efficiency

²²⁸Law on Dual Education ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 101/17 and 6/2020).

²²⁹ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/potpisan-memorandum-o-saradnji-u-oblasti-dualnog-obrazovanja-sa-nemackom-liderskom-avio-kompanijom-mty/>

Over the course of 2019, the optimization of the school network continued. On the basis of the Decision on the network of secondary schools in Vojvodina, four secondary schools were merged into one school (Gymnasium and Secondary School "Dositej Obradović" in Novi Kneževci, Gymnasium "Nikola Tesla" and Secondary Construction and Wood Processing Vocational School in Apatin)²³⁰. During the 2019/2020 school year, the educational centre "Osečina" in Osečina was founded through the transformation of elementary school "Braća Nedić" into the first educational centre in Serbia that offers vocational education for the educational profiles of food technician and plastic manufacturer²³¹. These changes are the beginning of a process that shall continue as a priority over the course of 2020 and they should include a larger number of schools.

During 2020, one-shift classes are expected to begin in a number of secondary schools. More than 100 schools have applied for this type of teaching.

Creating an enrolment policy for enrolment in a secondary school in which an employers' representatives actively participate (at the central level of the SCC, and at the local level with regional chambers of commerce and employers) influences the harmonization of the network of secondary vocational schools and creating an offer of educational profiles in accordance with labour market and economy needs (**PU-ST05 and PU-ST07**), which allows students an easier and faster transition to the labour market after graduation.

At the beginning of 2020, the Commission of the Government of the RS adopted a decision to announce a competition for employment in the education sector for an indefinite period of time²³². The recruitment process shall be implemented in several phases over the course of 2020 (**PU-ST04**). This decision has terminated the measure of banning employment, which was introduced in 2013.

For now, there is no systematic data on the rate of students leaving secondary vocational education before graduating. It is possible to obtain data from individual schools that keep records of the number of students who have dropped out of school as schools issue a certificate to students who do so. However, when issuing a student withdrawal certificate, students and parents, as well as schools, are not obliged to state the reason for dropping out, which does not provide data whether the student abandoned the education system or continued his/her education in another school, therefore this type of data can be considered unreliable and unsystematized.

According to SORS data for 2019, the percentage of young people aged 18 to 24, who have only completed primary school and have not been included in further education or training, was 6.6%²³³.

Regarding the monitoring of career development of vocational school students after graduation (**PU-ST06**), this crucial aspect was initiated through a pilot programme aimed at monitoring the course of schooling and career development of students enrolled in some of the profiles developed within the GIZ project "Reform of secondary vocational education". MoESTD collected data on the course of schooling of three generations of sampled students who were educated

²³⁰Available at: http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/mladi/obrazovanje/spojene-cetiri-srednje-skole-u-apatinu-i-novom-knezevcu_1029657.html

²³¹Available at: <https://skolskaupravavaljevo.wordpress.com/2019/04/05/>

²³²Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/vladina-komisija-odobrila-prvi-ciklus-zaposljavanja-u-prosveti-za-oko-5000-ljudi/>

²³³ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2020). Labour Force Survey in the Republic of Serbia, 2019 Belgrade.

according to the dual model of education. Monitoring is expected to be significantly improved by the development of EMIS, which shall provide an overview of a wide range of indicators for monitoring students through the education system and beyond **(PU-ST08)** and which is expected to become operational by 2020. A module shall be developed under its framework for monitoring employment after secondary school, which has so far only been monitored sporadically. A significant role in this domain shall be the use of the Unique education number (UEN), which is now legally regulated and which shall enable the connection of graduates' databases with the databases of the Central Register of Compulsory Social Security, through which employment and career development will be monitored at the system level.

4.2.4. Measures not directly listed in AP SEDS 2020

In order to improve the quality and relevance of vocational education, the Government of the RS and MoESTD have initiated activities to establish ten regional training centres that should support the implementation of teaching in secondary vocational education and non-formal education through training, vocational training, additional training and retraining in accordance with labour market needs. The centres shall be established for the following economic/industrial areas: 1) mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and computer sciences (mechatronics), 2) industrial production (textiles, chemistry and graphics, food processing), 3) transport, logistics, wood processing and construction, 4) health and social protection, and 5) tourism, catering and related services. Over the course of 2019, in addition to the identified areas, cities and schools were recognized within which regional training centres would be developed²³⁴. The establishment of training centres **(PU-ST05)** is expected in the upcoming period.

In order to provide support and enable a successful transition of students coming from deprived and socially under-stimulating environments to the secondary school level of education, the Centre for Education Policy, with the support of the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation, is implementing the second phase of the project "Together to Secondary School- Support for Children from Vulnerable Groups in their Transition to Secondary School". Ten primary schools from the first phase of the project are participating in this phase of the project, with a large number of students from vulnerable groups and ten secondary schools with which these primary schools cooperate, namely towards which graduates from the aforementioned primary schools gravitate. The aim of the project is to ensure the successful transition of students from vulnerable groups to secondary schools and the completion of secondary education through the application of various intervention measures²³⁵. The results of project activities may serve as an example of good practice that can be applied to the entire system for providing support to students in transition to secondary school. As a result of the first phase of the project, a manual for schools with examples of good practice²³⁶ **(PU-ST06)** has been drafted.

4.3. 2019 Priorities – Fulfilment Assessment

Priority 1 - Creating new and modernizing existing profiles in accordance with the needs of the economy.

²³⁴According to data from the MoESTD.

²³⁵Available at: <http://www.cep.edu.rs/dugorocniprojekti>

²³⁶Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Prirucnik-za-skole-sa-primerima-dobrih-praksi.pdf>

Continuous implementation. During 2019, a number of educational profiles were developed in accordance with the newly identified needs of the economy, while a number of educational profiles that were implemented in schools for many years but did not have defined qualification standards were modernized. The total number of profiles with a qualification standard in the 2019/2020 school year was 95, which is an increase of 19 profiles compared to the previous school year. This process is continuous and it shall resume to be one of the priorities over the course of 2020.

Priority 2 - Strengthening the quality of teaching through teacher training in vocational schools. Continuous implementation. Over the course of 2019, teacher training programmes for implementing classes focused on learning outcomes were improved. IEQV conducted several cycles of training for teachers of vocational schools on this topic. Furthermore, through a GIZ project a large number of professional training courses were implemented for teachers, which were aimed at using modern teaching methods in vocational education, training for instructors in companies involved in dual education, as well as training for school principals in connection with modern management in vocational education. In addition to the development of plans and programmes for vocational education, IIE has also prepared general instructions for strengthening the educational role of schools through the improvement of extracurricular activities.

Priority 3 - Further rationalization of the network of secondary vocational schools.

Continuous implementation. Over the course of 2019, the optimization of the school network continued. Through the Decision on the network of secondary schools in Vojvodina, four high schools were merged and the first educational centre in Serbia was established, which offers educational profiles of food technician and plastic manufacturer in vocational education²³⁷. These changes are the beginning of a process that shall continue as a priority over the course of 2020 and they should include a larger number of schools. Over the course of 2020, one-shift classes are expected to begin in secondary schools.

Priority 4 - Monitoring the career development of vocational school students after graduation.

Partially fulfilled. This important aspect of the system began being implemented through pilot programmes dedicated to monitoring the course of education and career development of students enrolled in some of the profiles developed within the GIZ project "Reform of Secondary Vocational Education", and it shall be significantly improved by the development of the EMIS, which shall become operational over the course of 2020. A module shall be developed under its framework for monitoring employment after secondary school, which has so far only been monitored sporadically. A significant role in this domain shall be the use of the Unique education number (UEN), which is now legally regulated and which shall enable the connection of graduates' databases with the databases of the Central Register of Compulsory Social Security, through which employment and career development will be monitored.

Priority 5 - Increasing the number of pupils, schools and companies in the dual education system.

Fulfilled. Every year, with the enrolment of each new generation, the number of students who attend educational profiles that are realized according to the dual model of education continues to grow. Over the course of September 2019, close to 2,600 students enrolled in the first grade of dual education, which increased the total number of students in the entire dual education system to 7,000. According to the data of the Competition for enrolment of students in the first grade of

²³⁷Available at: <https://skolskaupravavaljevo.wordpress.com/2019/04/05/>

secondary school²³⁸ for the 2019/2020 school year, 72 schools offered profiles which are realized according to the dual model out of 104 schools registered in the entire system. The number of companies that are included in dual education in the 2019/2020 school year is 460, which is an increase in the total number of companies that have participated in dual education from the beginning to about 800.

Priority 6 - Creating new and modernizing existing dual profiles in accordance with the needs of the economy.

Fulfilled. Over the course of the 2019/2020 school year, 4 new dual educational profiles were created in accordance with the needs of the economy, as follows: construction machinery operator, industrial tailor, thermal and cooling devices serviceman and air traffic information and communication systems security technician.

All educational profiles that are realized according to the dual model have a qualification standard and are made in accordance with the needs of the economy (**PU-ST03**).

Priority 7 - Continuation of work on the Master Plan for the Implementation of the Law on Dual Education.

Fulfilled. The Master Plan for the Implementation of the Law on Dual Education, which supports the planning and implementation of dual education reform processes and contains relevant information for the implementation of the entire reform, was adopted by the Commission for Development and Implementation of Dual Education and published on the official website of MoESTD.

Priority 8 - Commencement of activities related to the development of a framework for monitoring and evaluation of dual education.

Fulfilled. In order to establish a system for monitoring vocational education, in 2019 work commenced on creating a proposal for a framework for monitoring and evaluation of the National Model of Dual Education (**PU-ST08**).

Priority 9 - Implementation of activities for the promotion of the National Model of Dual and Entrepreneurial Education.

Fulfilled. In the period from December 2018 to June 2019, the promotion of the National Model of Dual and Entrepreneurial Education was realized in ten cities within the territory of the Republic of Serbia, in which in addition to schools and companies from the city where the promotion was realized, saw the participation of schools and employers belonging to the specific district. A Week of Dual Education was also organized in cooperation with the SCC over the course of October 2019, as well as other promotional events.

Priority 10 - Adoption of by-laws that shall further regulate the application of the provisions of the Law on the NQFS.

Continuous implementation. In line with the Law on the NQFS, some envisaged by-laws have been adopted (Rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services²³⁹, Rulebook on the content and appearance of the initiative form for development and adoption of

²³⁸ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-2020-KONKURS-ZA-UPIS-U-SREDNJU-SKOLU.pdf>

²³⁹ Rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 43/2019.)

qualification standards²⁴⁰), the Draft Rulebook on development of qualification standards, Draft Rulebook on content and manner of keeping the NQFS Register have been prepared, whereby the drafting and adoption of the remaining by-laws is expected during 2020.

Priority 11 - Strengthening the capacity of established institutions and bodies.

Continuous implementation. In 2019, the Qualifications Agency became fully functional and operational. Spatial, material and financial conditions for the smooth operation of the Agency have been provided. The process of mapping members of sector councils has been completed. Constitutive sessions of all 12 sector councils have been held. The sector councils adopted their rules of procedure, as well as their work programmes for 2019 and 2020. Additional support for strengthening the capacity of established institutions is provided through the project "Development of an integrated national qualifications system in the Republic of Serbia".

Priority 12 - Connecting NQFS with the EQF.

Fulfilled. At the 52nd meeting of the Advisory Group on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) held on 4 and 5 February 2020 in Brussels, the Report on the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia (NQFS) with the EQF was adopted, including an additional report on the self-assessment of the NQFS in the field of higher education in relation to the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (OK-EPVO). The adoption of the report was preceded by its preparation in accordance with the criteria and procedures defined by the EQF Advisory Group. Expert-consultative meetings with national and EU partners have been organized²⁴¹.

Priority 13 - Development of the NQFS Register, including the Qualifications Register.

Continuous implementation. Over the course of 2019, the elements of the NQFS Register were defined and a draft rulebook on the content and manner of keeping the NQFS Register was drafted. There was also continuous work on the development of software for the NQFS Register, the adoption of which is expected in the coming period, as well as on data entry and its connection with other registers provided by the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

Priority 14 - Developing the concept of recognition of prior education.

Continuous implementation. During 2019, examples of good practice relating to the procedure of recognizing previously acquired education from Portugal²⁴² were mapped out, while an action plan for piloting the concept of recognizing previously gained education in the RS was drafted²⁴³.

4.4. Priorities for 2020

²⁴⁰ Rulebook on the content and appearance of the initiative form for the development and adoption of qualification standards ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 53/2020).

²⁴¹ Available at: <http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/2020/02/okvir-kvalifikacija-republike-srbije/>

²⁴² Available at: http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/sr_lat/2019/12/studijska-poseta-portugalski-okvir-kvalifikacija-i-model-priznavanja-prethodnog-ucenja-primer-dobre-prakse-u-evropskoj-uniji/

²⁴³ Available at: <https://www.mfin.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ERP-2020-2022-srp.pdf>

Priority 1 - Creating new and modernizing existing dual profiles in accordance with the needs of the economy, including dual educational profiles.

Priority 2- Strengthening the quality of teaching through teacher training in vocational schools with a focus on professional content, digitization and application and use of modern equipment, machines and devices.

Priority 3- Development of the network of secondary vocational schools and optimization of the network of educational profiles in accordance with the local specificities of the economy and the labour market.

Priority 4- Monitoring the career development of vocational school students after completing their education within the EMIS.

Priority 5 - Development of the concept of vocational graduation and final exam within state graduation and implementation of a pilot graduation during the 2020/2021 school year.

Priority 6- Increasing the number of pupils, schools and companies in the dual education system.

Priority 7 - Establishment and development of regional training centres.

Priority 8 - Monitoring and evaluation of dual education.

Priority 9 - Industry Development 4.0.

Priority 10 - Establishment of the NQFS Register and data entry, as well as its connection with other Registers within the EMISaaaaaaa.

Priority 11 - Piloting the concept of recognizing prior education.

Priority 12 - Further strengthening of newly established institutions and bodies in charge of implementing the NQFS system.

Priority 13 - Improving the accreditation system for Publicly recognized organizers of adult education activities (JPOA), as well as defining standards for self-evaluation of external quality control.

Priority 14 - Development of qualification standards in accordance with the new methodology.

Activities from the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Education Development in Serbia/AP SEDS 2020:

PU-S001	Standardization of qualification exams.
PU-S002	Introduction of crafts education.

PU-S003	Development of educational programmes based on qualification standards.
PU-S004	Flexible teaching organization.
PU-S005	Harmonization of the network of vocational schools and educational programmes (profiles) offer with the needs of the economy.
PU-S006	Reducing the rate of school drop outs.
PU-S007	Involvement of employers in the process of programming, development and implementation of SVE.
PU-S008	Establishment of a system of monitoring and evaluation of vocational education.
PU-S009	Defining a clear division of responsibilities, roles and tasks of all management bodies in SVE.
VA-NOK	Development of the national qualifications framework.

5. Higher education

5.1. Basic information on higher education, current state and context

Higher education in Serbia is realized through academic and vocational studies, on the basis of accredited study programs for acquiring higher education. Academic studies include study programs which enable students to develop and apply scientific, professional and artistic achievements, while vocational studies include study programs which enable students to apply knowledge and skills necessary for inclusion in the work process.

The most important law in the field of higher education is the Law on Higher Education ²⁴⁴ (LHE), which introduced important changes in the higher education system in 2018, primarily in the field of quality assurance, establishing a legal basis for a formation of the National Body for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAB), formed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the purpose of performing accreditation, quality control in HEI, evaluation of study programs and quality assurance in higher education. In addition to MoESTD, which establishes and conducts policy, the National Council for Higher Education, the Conference of Universities in Serbia (CONUS), which brings together 18 accredited universities, the Conference of Academies and High Schools of Serbia (CAHS), the Student Conference of Serbian Universities (SCONUS) and the Student Conference of the Academy and Vocational Studies of Serbia (SCAVS) are particularly important in addressing the issues related to the higher education.

SEDS states, as one of the goals, that at least 50%, and more likely 55%, of a generation should enroll in tertiary education by 2020. This goal was not unrealistic having in mind that a large number of young people (between 19-24 years old) decide to enroll to some HEI. While one-fifth of young people want to finish only secondary school, most of the others aspire to obtain a masters degree, and every tenth respondent plans to obtain Phd title²⁴⁵.

In the school year 2018/2019, students mostly enrolled to programs in two areas: *engineering, production and civil engineering and business, administration and law*, with the first area having more men and the second having more women. A total of 45,115 students enrolled in the first year 2019/2020, of which 24,638 are on the budget of the RS, and 20,477 are in the status of self-financing students. The largest number of students enrolled in state faculties (28,095) and state colleges (7,811), while the remaining students (20.4%) study on private faculties and colleges²⁴⁶.

5.2. Progress made in the reporting period

5.2.1. Quality

²⁴⁴Law on Higher Education (“Official Gazette of RS” nos. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law and 73/2018)

²⁴⁵Popadić, D. and Associates (2019). Young People in Serbia 2018/2019. Fridrih Ebert Foundation(FES)

²⁴⁶Education statistics. Republic Statistical Office, number 347- year. LXIX, 26.12.2019. Available at: <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2019/Pdf/G20191347.pdf>

Given the fact that monitoring of quality at the national level is still lacking, except during accreditation and periodic external evaluation of institutions, the Shanghai List continues to arouse interest every year as a rare indicator of how Serbian universities rank in relation to other faculties. The University of Belgrade ranked between 401 and 500 place on the Shanghai List for 2019, which is much worse ranking compared to the previous year (between 301 and 400 place). The University of Novi Sad maintained its ranking between 901 and 1000. The position of the University of Belgrade (UB) within this ranking had downward trend compared to the stable ranking of around 300th place in the previous three years. The University of Belgrade itself sees the reason for this downward trend in the fact that “certain countries, especially those in East Asia, are increasingly investing significant resources in strengthening and positioning their universities”.²⁴⁷ In order to improve the quality of higher education, MoESTD announced the opening of a special budget line to strengthen the position of UB on the Shanghai list through a larger citation.

In 2019, the competition titled “Development of Higher Education” was realized with the aim to finance projects to support higher education institutions in the development of new and innovation of existing subjects (**HE-AS04**) within the program activity which should contribute to achieving MoESTD program goals, namely:

- 1) Improving the competencies of teachers and associates in the teaching process;
- 2) Developing new and innovating existing study programs that follow-up the needs of the labour market;
- 3) Improving the quality of the educational process through the creation of better conditions for teaching process and student learning;
- 4) Developing students’ entrepreneurial skills and improving the cooperation of higher education institutions with the economy and other stakeholders in the local community;
- 5) Increasing the use of information technology in teaching and learning process.

The goals listed here simultaneously cover several actions from the AP (**VO-SS07, VO-SS06, VO-ZD23, VO-ZD27**), hence it depends on what HEI saw as priority, to what extent each of these actions is covered, i.e. realized. A total of 44 projects were funded in the competition, of which four projects at vocational colleges. The expected implementation period for financial projects is the semester in which the subjects are realized, and no later than the end of the summer semester of the school year 2019/2020, after which reports on specific projects results will be available.

Most innovations in the field of quality improvement were created in the process of operational development of the National Body for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAB), whose legal basis is given in the Law on Amendments to the Law on Higher Education from 2018. Following the official establishment of NAB, a period of more detailed regulation of work followed up, and until March 2019, the reception of new requirements for accreditation was suspended²⁴⁸. After the interruption, the cases were processed as soon as possible. In the period of establishing internal NAB procedures the parallel work was carried out on improving the process of accreditation and quality assurance, so in 2019, several important bylaws were adopted, namely:

²⁴⁷ Available at: <http://www.bg.ac.rs/sr/mediji/rank.php>

²⁴⁸ Available at:

<https://www.kapk.org/sr/%d0%bf%d0%be%d1%87%d0%b5%d1%82%d0%bd%d0%b0/>

- Rulebook on Standards and Procedures of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions²⁴⁹,
- Rulebook on Standards and Procedures of Accreditation of Study Programs²⁵⁰,
- Rulebook on Standards for Initial Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs²⁵¹,
- Rulebook on Standards for Self-Evaluation and Quality Assessment of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs²⁵², and
- Rulebook on Standards and Procedures for External Quality Control of Higher Education Institutions²⁵³

Additionally, the process of request submission, reporting, record keeping and other areas crucial for the integrity of the accreditation process have been improved as well.

In February 2018, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) rendered a decision that (then) CAQA shall lose its full member status and instead become a “member under the review” for the period of two years, because of deficiencies found in the quality assurance system and accreditation of institutions and programs in RS.²⁵⁴ For this reason, NAB has set the implementation of the new methodology of the accreditation and quality control process in Serbia as its priority²⁵⁵, with the main goal directed towards the highest possible internationalization, positioning in the higher education area, gaining full status in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and registration in the appropriate register²⁵⁶. The visit of ENQA representatives tasked to collect information on how NAB eliminated previous objections and make a report based on which it would be decided to return the NAB the status of a full member in ENQA, took place at the end of 2019. Based on these findings, the ENQA Board reviewed the request of the RS in February 2020 and decided that, despite the obvious progress made in the field of quality assurance, some crucial objections have not been resolved, and consequently the NAB has not been granted full membership.

The main objections relate to the non-compliance with certain Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area²⁵⁷, some of which are listed below: the verification process is neither performed in sufficient detail and thoroughly, nor rationally enough (**2.3 Implementation Process**); insufficient independence of the NAB, which is reflected

²⁴⁹ Rulebook on Standards and Procedures of Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 13/2019).

²⁵⁰ Rulebook on Standards and Procedures of Accreditation of Study Programs (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 13/2019).

²⁵¹ Rulebook on Standards for Initial Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 13/2019).

²⁵² Rulebook on Standards for Self-Evaluation and Quality Assessment of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 13/2019).

²⁵³ Rulebook on Standards and Procedures for External Quality Control of Higher Education Institutions (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 13/2019).

²⁵⁴ In the meantime, the Government of the RS established the NAB, which was constituted in July 2018, as the legal successor of the former ENQA.

²⁵⁵ And in accordance with the principles of the quality of the European Higher Education Area, European Standards and Guidelines and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, as well as the legal regulation in the RS.

²⁵⁶ In English: European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

²⁵⁷ Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)(2015). Brussels, Belgium. Available at:

https://www.nat.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ESG_2015-srp.pdf

in inability of the NCHE to overrule the decision of CAQA. **(2.7. Complaints and Appeals)**; The approach to external evaluation should be more reflective and analytical, and also include a development dimension, promote innovation and the like **(3.4 Thematic analysis)**; Insufficiently regulated area of internal quality assurance and process integrity (lack of systematic information collection and feedback analysis, most information is obtained informally, there is no room for discussion on results and ways of improvement, etc.) **(3.6 Internal Quality Assurance and Professional Conduct)** etc.²⁵⁸

It should be stressed that NAB full membership in ENQA, although it is an important strategic goal and evidence of quality, is not the only quality benchmark, nor a condition for the validity of diplomas obtained on HEIs in RS. If a national agency is a full member, it means that its work is fully in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and in the process of recognizing foreign diplomas, countries can apply more strict or lenient criteria for recognizing diplomas from a particular country. For this reason, it is important to emphasize that assessing the work of NAB is not the same as assessing the quality of our higher education system, so although these two aspects are related, there is no sign of equality between them.

NAB operations are regulated by internal acts, the Statute²⁵⁹ and the Code of Ethics²⁶⁰, and the Strategy for the period 2019-2022²⁶¹ has been adopted. The Strategy, in its short-term goals primarily envisages elimination of ENQA objections and achieving full membership, changing the public perception of CAQA, as a supervisory body towards more professional and advisory body and generally shifting the paradigm of quality of higher education towards outcomes for students instead of focusing on scientific discipline as such.

Accreditation of programs and institutions in 2019. Accreditation and quality control, after the interruption that lasted until the functional operation of NAB capacity has been established, was performed in line with improved procedures and the application of the new methodology. One of the main objections to the previous procedure, and at the same time what the evaluations of the accreditation cycles showed, was the manner of work of the reviewers. In March 2019, new regulations on accreditation came into force, introducing into the accreditation process the Review Commissions (RC), composed of three teachers from higher education institutions, one student and one business representative, whose task is to review the documentation provided by the higher education institution submitted with the request, as well as to verify the accuracy of

²⁵⁸These are some of the key objections, while the full report is available on the NAB site (available at: <https://www.nat.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NEAQA-external-review-report-2020.pdf>). ENQA, however, commends the progress and efforts made in the past period and notes that NAB may re-apply for membership within two years, with the recommendation to carefully review the fulfilment of requirements before re-applying. NAB may also request a panel visit in order to obtain an opinion on the progress made and to prepare better for the next visit aimed at assessing eligibility for full membership. In 2020, NAB was, in line with the goals to eliminate the remaining objections in the coming period, included in Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – CEENQA. CEENQA membership gives NAB an opportunity to work closely with the member agencies of the Network, to engage in ongoing discussions on the quality assurance policy of higher education institutions and study programs in the European region, to participate in joint projects and share experience with member agencies, which would altogether contribute, in the following period, to a better understanding of the necessary measures aimed at the fulfilment of standards.

²⁵⁹Available at: <https://www.nat.rs/statut-nat-a/>

²⁶⁰Available at: <https://www.nat.rs/eticki-kodeks-nat-a/>

²⁶¹Available at: <https://www.nat.rs/strategija-nat/>

stated information through the site visit in order to determine the factual situation relevant for deciding on accreditation. Unlike the previous practice of individual reporting, review commissions must submit a joint report with a detailed description of the fulfilment of standards according to the set indicators.

Another important novelty is related to the documentation submission procedure itself. As part of the new methodology, requirements for the digital accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs have been defined, and the *NAB software 2019*, developed by the Faculty of Technical Science, University of Novi Sad, is in operation since July 2019. By implementing *NAB software 2019*, the old electronic form for entering and processing accreditation data has been replaced by a new, modern electronic form harmonized with the new accreditation standards. A single database has been provided and used by the academic institutions to enter data on accreditation requirements, and set of reports for reviewers, taking off the burden related to the manual computational work in data analysis. From the beginning of July until the end of 2019, a total of 115 higher education institutions gained access to *NAB software 2019*, while 28 institutions managed to align the submitted data with the new accreditation standards and complete the submission of electronic data in this new manner, through *NAB software 2019*. By the beginning of 2020 and in accordance with the new methodology, a total of 52 study programs, 6 higher education institutions have been accredited and one positive opinion has been given in the procedure of initial accreditation of a higher education institution. Also, NAB has initiated three extraordinary external quality controls of higher education institutions²⁶².

From NAB perspective, one of the aggravating circumstances relating to the implementation of the new methodology is the insufficient availability of reviewers from the area of economy, foreign reviewers who are mandatory part of the doctoral program review commissions as well as a small number of reviewers for certain areas. In its report, ENQA commends all the novelties relating to the structure of commissions and the selection of reviewers who are no longer anonymous, but also points out that although there is a certain internal process of evaluating the work of reviewers on the basis of which they are assigned cases, the process itself is not clear and transparent. Also, ENQA states that they received information that the reviewers who were poorly rated continue to work, and also points out that the training they attended does not cover crucial quality assurance issues and is too short to provide an objective and consistent evaluation of all reviewers²⁶³.

Non-university higher education institutions (academies and colleges). Non-university HEIs (academies and colleges of vocational studies) have become one of the priority topics when it comes to the quality of HE, mainly due to the expansion of such institutions with insufficient quality control. Based on the pilot project during which certain non-university higher education institutions were merged, a decision was made that in 2019 all higher education institutions fulfilling the quality criteria will be merged into academies. This was done gradually, a total of 32 colleges were merged and 11 academies were created (the list is available on the Conference of

²⁶²Kočović, J. (2020). Challenges in the implementation of accreditation procedures according to the new Methodology and the role of NAB in quality assurance in higher education, XXVI Conference Development Trends: "Innovations in Modern Education", Kopaonik, 16-19. 02. 2020.

²⁶³Available at: <https://www.nat.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NEAQA-external-review-report-2020.pdf>

Academies of Applied Studies Serbia (CAASS) website²⁶⁴. The decision on merging and fulfilment of requirements was made within the MoESTD, while NAB is also responsible for the quality assurance and the process of accreditation and external control²⁶⁵.

5.2.2. Coverage

The most important novelty related to the enrollment in higher education institution is the introduction of a new concept of the state graduation exam (**VO-ZD01**). In this process, MoESTD has the support of the EU through the project “State Graduation Exam”, and a special part of the project is addressing the preparation of higher education institutions for a new way of enrolling students by providing support to HEIs in integrating results from graduation exams into enrollment procedures (training, support in defining enrollment criteria, etc.). The current SEDS until 2020, since 2012 when it was adopted, envisages changes in the entry system to higher education, and the main objectives are aimed at improving the quality of admission and selection of candidates and equalizing enrollment procedure, emphasizing the high quality of state graduation exam after the secondary education as an evidence of the adoption of all standards of student achievements. In accordance with that, **SEDS states that, without taking entrance exams**, general graduation exam entitles students to enter all HEIs, the vocational graduation exam entitles students to enroll in the chosen disciplines at vocational and academic studies, while art graduation exam entitles students to access the relevant study programs at art faculties, although art faculties may also introduce a test of special abilities/talents. At the same time, the Law on Higher Education is not fully in line with SEDS, as it leaves the possibility of entrance exams – according to the Law on Higher Education the ranking of students is based on the overall result achieved in secondary education of a four-year period of duration, the graduation result, the results obtained at placement test, i.e. aptitude test, and when needed, based on the result achieved at national and international competitions, in line with the general act of HEI²⁶⁶. In the following period, it is expected that HEIs will decide which subjects taken at the state graduation exam shall be relevant for the admission to the specific institution.

The examination material for the state graduation exam is compiled jointly by secondary school and university teachers, which is an important step in ensuring the integration of the state graduation exam results into enrollment procedures. For the first time, the students will take the state graduation exam at the end of secondary education in 2022, according to this new concept (school year 2021/2022)²⁶⁷.

Pursuant to the regulations on higher education and the requirements laid down in the Statute of a Higher Education Institution, a person without acquired secondary education who applies for enrollment in study programs in the domain of arts is entitled to higher education²⁶⁸. Also, in connection with the introduction of alternative ways of entering higher education, Instructions for enrollment in the first year of study programs of basic and integrated studies at higher education institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia for the school year 2019/2020 are

²⁶⁴ The directory of academies and colleges of vocational studies is available at: <http://www.kasss.rs>

²⁶⁵ Standards for accreditation of non-university HEIs are available at: <https://www.nat.rs/akreditacija-ustanove/>

²⁶⁶ Article 100 of the Law on Higher Education (“Official Gazette of RS”, nos. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 73/2018, 67/2019 и 6/2020 – other laws).

²⁶⁷ Part of the state graduation exam is also the final exam for students who are studying three-year educational profiles – they will take the final exam in 2021, according to the new concept.

²⁶⁸ Law on Higher Education (“Official Gazette of RS”, nos. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 73/2018, 67/2019 and 6/2020 – other laws).

adopted, thus ensuring greater availability of HE persons who do not have a public document on acquired secondary education. In such cases, the possibility of submitting a decision on determining the acquired secondary education issued by the municipal court in no-litigious procedure is envisaged ²⁶⁹(VO-ZD02).

Affirmative measures for enrollment in HEI still exist in the form of places which are “reserved” for certain categories of students in each study program (students belonging to Roma national minority, students with disabilities). In the school year 2018/2019, a total of 462 Roma students²⁷⁰ attended HEIs. The National Council of Roma National Minority points out that despite efforts to make this process transparent and fair, there are still attempts of abuse²⁷¹. In 2019, this Council issued 141 recommendation for enrollment under affirmative measures. In the school year 2019/2020 a total of 170 young Roma (78 male and 92 female) applied for Affirmative Enrollment Programme at higher education institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia. A total of 120 eligible members of Roma national minority were enrolled (58 male and 62 female).

HEI may organize part-time studies for employed students or those who are unable to attend lectures regularly for other reasons²⁷². In order to provide assistance to these students, a compromise is made regarding the number of ECTS credits earned in the school year (30 ECTS), as well as longer duration of student status in enrolled study program (three times duration of the regular study program) (VO-ZD04).

When it comes to support for vulnerable groups of students, during the course of 2019, the Rulebook on Student Loans and Scholarships²⁷³ was amended in terms of milder criteria for vulnerable social groups – the criterion of achievement for Roma students, students without parental care and students with disabilities is no longer valid. At the Competition for granting student scholarships for the school year 2018/2019, out of 158 students who applied for the scholarship submitting a certificate of the National Council of the Roma National Minority, 115 students were granted scholarships and 18 Roma students were granted student loans. The monthly amount of the scholarship, i.e. the loan is RSD 8,400. However, one of the objections stated in the *Mobility Scoreboard indicators in higher education*²⁷⁴, a report of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), is that of all indicators monitored, the indicator related to participation of students from vulnerable groups in mobility programs and measures aimed at improving their mobility options requires most improvements. Although most countries have shortcomings, Serbia, along with Bulgaria and Albania, is in the red category (i.e. very low compliance with standards). It is particularly emphasized that students cannot use their

²⁶⁹Instructions for enrollment in the first year of study programs of basis and integrated studies at higher education institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia for the school year 2019/2020 (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 36/2019).

²⁷⁰Data for the school year 2019/2020 are not available.

²⁷¹Available at <http://voice.org.rs/romske-organizacije-afirmativne-mere-za-upis-romskih-studenata-koristi-rodbina-visokih-funkcionera/>

²⁷²Article 96 of the Law on Higher Education (“Official Gazette of RS”, nos. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 73/2018, 67/2019 and 6/2020 – other laws).

²⁷³Rulebook on Student Loans and Scholarships (“Official Gazette of RS”, nos. 18/2010, 55/2013, 27/2018 – other law and 10/2019).

²⁷⁴EACEA (2020) Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report – 2018/19, [Eurydice \(Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency\)](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0f751de6-5782-11ea-8b81-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-120474453) available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0f751de6-5782-11ea-8b81-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-120474453>

national grants (scholarships) abroad, although, as stated in the part of the report on mobility through the Erasmus + program, it is possible to provide additional funding for these students.

5.2.3. Relevance

According to data obtained from the Labour Force Survey, unemployment is still the highest in the category of young people aged 25 to 34. Out of 335,900 unemployed, 100,400 fall within this age group, and what is also an issue of concern is that out of the total number of unemployed, 69,600 are those with higher education. Out of a total of 2,687,000 inactive persons in the population, 328,400 have higher education. Another interesting fact is that the increase in the number of employees with higher education is primarily reflected in the increased employment of highly educated women (as regards men the increase is higher for those with secondary education).²⁷⁵

The establishment of the Qualifications Agency has strengthened national capacities to increase the relevance of education programs at all levels, including in HE. In 2019, several meetings were held with NAB and IIE on the topic of new qualification standards initiatives, coding systems and methods of classification, and agreements were also prepared with NAB on further cooperation on this topic. In 2019, the List of Qualifications in Higher Education was made since the implementation of the Bologna Declaration (type, level, educational scientific field and qualifications code were determined) with a total of 1,789 qualifications, as well as the List of Qualifications in Higher Education before the implementation of the Bologna Declaration, with a total of 1,037 qualifications²⁷⁶.

The process of drafting the Report on linking NQFS with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) began in early 2019 and ended the same year. This report and the NQFS Self-Assessment Report in the field of higher education²⁷⁷ in relation to the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) are instruments used to prove or assess the compliance of the national framework with the European Qualifications Framework and are prepared in accordance with the procedure defined by the EQF Advisory Group. Both reports were presented in November 2019 at the meeting of the EQF Advisory Group in Brussels. At the next meeting of the EQF Advisory Group (held in February 2020) these reports were adopted²⁷⁸, and consequently NQFS became officially linked to the EQF. Linking NQFS with EQF in the coming period will require work on amending the existing and/or new documents on qualifications that will contain information on the level of NQFS and the level of EQF. Also, information on the level of qualifications from EQF will need to be entered in the above-mentioned NQFS Register.

As part of improving the process of quality control and accreditation of institutions and programs, by amending the Rulebook on Standards and Procedures for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions²⁷⁹, one expert for certain areas from employers, professional or vocational associations, labour market and chambers was introduced as a member of the review

²⁷⁵In 2019, the highest increase in employment compared to 2018 was recorded in the group of employees with secondary education, namely 37,000 more employees and with higher education, namely 21,200 more employees. As regards women, an increase was recorded in both categories (both secondary and higher education), while for men, employees with secondary education were mostly in demand.

²⁷⁶Qualifications Agency (2002). Report on the work of the Qualifications Agency for 2019.

²⁷⁷Available at http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/sr_lat/2020/02/okvir-kvalifikacija-republike-srbije-povezan-je-sa-evropskim-okvirom-kvalifikacija/

²⁷⁸Source: <http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/2020/02/okvir-kvalifikacija-republike-srbije/>

²⁷⁹Rulebook on Standards and Procedures for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions ("Official Gazette of RS", no. 13/2019).

commission, and the expert is proposed by the relevant organizations. Also Standard 4: Studies, requires compliance with the National Qualifications Framework , thus ensuring the modernization of study programs in accordance with the needs of the labour market and the level of scientific and technological development worldwide **(VO-AS01)**.

An important novelty that was regulated by bylaws in 2019 are short-cycle programmes (SP)²⁸⁰. As a rule, short programmes are harmonized with the needs of the labour market and are implemented for the purpose of professional training of students and persons with acquired secondary education for inclusion in the work process. The purpose of introducing SP in the education system is to enable effective and efficient education in a short period of time, and training of experts for a specific job based on the expressed need of the employer, to give an opportunity to resolve the acute need for workers for a specific job/occupation, i.e. shortage of skilled labour (VO-AS10). In order to regulate the short-cycle study programmes, the Rulebook on the organisation, implementation, issuance of certificates and the procedure for keeping records for short-cycle study programmes²⁸¹ and the Rulebook on the content of the short-cycle study programme²⁸² certificate were adopted.

Internationalisation at universities in RS. Internationalisation is the process of implementing international, intercultural and supranational elements in university teaching, research and accompanying activities in order to more fully involve universities in the regional, European and global trends in science, higher education and transfer of knowledge. Internationalisation is primarily ensured by introducing global perspectives in teaching, learning and research, but also by building international and intercultural competencies of students, as well as the teaching and administrative staff. Mobility programmes that universities in Serbia can use are Erasmus+, CEEPUS III (Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies, Campus Europae (international student mobility programme implemented under the auspices of the European University Foundation seated in Luxembourg) and other.

After the signing of the Agreement on full participation in the Erasmus + programme, at the beginning of 2019, RS became a full member of this programme and the participants from RS can therefore use all the opportunities that this programme provides, i.e. to participate in all types of projects on an equal footing with participants from EU member states.

Within higher education, a total of 39 projects (centralized and decentralized actions) were approved to higher education institutions from Serbia in the competition deadline for 2019, while they participate in 20 more projects as partners. The total value of mobility projects for the field of higher education is 2,295,059.00 euros. A total of 693 students and 371 teaching staff representatives participated in mobility projects. When it comes to the topics of strategic partnership projects, the projects are oriented towards the use of innovative teaching methods.

In order to encourage participation in the Erasmus+ programme and increase the chances of institutions for projects, the Tempus Foundation and its partners organise various promotional activities and trainings. A total of nine workshops for writing projects for all sectors within the Erasmus + programme were organised, as well as a workshop dedicated to the upcoming

²⁸⁰Rulebook on the organisation, implementation, issuance of certificates and the procedure for keeping records for short-cycle study programmes (Official Gazette of RS, No. 32/2019)

²⁸¹Rulebook on the organisation, implementation, issuance of certificates and the procedure for keeping records for short-cycle study programmes (Official Gazette of RS, No. 39/2019).

²⁸²Rulebook on the content of the short-cycle study programme ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 39/2019)

competition for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education. The new seven-year cycle begins in 2021.

Student mobility is an important goal both within the EU programmes and at the national level. In order to ensure equal access to Erasmus+ KA1 exchange programmes for as many students as possible who are in an unfavourable socio-economic position and who participate in mobility activities, they are entitled to additional funds for individual support in the amount of 200 euros per month, if they meet the eligibility criteria set at the national level²⁸³. Also, students who are not in an unfavourable position have some benefits such as in case of mobility for the purpose of performing professional practice, the student is entitled to additional funds for individual support of 100 euros per month, and in case the student is in an unfavourable socio-economic position, he/she is entitled to 200 euros per month. Students are given the opportunity to go abroad also through the CEEPUS III programme, which which Serbia chaired in 2019. In the period 2018-2019, over 800 scholarship months for RS students and more than 500 stays at foreign HEIs for our students and staff were realised through this programme. In our country, 280 stays and over 300 scholarship months have been organised. Within the “World in Serbia” programme, a competition was announced which awarded 116 scholarships to students from abroad, and within the programme “Serbia for Serbs from the region”, 30 scholarships were awarded (for the school year 2019/2020). For the 2019/2020 school year, the RS government awarded, on the basis of bilateral agreements, 73 scholarships for foreign students for training at faculties, and 44 scholarships for attending a summer school of Serbian language in the duration of 3 weeks.

EACEA monitors the situation in the field of student mobility in EU and candidate countries and issues an annual report on monitoring the *Mobility Scoreboard indicators in higher education*. According to the latest available report for the period 2018-2019, Serbia is in relation to the 6 indicators that are being monitored²⁸⁴, for three in what is called the “red category”, i.e. significant policy changes are needed to achieve the required standard. The standards that RS should work on most are: Transferability of grants and loans, Support to students from vulnerable groups and Recognition of qualifications for the purpose of mobility.

The working version of the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Serbia for the period 2017-2025, which was drafted in October 2016, was not adopted, but most universities have their own internationalisation strategies.

HEIs are trying to respond to the staffing needs, which is related to the activity of developing programmes to increase coverage in priority areas (**VO-ZD06**). Given that one of the key measures within the Action Plan for Exercising the Rights of the National Minorities²⁸⁵ in relation

²⁸³Available at: <https://erasmusplus.rs/odobreni-projekti/ka1-visoko-obrazovanje/studenti-u-nepovoljnom-polozaju/>

²⁸⁴The six indicators monitored are: Information and guidance on learning mobility; Foreign language learning; Transferability of government grants and loans; Support to students from vulnerable groups; Recognition of learning outcomes through the ECTS; and Recognition of qualifications for the purpose of mobility

²⁸⁵Available

at: http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sites/default/files/prilog_fajl/akcioni_plan_za_sprovođenje_prava_nacionalnih_manjina_-_sa_semaforom.pdf

to improving the quality of teaching staff in the languages of national minorities²⁸⁶, the increased need for staff to teach in the languages of national minorities has led to the opening of new places in programmes. The Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade is implementing the Programme for Acquiring Competencies in Croatian Language, Culture and Literature with the methodology of work within the Centre for Teacher Training. A total of 7 candidates were enrolled in the current school year. In accordance with the Conclusions of the seminar “Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia” for the period October 2017 – October 2019, it is planned to enhance the work of the Department of Romani Language at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade through cooperation with the National Council with the aim of educating teachers to work in educational and scientific research activities related to the Romani language and culture due to the increased interest of primary school students in the elective subject Romani language for elements of national culture. In order to further strengthen the staff, MoESTD in cooperation with the Higher Vocational School for Teachers “Mihajlo Palov” agreed to issue a certificate of knowledge of the Romani language to graduates who studied in Romani language in accordance with the curriculum and syllabus based on which the students studied and graduated. This means that these graduates will also be able to teach the elective subject Romani language with elements of the national culture.

Recognition of foreign documents. During 2019, the ENIC/NARIC Centre became part of the Qualifications Agency. Within the ENIC/NARIC Centre, professional recognition of foreign higher education documents is performed for employment purposes, while recognition for continuing studies is still performed at universities. The activities of the ENIC/NARIC Centre are presented below.

²⁸⁶The measure is to *improve the position and encourage the exercise of rights of members of minority communities in the field of education*, while the expected result is that *all forms of teaching in the languages of national minorities are provided by appropriate quality teaching staff*.

The ENIC/NARIC Centre performs activities related to:

- Collecting and providing information in the process of recognition of public documents acquired abroad;
- Implementation of the procedure of the first evaluation of a foreign study programme for the purpose of employment – professional recognition in accordance with the Law on NQFS – and the law regulating higher education;
- Providing information on an independent higher education institution and education system, in order to recognise a domestic higher education document abroad;
- Providing information on the education system in the country where the foreign higher education document was acquired, on the enrollment conditions, competencies acquired upon completion of the study programme, rights arising from the foreign higher education document in the country where it was acquired;
- Comparing the domestic and foreign education systems, the duration of education and the curriculum and syllabus;
- Providing assistance in the work of the commission set up by the director for giving an expert opinion in the procedure of the first evaluation of a foreign study programme;
- If necessary, participates in the work of the expert commission for establishing facts of importance for decision-making;
- Cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collecting data necessary in the procedure of recognition of a foreign school document;
- Implementation of the procedure for recognition of foreign higher education documents for employment (professional recognition);
- Issuing a decision with the level of NQFS to which the recognised qualification responds;
- Networking with ENIC/NARIC centres and other organisations that recognise qualifications;

In 2019, the Agency received 894 applications for professional recognition of foreign school documents for employment, while 385 were taken over from the MoESTD (which arrived while the ENIC/NARIC Centre was part of the MoESTD). A total of 850 decisions were made, and 322 checks of accreditation of foreign study programmes were carried out. Verification of the authenticity of diplomas was done in 73 cases²⁸⁷. For the purpose of evaluation of foreign student programmes, 125 reviewers were hired.

²⁸⁷Qualifications Agency (2002). Qualifications Agency progress report for 2019

Dual model of studies. The Law on the Dual Model of Studies²⁸⁸ came into force on 26 September 2019. Unlike the previous solutions, the dual model of studies also treats the employer as the environment for student learning, together with the higher education institution. It is practically a type of learning – training, which includes three groups of participants: students, higher education institutions and employers, where the mutual relationship between the higher education institution and the employer is regulated by a dual agreement, and the employer-student relationship by an agreement on learning through work. These measures certainly improve the relationship of HE with the world of work and provide students with better opportunities for professional practice **(VO-ZD16)**.

Erasmus+ project Implementation of Dual Education in Higher Education of Serbia – DualEdu has started the assessment of the needs of HEIs and employers on the basis of which models of dual education in higher education will be developed. The results of the first survey speak in favour of the need for modernisation of HE, however, there is still no complete consent on the model that could be applied when it comes to the implementation of part of the study programme with employers. A survey²⁸⁹ was conducted among 52 respondents – representatives of companies from various industries (computer programming, software development and production automation, television broadcasting, retail and wholesale, steel production and processing, electronics, electricity distribution, clothing industry, furniture industry, providing legal and health services, etc.). More than 50% of the respondents are small businesses – up to 25 employees. About 60% of the respondents believe that they should be included in the model of dual higher education, but they see risks in insufficient theoretical knowledge and the lack of motivation of students, lack of mentors, inconsistency of academic programmes with the company needs and the students' lack of motivation. The largest percentage of respondents (close to 60%) believes that the optimal model of distribution of student engagement in the company and faculty during the semester would be to engage the student for two weeks at the faculty, followed by two weeks in the company, and one week for preparing and taking exams/other obligations. Most of the surveyed companies would be willing to include a small number of students (1 – 3 students), which should be kept in mind when planning this type of programme (so that all students according to this model have the opportunity to learn through work).

Through the Erasmus+ project IF4TM (Institutional framework for development of the third mission of universities in Serbia) the partner universities (five founded by RS and one private university) developed the third mission of the university by revising their internal documents and activities which encouraged entrepreneurial skills and the innovation potential of students and employees. The Final Progress Report²⁹⁰ was prepared, which presented individual activities according to the project objectives at all universities. Students had the opportunity to participate in numerous competitions and workshops, and study visits and trainings were organised in order to strengthen the third mission of universities.

²⁸⁸Law on the Dual Model of Studies in Higher Education (Official Gazette of RS, No. 66/2019).

²⁸⁹Available at:

<https://dualedu.ef.uns.ac.rs/index.php/download/send/3-activities/129-report-on-review-of-needs-and-recommendations-regarding-dhe>

²⁹⁰Доступно на: http://www.if4tm.kg.ac.rs/pub/download/15622381188642_D2.6%20v3.pdf

5.2.4. Efficiency

The efficiency of higher education in Serbia cannot be reported yet on the basis of research-based data. Although HEIs monitor, as part of the self-evaluation, the students' pass rate, the professors' work, changes in interest as to various programmes and other topics important for system optimisation, there is no methodology for national assessment of HE outcomes. Measures to increase the efficiency have not been defined and indicators for assessing the efficiency have not been developed. The preparation of a strategy for collecting data on drop-out from the HEIs, which is visible in the reports of individual HEIs and announcements of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SOS)²⁹¹ is underway. For the so-called "old students", i.e. students who started their studies according to the old "non-Bologna" principle, the deadline for completing their studies was again extended. With the established new deadlines, the completion of these studies is planned for the end of the 2020/2021 school year and for the students enrolled in integrated studies in the field of medical sciences until the end of 2020/2021.

One of the actions of the AP refers to the harmonisation of the number of teachers by areas (**VO-ZD19**). For this measure, the application of the Rulebook on standards and procedure for external quality control of higher education institutions²⁹² is important, but at the national level there is no analysis of the staff and needs at the HE level. The change which was aimed primarily at improving the quality of academies and colleges of applied studies, certainly has an impact on the efficiency of the HE system, given that there has been a status change of merging into academies.

The key step for improving the efficiency of the HE system and the entire education system is the establishment of a fully operational Unique information system in education (UISE).

We point out that within the UISE system, the Law on Foundations of the Education System²⁹³ states that registers of employees in HEIs, register of data on the curriculum and syllabus, register of accredited programmes and data on the programmes, as well as a register of students are kept at the HE level. The data collected on employees at HEIs founded by RS also includes: the coefficient of work complexity as a basis for financing, as well as the coefficient on the basis of which salary is calculated from the collective agreement or general act of the institution. The establishment of these registers should, in addition to the transparency of the system, also contribute to efficiency, because policy makers will be able to base their decisions on concrete data on the essential elements of the system. Measures not directly listed in AP SEDS by 2020.

5.2.5. Measures that are not directly noted in the AP SEDS 2020

Relevant national strategic documents in the field of prevention of corruption adopted in the period from 2013 until today – National Anti-Corruption Strategy for the period 2013-2018 and the accompanying action plan, as well as the Action Plan for Chapter 23, identify education as one

²⁹¹However data for 2019 are not available. Also, data from the new cycle of Eurostudent research are not yet available, so we do not have information on recognition and efficiency of studies nor updated national data on the length of studies which are newer compared to those from the previous report.

²⁹²Rulebook on standards and procedure for external quality control of higher education institutions (Official Gazette of RS, No. 88/2017).

²⁹³Law on Foundations of the Education System (Official Gazette of RS, No. 88/2017, 27/2018 – second law, 10/2019 and 6/2020)

of the sectors in Serbia that is particularly at risk for corruption and the area of quality assurance at the HE level as a particularly vulnerable area. In accordance with that, MoESTD supported the preparation of the Report on the Risks of Corruption in the Education Sector ²⁹⁴, which was prepared within the IPA project “Prevention and Fight against Corruption”.

The Action Plan for Chapter 23 contains two specific measures related to the prevention of corruption in HE, and that is conducting an analysis to determine the criteria necessary for a successful accreditation process and performance control for higher education (2.2.10.15.) and establishing an accreditation process and subsequent control of the fulfillment of conditions for the work of state and private higher education institutions founded on clear, objective, transparent and pre-determined criteria based on the performed analysis by improving the work of CAQA (2.2.10.16.). MoESTD held several meetings with the project team to discuss the findings on risks that to a certain extent overlap with the findings of ENQA and agree with the recommendations in the field of work of MoESTD, and in the following period MoESTD and NAB will work on eliminating the risk of corruption.

5.3. Fulfillment of priorities for 2019

Priority 1 - Announcing a competition for the admission of new students

Fulfilled. Enrollment in the first year of accredited study programmes at all three levels of study was realised in June and September enrollment period. Through the programmes intended for foreign students new enrollments were also realised: “World in Serbia” for the 2019/2020 school year, with 116 scholarships; “Serbia for Serbs from the region” with 30 scholarships. Through the competition for scholarships of the Government of RS for the school year 2019/2020 for foreign students on the basis of bilateral agreements, 73 scholarships were awarded for training at faculties and 44 scholarships for attending a summer school of Serbian language for a period of 3 weeks.

Priority 2 – Continuation of support for inter-university cooperation

Fulfilled. The current regulations enable the realisation of inter-university cooperation through the implementation of joint study programmes, mobility of students and teachers. In the school year 2019/2020 MoESTD provided support to inter-university cooperation in terms of covering the costs of accommodation and meals in student dormitories, for about 75 foreign students/professors in training. The support also referred to the provision of financial resources for the participants of the 49th Meeting of Slavists in Belgrade, of which there were as many as 60 in 2019 from various countries around the world.

Priority 3 – Continuation of the implementation of the CEEPUS III programme – approval of new 300 scholarship months for teachers and students

Fulfilled. The Agreement on the realisation of the participation of RS in the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS III) in the 2019/2020 school year was signed between the Tempus Foundation and MoESTD (until the beginning of February 2020, 240 foreign students/professors have been staying in RS).

Priority 4 – Implementation of dual models of studies in higher education

²⁹⁴Expected date of publishing is June 2020.

Partially fulfilled. The Law on the Dual Model of Studies in Higher Education was adopted in 2019, while the implementation of dual models of studies is expected in the following period.

5.4. Priorities for 2020

Priority 1

Announcing and implementing a competition for financing projects to support HEIs in the development of new and innovation of existing subjects, within the programme activity “Development of higher education” which should contribute to the realisation of the programme goals of MoESTD:

- 1) Improving competencies of teachers and associates for teaching;
- 2) Developing new and innovation of existing study programmes that follow the labour market needs;
- 3) Improving educational process quality through creation of better conditions for realisation of teaching and student learning;
- 4) Developing students’ entrepreneurial skills and improvement of cooperation between the higher education institutions and the economy and other actors concerned within the local community;
- 5) Increasing information technology in teaching and the learning process.

Priority 2

Giving consent to the realisation of the projects “World in Serbia” and “Serbia for Serbs from the region” and announcing a competition for admission of new students for the school year 2020/2021.

Priority 3

Announcing the competition for scholarships of the Government of RS for the school year 2020/2021 on the basis of bilateral agreements as well as organising a summer school of Serbian language within the same competition.

Priority 4

Continued provision of support to inter-university exchange also for the school year 2020/2021. There are already 10 candidates registered for the inter-university exchange for the school year 2020/2021.

Priority 5

Signing of Agreement on the realisation of the participation of RS in the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS III) for the school year 2020/2021 (the same number of scholarship months (300) was approved also for 2020/2021).

Priority 6 – Implementation of dual models of studies in higher education.

Actions from AP SEDS by 2020:

VO-ZD01	Development of the system of enrollment in undergraduate academic studies on the basis of passing the graduation exam
VO-ZD02	Introduction of alternative ways of access to higher education
VO-ZD03	Access to the second level of higher education
VO-ZD04	Introduction of part time studies
VO-ZD05	Ensuring accessibility at all three levels of studies to students from vulnerable groups
VO-ZD06	Development of programmes to increase coverage in priority areas
VO-ZD07	Reducing the drop-out rate from higher education
VO-ZD08	Strengthening the public responsibility of HEIs for the quality of higher education
VO-ZD09	Introduction of quality indicators in HE
VO-ZD010	Improving the accreditation system
VO-ZD011	Improving the quality assurance system-establishing a national accreditation agency
VO-ZD 12	Introduction of performance analysis in education
VO-ZD 13	Efficiency improvement programme
VO-ZD 14	Defining the core of the profession (corpus of mandatory knowledge and competences)
VO-ZD 15	Improving student participation in raising the quality of the teaching process
VO-ZD 16	Establishing a system of professional practice
VO-ZD 17	Improving the criteria and procedures for the selection and promotion of teaching staff
VO-ZD 18	Development of support to teaching staff for teaching, professional and scientific work
VO-ZD 19	Coordinating the number of teachers by areas
VO-ZD 20	Introduction of intersectoral teacher engagement Увођење интерсекторског
VO-ZD 21	Improving the implementation of the concept “student in the centre of learning”
VO-ZD 22	Harmonisation of learning outcomes and student workload (ECTS)
VO-ZD 23	Improvements in the application of new learning methods, information technologies and e-learning
VO-ZD 24	Improving cooperation with employers and the economy
VO-ZD 25	Improving the research component of higher education
VO-ZD 26	Strengthening the innovative potential and increasing innovative outcomes
VO-ZD 27	Strengthening the entrepreneurial component of higher education
VO-ZD 28	Improving the international openness of the higher education system
VO-ZD 29	Establishing international mobility of teachers, students and researchers
VO-SS01	Reform of the organisational structure of vocational education institutions
VO-SS02	Strengthening the role of the conference of academies of applied studies

VO-SS03	Introduction of research into applied studies
VO-SS04	Adjusting the enrollment policy in the field of applied studies
VO-SS05	Improving the expected outcomes of applied studies
VO-SS06	Improving the competences of teaching staff at applied studies
VO-SS07	Strengthening the cooperation of HEIs in the field of applied studies with the economy
VO-AS01	Modernisation of study programmes in accordance with the needs of the labour market and the degree of scientific and technological development in the world
VO-AS02	Redefining key competences for Basic Academic Studies (Bachelor)
VO-AS03	Redefining Key Competences for Master Academic Studies (MAS)
VO-AS04	Encouraging the development and offer of quality study programmes
VO-AS05	Introduction of ranking of study programmes
VO-AS06	Improving teaching methodology and technology
VO-AS07	Preparation of freshmen for teaching in higher education
VO-AS08	Developing interest of potential students in Basic Academic Studies
VO-AS09	Introduction and possibilities of application of modules in master studies
VO-AS010	Introduction of short programmes (short cycle)
VO-AS011	Organisation of studies in the field of art
VO-DS01	Involvement of doctoral students in scientific research projects
VO-DS02	Strengthening research capacity and excellence
VO-DS03	Establishing cooperation with the commercial, business and public sectors
VO-DS04	Improving the quality control system of doctoral studies
VO-DS05	Development and organisation of “doctoral schools”
VO-DS06	Improving doctoral studies in the field of art
VO-DS07	Introduction of postdoctoral training

6. Adult education

6.1. Basic information on adult education, current situation and context

Adult education is part of the education system that enables adults to acquire competences and qualifications throughout their lives. It is regulated by the Law on Foundations of Educational System²⁹⁵ and the Law on Adult Education²⁹⁶. It is realised as formal and non-formal education and informal learning.

Formal elementary education is realised in schools that have been verified for that purpose (elementary schools and schools for elementary adult education) and is realised according to the model of functional elementary education of adults (hereinafter: FEEA) developed through the IPA 2008 project, the “Second Chance – Systemic Development of Functional Elementary Education of Adults in Serbia” (2010-2013). It is also realised in educational and correctional institutions and penitentiary institutions. Formal secondary education is also implemented in verified secondary schools and schools for secondary adult education, and schools for secondary adult education, in accordance with the prescribed goals, outcomes and competencies in the Law on Foundations of Educational System, and special laws. Within this education, there are also programmes of vocational training, specialist and master education in the duration of two-years and three-years, as well as retraining training programmes.

Non-formal education is realised on the basis of special, accredited programmes implemented by Publicly Recognised Organisers of Adult Education Activities (hereinafter: PROA AE) in order to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for personal development, employment and social inclusion. They are implemented in elementary and secondary schools that have the status of PROA and other organisations that meet the requirements of accreditation (e.g. employment agency, company, professional society, people’s, workers’, open university, university for the third age, centres and organisations for professional development, foreign language learning, information and communication technologies, chamber of commerce and industry, centre for career guidance and counselling, etc.).

The situation in adult education in 2019 is a reflection of the implemented measures and activities from the Action Plan for the Strategy for education development in Serbia by 2020 and the Annual Plan of Adult Education for 2019, as well as the reflection of activities carried out in connection with the Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia²⁹⁷ which was adopted in 2018²⁹⁸. The adoption of this law resulted in the adoption of amendments to the Law on Adult Education²⁹⁹.

²⁹⁵ Law on Foundations of Educational System (Official Gazette of RS, No. 88/2017, 27/2018 – second law, 10/2019, 27/2018 – and 6/2020).

²⁹⁶ Law on Adult Education (Official Gazette of RS, No. 55/2013, 88/2017, 27/2018 and 6/2020).

²⁹⁷ Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette of RS, No. 27/2018).

²⁹⁸ During 2019, the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia was prepared. This proposal was adopted in the meantime, and in January 2020, the Law on Amendments to the Law on the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia was adopted. Official Gazette of RS, No. 27/2018 and 6/2020).

²⁹⁹ Law on Adult Education (Official Gazette of RS, No. 55/2013, 88/2017, 27/2018 and 6/2020).

When it comes to innovations created by the adoption of the Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia³⁰⁰, the procedure for acquiring the status of a Publicly Recognised Organiser of Adult Education Activities (PROA) as another organization is delegated to the newly established Agency for Qualification, while primary and secondary schools continue to acquire the status of PROA through the procedure with the MoESTD, more precisely through the procedure of obtaining consent for expanded activity.

Also, during 2019, the Rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services³⁰¹ was adopted, which among others, are applied by schools and other organisations in adult education.

The rate of adult participation in education and training is measured through two types of surveys, which use two different methodologies. The first is the *Labour Force Survey*, according to which the participation of adults (from 25 to 64 years of age) in education and training is measured as the participation that was realised up to four weeks before the moment of the survey; the second is the *Survey on Adult Education*, according to which the participation of adults (from 25 to 64 years of age) in education and training is measured as the participation that was realised up to 12 months before the survey.

Official data from the Labour Force Survey (and presented in the EUROSTAT database) show that the participation rate of adults in education and training (four weeks before the survey) in 2019 in Serbia at the national level is 4.2%, which represents the unchanged situation compared to the previous year when the rate was 4.1%. This participation rate is below the average of the EU member states for 2019, which is 11.2%³⁰², but also below the national target of 7%, set in SEDS by 2020.

Official data on the adult participation rate collected by the Survey on Adult Education have not changed compared to 2018 (according to which the adult participation rate in some form of formal or non-formal education or training at the national level was 19.8% for 2016, which is slightly higher than in 2011 when it amounted to 16.5% but is also significantly lower than the average of EU member states which in 2016 was 45.2%)³⁰³, since the survey in Serbia was conducted in 2011 and in 2016 (and the data were published in 2013 and 2018), and the implementation of the next Survey on Adult Education is planned for 2022.

According to the data from the last Survey on Adult Education (2016), in some form of education and training in the 12 months preceding the survey, women (21.4%) participate slightly more than men (18%). The participation rate is highest among the population aged 25 to 34 (29.2%). Most often, a woman aged 25 to 34, with a higher education, and who is employed and lives in the city, participates in lifelong education.

³⁰⁰Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette of RS, No. 27/2018 and 6/2020).

³⁰¹ Rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services (Official Gazette of RS, No. 43/2019).

³⁰²Data on the participation rate of adults in education and training (four weeks before the survey) in 2019 are marked in the EUROSTAT database as provisional, i.e. as data that are in the phase before the final confirmation, and minimal deviations are possible.

Source: EUROSTAT, available at: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=trng_lfse_01&lang=en

³⁰³Source: SOS – Survey on Adult Education for 2011 and 2016, available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/vesti/20180530-anketu-o-obrazovanju-odraslih/?s=1105>

6.2. Progress made in the reporting period

6.2.1. Quality

During 2019, activities were implemented aiming at improving the quality of formal and non-formal adult education, as follows: improving the competencies of employees and staff engaged in adult education; improving international cooperation of educational institutions, employees and staff engaged in adult education at the European level.

Increasing and ensuring the quality of training programmes in 2019 was realised through the process of acquiring the status of publicly recognised organiser of adult education activities (PROA 00), more precisely through the application of the Rulebook on the detailed conditions for the programmes, staff, space, equipment and teaching aids for acquiring the status of a public recognised organiser of adult education activities³⁰⁴, which contributed to the expansion of the PROA network (PD-0001). In 2019, 28 institutions (six schools, six institutions for adult education - people's, workers' and open universities and 16 other organisations) received the status of PROA for 79 training programmes aimed at acquiring competencies and qualifications necessary for the labour market (PD-0001).

Trainings were also realised for PROA programme providers and professional associates who, in accordance with the provisions of the Rulebook on the detailed conditions for the programmes, staff, space, equipment and teaching aids for acquiring the status of a publicly recognised organiser of adult education activities³⁰⁵ (Article 7) so that engaged PROA staff would acquire competencies for working with adults within six months of acquiring the PROA status. Programme providers and professional associates, by attending accredited trainings from the catalogue of the Institute for Improvement of Education acquired competencies in the areas defined by the above Rulebook through seven modules (module 1 – basic principles, characteristics and learning styles of adults – 223 persons; module 2 – motivation in adult learning - 215 persons; module 3 – management of educational group – 217 persons; module 4 – methods and techniques of interactive educational work with adults – 213 persons; module 5 – methods and techniques for assessing student achievement – 196 persons; module 6 – planning, organisation and individualisation of the educational process, including persons with disabilities – 201 persons; module 7 – evaluation of the educational process – 195 persons).

During 2019, the implementation of measures aimed at reducing the dropout of students and improving the competencies of teachers, i.e. improving the functionalisation of elementary adult education (**PD-0002**) continued. In mid 2019, in cooperation with the TEMPUS office and the Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, the second round of training on basic andragogical skills was organised (module 1) for about 260 teachers from 28 schools that implement FEEA. These trainings started in 2018, when the first round of training was conducted in order to include about

³⁰⁴ Rulebook on the detailed conditions for the programmes, staff, space, equipment and teaching aids for acquiring the status of a publicly recognised organiser of adult education activities (Official Gazette of RS, No.89/2015)

³⁰⁵ Rulebook on the detailed conditions for the programmes, staff, space, equipment and teaching aids for acquiring the status of a public recognised organiser of adult education activities (Official Gazette of RS, No.89/2015).

500 teachers who lacked the necessary competencies to work with adults, i.e. who did not attend the mandatory “Integrated training programme for achieving FEEA”.

As part of the action establishing a system of evaluating the quality of institutions for formal and non-formal adult education, in 2019 were initiated talks on the adoption of bylaws related to evaluation of the quality of institutions for formal and non-formal education and a Rulebook on the quality assurance of institutions³⁰⁶ was adopted, which in adult education refers to public institutions, i.e. formal adult education (**PD-0005**).

The Rulebook on pedagogical assistant and andragogical assistant³⁰⁷ was also adopted, and according to the data obtained from MoESTD, an increase in the number of andragogical assistants in schools that implement FEEA for the school year 2019/2020 was approved, more precisely, the engagement of 34 andragogical assistants in 31 primary schools.

By adopting the above rulebooks, as well as the Rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services³⁰⁸ (**PD-0001**), Recommendations for the implementation of the plan for the implementation of standards of career guidance and counselling services (adopted by the National Qualifications Framework Council in 2019) and Instructions on methodology for determining needs for professional training in public administration bodies (2019 adopted by the National Academy of Public Administration), Professional Instruction on the formation of classes and the method of financing in primary and secondary schools for the 2019/2020 school year (adopted in 2019 by MoESTD), as well as the adoption of the FEEA programme as a measure of active employment policy within the National Employment Action Plan for 2020³⁰⁹, improved the quality of legislative framework for adult education.

The contribution to improving the quality of international cooperation is reflected in the inclusion of adult education in the Republic of Serbia into the European networks and projects.

During 2019, the Tempus Foundation organised several activities aimed at improving the quality of adult education, including the EPALE conference “Methods and techniques for the development of key competencies in primary adult education”; 11 accredited trainings “Basic andragogical skills” for teachers who implement the FEEA programme; four webinars in the form of lectures on order to approach and present the opportunities provided by the EPALE platform, etc.

During 2019, the implementation of international projects continued, which, inter alia, aim at increasing the prospects for employment through training (e.g. the project “From Education to Employment”³¹⁰ financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and “Faster recruitment and youth employment”³¹¹ financed by the German Government through the GIZ project).

Despite the activities whose implementation has contributed to improving the quality of adult education and the implementation of actions planned by the Action Plan for the implementation

³⁰⁶ Rulebook on the quality assurance of institutions (Official Gazette of RS, No. 20/2019).

³⁰⁷ Rulebook on pedagogical assistant and andragogical assistant (Official Gazette of R S, No. 87/2019).

³⁰⁸ Rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services (Official Gazette of RS, No. 43/19).

³⁰⁹ Available at: http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Nacionalni_akcioni_plan_zaposljavanja_2020.pdf

³¹⁰ Available at: <https://znanjemdoposla.rs/>

³¹¹ Available at: <http://odskoledoposla.org/obuke-za-zaposljavanje-kod-unapred-poznatog-poslodavca/>

of SEDS by 2020 there are still open issues such as, for example, collection of data on implemented activities (with the increase in the number of organisers it is more difficult to collect data due to different competent bodies over different organisers, e.g. the National Academy of Public Administration, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, etc.); workplace learning of adults and vocational training programmes (PD-0003); recognition of prior learning and introduction of short-cycle training courses to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, with ECTS (PD-0004).

6.2.2. Coverage

Primary adult education (according to the model of functional primary (elementary) education of adults) was realised in 65 primary schools (66 planned) on the territory of all school administrations, and all three cycles were attended by 5,633 adults, which is less than the number of planned places (6,315) and the number of participants in 2018 (6,090). All three cycles were successfully completed by 2,930 participants, which is 52%. Of the total number of participants, 48% did not complete the enrolled cycle, and the reasons for dropping out are the unresolved issue of transportation³¹² (the cost of transportation is high because the participants are unemployed and schools are often far from their residence), seasonal work (especially visible to students of the Roma population), which is the reason for dropout of the final exam, and it should be pointed out that one of the reasons for dropping out is the disorganisation of professional trainings in the second half of the third cycle, as envisaged by the FEEA programme. The dropout of students is also visible in the Penitentiary institutions, where 266 students were enrolled in all three cycles, and 187 graduated. Several factors contributed to the lower coverage of the FEEA programme and dropout, including the lack of qualified staff in FEEA schools and the lack and non-functioning of the network of these schools in relation to the number and territorial distribution of adults in need of this type of education³¹³. In order to improve the network of schools, MoESTD approved the establishment of 16 small classes in seven primary schools.

Extraordinary secondary education for students older than 17 was realised in 180 secondary schools, on the territory of 17 school administrations (more than in 2018), attended by 447 students (more than in 2018) and much less than planned places (2,776). A low dropout rate is marked here and one of the reasons for that is the high motivation of students to complete secondary education.

Retraining, additional training and specialization was realised in 310 secondary schools (significantly more than in 2018, when it was realised in 178 schools) and the number of adult students who attended the programmes was 8,554³¹⁴ (5,034 students were included in the retraining, 2,412 in the additional qualifications, and 1,108 in the specialisation programmes), which is also significantly more than in the previous year, when 4,018 students attended the programmes. However, the number of those who attended these programmes in 2019 is significantly lower than the number of planned places (planned 23,772), which may indicate a

³¹² According to MoESTD, activities have been undertaken to address the issue of transportation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the National Employment Service.

³¹³Source: Annual Adult Education Plan of the Republic of Serbia for 2019, available at:<http://www.mpn.gov.rs/obrazovanje-odraslih/>

³¹⁴Source: Report on Implementation of Annual Adult Education Plan of the Republic of Serbia for 2019.

lack of adequate mechanisms in secondary vocational schools to examine the local needs for labour.

Non-formal education programmes have been implemented within other organisations (with and without the status of PROA) and state bodies and public institutions such as various ministries, the National Employment Service (NES) and others. Non-formal education programmes have been implemented within other organisations (with and without the status of PROA) and state bodies and public institutions such as various ministries, the National Employment Service (NES) and others. In 2019, six schools received accreditation for 8 programmes, six adult education institutions (people's, workers' and open universities) for 35, and 16 other organisations (centres, companies, institutes, etc.) for 36 training programmes, which, compared to 2018, represents a decrease in the number of training programmes implemented by schools (19 programmes in 2018) and an increase in the number of training programmes adult education institutions (9 programmes in 2018) while the number of programmes of other organisations is approximate (30 programmes in 2018).

As regards NES, programmes and training in line with the National Employment Action Plan for 2019³¹⁵ were implemented in 2019.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS), in accordance with the competencies of the Education Service of CCIS, has implemented 237 non-formal education programmes at the request of businessmen.

Other non-formal education programmes have been implemented within state bodies – the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice and others. Trainings for civil servants are conducted by the National Academy of Public Administration. The number of providers of training with the assigned UEN (IBR) number was 578, by the end of 2019.

Within the framework of non-formal adult education, measures of the Government of the Republic of Serbia related to retraining in the field of information technology (IT) were also implemented. During 2019, trainings were realised within the retraining programme for employees³¹⁶ and a call was announced for the retraining programme for IT intended for persons with disabilities from the territory of the City of Belgrade.³¹⁷

Recognition of prior learning is one of the essential mechanisms for increasing the coverage of adult education. The aim of recognizing prior learning is to ensure the improvement of adult participation in lifelong learning processes, the individualisation of adult learning processes and pathways, and the mobility and employability of the workforce. The adoption of the Rulebook on

³¹⁵ Professional internship programme for a total of 4,448 persons; internship programme for young people with higher education for a total of 140 persons; internship programme for the unemployed with secondary education for a total of 217 persons; programme of acquiring practical knowledge for unskilled persons, redundancies and long-term unemployed persons for a total of 821 persons; labour market trainings for a total of 1054 persons; trainings at the request of the employer (for the unemployed) for a total of 529 persons; training for the needs of the employer for a total of 25 persons. Source: Report on Implementation of Annual Adult Education Plan of the Republic of Serbia for 2019. Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Izveštaj-GPOO-2019.-ŠTAMPA.pdf>

³¹⁶ Available at: <https://itobuke.rs/programi-obuka-prekvalifikacije-za-zaposlene-2019/>

³¹⁷ Available at: <https://itobuke.rs/poziv-za-obuku-prekvalifikacije-za-it-za-osobe-sa-invaliditetom/>

the recognition of previous learning was planned in the fourth quarter of 2018, but, unfortunately, this rulebook was not adopted.

6.2.3. Relevance

In 2019, within formal education, 310 secondary schools implemented retraining, additional training and specialisation programmes, which included 8,554 students, which is much less than the number of planned places (23,772). One of the reasons is poor, unrealistic planning that is not based on examining the labour market needs.

In non-formal adult education, the programmes were implemented by PROAs and the National Employment Service (NES). PROA offers a range of different programmes (training programmes for: computer work; maintaining safe and healthy working conditions; foreign languages; trade, catering and tourism, etc.) prepared in cooperation with local employers and social partners to respond to the requests of the local labour market. Despite the confidence in managing the programme and acquiring the qualifications and professional competencies,³¹⁸ there is still a discrepancy between the employers and organisers, because the trainings are not fully recognised by employers and NES, i.e. they do not provide the same chances in employment as formal education, which is the reason for lower interest of students in the programmes. NES implemented programmes aimed at increasing employability (professional internship programme, internship programme for young people with higher education, internship programme for the unemployed with secondary education, programme of acquiring practical knowledge for unskilled persons, redundancies and persons with long-term unemployment).

In order to increase the relevance of adult education, it is necessary in the coming period, to research the needs of the labour market and prepare and adapt the training programmes to those needs. It is also necessary to pay more attention to the promotion, visibility and availability of quality programmes.

As we mentioned, PROA trainings have not yet been fully recognised by employers and the National Employment Service, nor by the students. The planned promotional campaigns should improve this relationship, but the fulfillment of planned activities such as e-learning or diversification of course offers would probably also contribute to greater coverage.

The procedure for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) has not yet been established, i.e. no regulation has been adopted which should define the procedure for the recognition of prior learning (RPL). The competence for the development of the RPL concept was taken over from IIE (Institute for Improvement of Education) by the Qualifications Agency. In 2019, the Report on the analytical review of the document "Concept of development of prior learning"³¹⁹, was prepared, which is a step in that process. In the following period, there will be an agreement with the social partners on the proposed concept, the adoption of a bylaw, the piloting of the RPL procedure and final determination of the RPL procedure, in accordance with the results of the piloting. With the adoption of the National Qualifications Framework of Serbia, which recognizes the levels of qualifications that can be acquired through non-formal education and through RPL (levels 2, 3

³¹⁸Regulated by the Rulebook on the type, name and content of forms and the manner of keeping records and the name, content and appearance of forms of public documents and certificates in adult education (Official Gazette of RS, No. 89/2015).

³¹⁹The document was created in 2015 as a result of secondary vocational education reform projects.

and 5), establishing an RPL procedure would further encourage the inclusion of adults in non-formal education and informal learning.

The introduction of short training courses after which the student receives ECTS has not yet been implemented (**PD-0004**), although in early 2019 the Rulebook on organisation, implementation, issuance of certificates and record keeping procedure for short learning programmes ³²⁰ was adopted by the National Council for Higher Education, which forms the basis for the realisation of this action. Also, in order to improve the offer, in 2019 MoESTD adopted the Rulebook on standards of career guidance and counselling services, and the Council for the National Qualifications Framework of RS adopted the Recommendations for the implementation of the plan for the application of standards of career guidance and counselling services.

The Rulebook on Unified Education Information System³²¹ and the Rulebook on more detailed conditions in the single educational number allocation procedure³²² have been adopted and their application should contribute to collecting relevant information in the sector of formal adult education.

There is no information on activities undertaken within the actions aimed at Establishing “Universities” for Senior Citizens (**PD-0007**) and Development of adult educational and workplace learning training program (**PD-0003**) although certain “universities” for senior citizens exist within other organizations that are providing informal education and trainings for elderly persons, but the system lacks information on the number of beneficiaries and on the success of the programs realized. In addition to that, there are also workplace training programs (like the ones that are implemented within the Knowledge for Employment³²³ Project) in the “educational market”.

6.2.4. Efficiency

Although some of the adult education learning activities have been realized as distance activities, such as the trainings organized with the support from the Tempus Foundation for the professionals in adult education through the EPAL platform, there is no information on the realization of the action relating to establishing electronic learning and distance learning on the level of the system (either within the regular education, or within the adult education), and it can thus be concluded that it had not taken hold in 2019 either (**PD-0006**).

Establishing of electronic and distance learning would substantially contribute to the efficiency of adult education system, bearing in mind the significant differences in needs of individual learners/beneficiaries and their abilities (those who are willing to attend training, but are facing obstacles in the form of the physical distance). The quality assessment system for institutions for formal and informal adult education on all the levels is by all means a missing link for optimization of this form of education (**PD-0005**).

³²⁰ Rulebook on organisation, implementation, issuance of certificates and record keeping procedure for short learning programmes (Official Gazette of RS, No. 32/2019).

³²¹ The Rulebook on Unified Education Information System (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 81/2019)

³²² The Rulebook on more detailed conditions in the procedure of single educational number allocation procedure (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 81/2019).

³²³ Available at: <https://znaniemdoposla.rs/>

6.2.5. Measures not directly indicated in AP SEDS 2020

The Annual Plan of Adult Education of the Republic of Serbia Government for 2019 set out priority areas of education indicated in the following table.

Priority areas of education envisaged in the RS Government Plan for 2019 within the area of adult education

Priority 1	Improving competences and qualifications of unemployed and employed adults of significance for personal and professional development, employment, keeping employment and career advancement through programs and activities of life-long education and learning, all within:		
	The formal system of adult education, through:		The informal system of adult education and training, through:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional basic adult education; • Secondary adult education (part-time adult learners attending secondary education, adults older than 17 years); • Adult retraining, upskilling and specializations in secondary education. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realization of programs with Publicly Recognized Organizers of adult education activities; • Realization of informal education programs within the NES and other state authorities and institutions.
Priority 2	Quality improvement in adult education, through:		
	Improvement of competencies of the employed and temporarily engaged staff in adult education (program realizers – teachers, lecturers, trainers, instructors, expert associates, andragogical assistants)	Improvement of legislative framework in adult education and improvement of intersectoral cooperation in realization of strategic objectives in adult education	Furthering of international cooperation of educational institutions, employees and temporarily engaged staff in adult education on the European level through European networks and projects (Erasmus+, EPALE platform and other European projects and networks).

Some measures that were not directly envisaged in the AP SEDS 2020 were realized within the above mentioned priority areas. Those were the measures and activities of the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) related to efficiency improvements. In 2019, the NAPA adopted a Guide on methodology for the assessment of professional training needs in public administration authorities (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 32/2019), which provided the basis for establishing of a framework for professional training in public administration. In addition to that, the NAPA continued to implement the projects aimed at strengthening institutional capacities for realization of training courses in public sector (Training for State Service for 21st

Century in the Republic of Serbia Projects³²⁴, Support to NAPA in Professional Development of Public Administration³²⁵ etc.).

In compliance with its competences, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy, in cooperation with the National Employment Service and Faculty of Political Science of the Belgrade University, continued in 2019 the implementation of project “Methods of training for work: New chances for development of skills for adults in the Republic of Serbia”³²⁶ (2018-2020) which is aimed at creating the basis for the development of adult skills through implementation of methods for training for work.

6.3. Priorities for the year of 2019 – assessment of fulfilment

Priority 1 – Improving of competencies and qualifications of unemployed and employed adults of significance for their personal and professional development, employment, employment maintenance and career advancement through life-long education and learning programs and activities in formal education (FBEA, Secondary Adult Education (external secondary education students attending secondary adult education who are older than 17 years of age), adult retraining, additional qualification and specialization in secondary education).

Partially fulfilled. Despite the implementation of the programs and activities of adult education within the formal adult education, the number of adult secondary education students planned in the FBAE program, in the secondary adult education and in the retraining, additional qualification and specialization programs was not covered by the above education and other programs. In addition to that, as much as almost a half of the FBAE adult secondary education students quit the program before its end.

Priority 2 – Realization of programs and acquisition of competencies and qualifications by the employed and unemployed persons with a Publicly Recognized Organizer of adult education activities (PROA AE).

Fulfilled. According to data of the MoESTD, the total of 2251 candidate attended the programs with the PROA AE, the objectives of which were adjusted to the needs of the labour market. The beneficiaries of the programs were the natural persons, enterprises, employers, local self-government.

Priority 3 – Realization of programs and other activities of informal adult education and training within the NES, other state authorities and institutions, associations and chambers, through which the unemployed and employed persons acquire competences and qualifications of significance for their personal and professional development, employment, maintenance of employment and career advancement as well as for the career management and decision-making on further education and employment.

³²⁴ Available at: <https://www.napa.gov.rs/tekst/131/projekat-obuka-za-drzavnu-sluzbu-za-21-vek-u-republici-srbiji.php>

³²⁵ Available at: <https://www.napa.gov.rs/tekst/1155/projekat-podrska-naju-u-profesionalnom-razvoju-javne-uprave-jun-2019-oktobar-2020.php>

³²⁶ Available at: <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr/projekti/programi/program-zaposljavanja-easi>

Fulfilled. Informal education programs for acquiring competences and qualifications relating to personal and professional development, employment, career advancement and further education were realized by the NES, NAPA, CCIS and state authorities.

Priority 4 – Improvement of competences of employed and temporarily hired staff in adult education (program realizers – teachers, lecturers, trainers, instructors, expert associates, andragogical assistants).

Fulfilled. Trainings were realized on the basic andragogical skills (module 1) for approximately 260 teachers from 28 schools that are realizing FAET, as well as trainings (modules 1 to 7) for the hired staff within the PROA AE were realized with the aim of improving their competencies for the work with adults.

Priority 5 – Improvement of legislative framework in adult education and furthering of intersectoral cooperation on realization of strategic objectives in adult education.

Partially fulfilled. Although certain laws and regulations, primarily within the domain of the Law on National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia, were adopted, which has contributed to the improvement of the legislative framework for adult education and furthering of intersectoral cooperation as well, bylaws are still missing that should regulate the issues such as recognition of prior learning, on-the-job training, electronic learning, etc., which are directly relating to the adult education sector.

6.4. Priorities for 2020

Priority 1 – Improvement of competences and qualifications of the unemployed and employed adults through programs and activities of life-long learning, within the formal and informal education systems.

Priority 2 – Development of a system for recognition of prior learning.

Priority 3 – Establishing of National Resource Centres for life-long learning competencies (NRSC) in secondary vocational schools in the RS for the needs of the economy.

Priority 4 – Development of NQF and establishing of a Subregistry of PROA AE within the NQF Registry.

Priority 5 – Evaluation of the existing PROA accreditation system and preparation of proposals for its improvement.

Priority 6 – Defining of strategic objectives for adult learning and life-long learning for the period of 20 – 27/30 and drafting of the accompanying Action Plan.

Actions from the AP SEDS 2020:

PD-0001	Establishing of a network of publicly recognized organizers (PROA) of adult education activities.
PD-0002	Improvement of functionalization of primary adult education.
PD-0003	Development of adult education program and on-the-job training (workplace learning).

PD-0004	Introduction of short training courses for acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills, with ECTS.
PD-0005	Introduction of a quality assessment system for institutions of formal and informal adult education system at all levels.
PD-0006	Introduction of e-learning in adult education.
PD-0007	Establishing of “universities” for senior citizens.

III Progress Report for the field of Education of National Minorities

This section of the Report for 2019 is dedicated to the results directly related to other action documents of the RS Government, and specifically: the Action Plan for exercising of national minorities’ rights and Action Plan for implementation of Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the RS.

An overview of education of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia in general is presented first, followed by an overview of education of one of the most vulnerable social groups in the RS – Roma men and women.

1. Education of the members of national minorities

Education of the members of national minority communities is realized in compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, laws in the field of education and laws regulating rights and freedoms of the members of national minorities on the Republic level and on the level of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina³²⁷. In compliance with the legal framework, the members of the national minorities have the right to education in their native languages and scripts, as well as an option of bilingual education (in the language and script of the national minority concerned and in the Serbian language)³²⁸. Where education is realized in the language and script of a national minority, Serbian language learning is mandatory – the subject of *Serbian Language as non-native language*³²⁹.

In addition to the above mentioned legal framework, it is important to also mention the Action Plans that, among other things, include actions/activities relating to education of national minorities’ members, and specifically: the *Action Plan for implementation of Strategy for Social*

³²⁷ The Law on Determining Competences of the Autonomous Province (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 99/2009 and 67/2012 – decision of the CC) and the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (“Official Gazette of the FRY”, No. 11/2002, “Official Gazette of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro”, No. 1/2003 – Constitutional Charter and “Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 72/2009 – other law, 97/2013 – decision of the CC and 47/2018).

³²⁸ Article 5, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on Fundamentals of the System of Education and Upbringing.

³²⁹ Serbian as non-native language is a mandatory school subject in primary and secondary education and upbringing for the pupils and students that are acquiring education in one of eight languages of the national minorities. The status of this subject has been regulated by means of the rulebooks on the plan of instruction and learning, and/or by means of the curriculum in the school grades in which it is implemented.

*Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period of 2016-2025*³³⁰ and the *Action Plan for Chapter 23*³³¹.

The Action Plan for Implementation of Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025, in the part pertaining to education, defines a set of measures aimed at ensuring greater inclusion of children and young persons from the Roma national community in pre-university education and upbringing and in university education.

The Action Plan for Chapter 23 (Chapter 3.8. is dedicated to the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia) in addition to other things defines the activities relating to education for the implementation of which the MoESTD is in charge in cooperation with the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Institute for Improvement of Education and the National Councils of national minorities. Activities in this Action Plan are focused on: *textbooks in the languages and scripts of the national minorities* – adoption of the new law on textbooks (activity 3.8.1.6) and its full implementation (activity 3.8.1.7.); *rulebook on identification of discrimination in education* (activity 3.8.1.8.), *introduction of contents and topics whereby knowledge on national minorities living in the territory of the Republic of Serbia are developed* (activity 3.8.1.9), *establishing of an expert team that will be dedicated to the improvement of quality of the textbooks' contents, plans and programs* (activity 3.8.1.10), *quality improvement of the primary and secondary education in languages of national minorities* (activity 3.8.1.11), *improvement of learning of Serbian language as the second language in accordance with the methodology for foreign language learning* (activity 3.8.1.12), *organization of trainings for the teachers providing instruction in the languages of the national minorities* (activity 3.8.1.13.). **The following activities have been realized:** the new Law on Textbooks³³² has been passed (activity 3.8.1.6.) and it is now being implemented (activity 3.8.1.7.); Rulebooks on identification of discrimination in education³³³ have been adopted and they entered into force (activity 3.8.1.8.). Establishing of the Commission tasked with monitoring of education in languages of the national minorities within the National Education Council (activity 3.8.1.10.) can also be linked to the defined activities, along with the new concept of the curriculum for school subject of Serbian Language as Non-Native Language (activity 3.8.1.12.). **Other activities from the Action Plan for Chapter 23 are at the very beginning of implementation, particularly those focused on teachers' training.**

1.1. Education in languages of the national minorities

1.1.1. Attendance in the languages of the national minorities

³³⁰ Available at:

https://ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sites/default/files/dokument_file/akcioni_plan_za_primenu_strategije_za_so_cijalno_ukljufivanje_roma

³³¹ Available at: <https://www.mpravde.gov.rs/files/Akcioni%20plan%20PG%2023%20Treci%20nacrt-%20Konacna%20verzija1.pdf>.

³³² The Law on Textbooks ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 27/2018).

³³³ The Rulebook on more detailed criteria for identification of forms of discrimination by an employee, child, student or a third person in educational institutions ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 22/2016) and Rulebook on institutional actions in cases of suspected or established discriminatory behavior and insults to reputation, honour or dignity of a person ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 65/2018).

Primary education in the Republic of Serbia is realized in Serbian language and in eight languages of national minorities – in Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian and Croatian languages. Teaching is provided in primary schools that are realizing the educational process in a national minority language or in schools providing instruction in a national minority language.

In the school year of 2019/2020 education in:

- **Albanian language** was attended by **4,199** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac (Pčinje Administrative District) and Medveđa (Jablanica Administrative District);
- **Bosnian language** was attended by **11,940** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Novi Pazar, Tutin (Raška Administrative District), Sjenica and Prijepolje (Zlatibor Administrative District);
- **Bulgarian language** was attended by **72** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Bosilegrad (Pčinje Administrative District) and Dimitrovgrad (Pirot Administrative District), and **74** pupils attended bilingual Bulgarian-Serbian classes;
- **Hungarian language** was attended by **12,730** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Ada, Kanjiža, Kikinda, Novi Kneževac, Senta, Čoka (North Banat Administrative District), Žitište, Zrenjanin, Nova Crnja, Novi Bečej, Sečanj (Central Banat Administrative District), Kovačica, Kovin, Pančevo, Plandište (South Banat Administrative District), Apatin, Kula, Odžaci, Sombor (West Banat Administrative District), Bačka Topola, Mali Idoš, Subotica (North Bačka Administrative District), Bečej, Novi Sad, Srbobran, Temerin (South Bačka Administrative District) and Inđija (Srem Administrative District);
- **Romanian language** was attended by **789** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Zrenjanin, Sečanj (Central Banat Administrative District) and Kovačica, Pančevo, Plandište, Alibunar, Vršac, Bela Crkva (South Banat Administrative District);
- **Ruthenian language** was attended by **84** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Kula (West Bačka Administrative District) and Žabalj and Vrbas (South Bačka Administrative District);
- **Slovakian language** was attended by **2,329** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Zrenjanin (Central Banat Administrative District), Kovačica, Alibunar (South Banat Administrative District), Odžaci (West Bačka Administrative District), Novi Sad, Bačka Palanka, Bački Petrovac, Bač (South Bačka Administrative District) and Šid and Stara Pazova (Srem Administrative District);
- **Croatian language** was attended by **240** pupils in the territories of the municipalities of Sombor (West Bačka Administrative District) and Subotica (North Bačka Administrative District)³³⁴.

³³⁴ Information on municipalities and Administrative Districts was downloaded from the following website: <http://www.kt.gov.rs/sr/articles/opstine/> for Albanian language, and for Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian and Croatian languages were downloaded from the following website: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/etext.php?ID_mat=1272

Primary education in a national minority language in the **school year of 2019/2020** was attended by the total of **32,383** pupils, and 74 pupils attended bilingual classes in Bulgarian and Serbian languages³³⁵.

Primary education is completed by taking the final examination that can be taken, other than in Serbian language, in eight languages of the national minorities – in Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian and Croatian languages. **The final examination was taken in the national minority languages (in eight languages in which the process of instruction and learning is realized) by 3,999 pupils (5.9% of the total population of eighth graders who took the final examination in June 2019) from 137 primary schools.** The numbers of pupils who took the final examination in individual national minority languages differ, and the highest ones are the numbers of pupils who took the final examination in Hungarian (1,498) and in Bosnian (1,424) languages, and that number is extremely low for some other national minority languages (such as, for example, for Bulgarian, where only five pupils took the final examination in that language).

Just like in the previous years, pupils were given three tests: a test in the native language, a test in mathematics and a combined test.³³⁶ The test in the native language had different versions, depending on the curriculum for individual native languages. The highest score was recorded in the test in Albanian language, and substantial results were also achieved by the pupils who took the tests in Ruthenian and in Croatian languages. The lowest score was recorded in the test in Bosnian and Hungarian languages. The test in mathematics and the combined test were the same for all the pupils and these were translated from Serbian into the individual national minority languages. The highest scores were achieved in the test in mathematics by the pupils who took the test in Albanian language, and the lower score was that of the pupils who took the test in Romanian language. In the combined test, the pupils who took the test in Albanian language achieved the highest score, too, and the pupils who took the test in Hungarian had the lowest score. By comparing the scores from individual school years, it can be noted that the pupils' scores have been unchanging (such as, for example, in mathematics among the pupils who attended the classes in Croatian language), while the test scores of some other pupils were varied to a higher or lower degree (such as, for example, in Slovakian language and the scores for the combined test for the pupils who are members of the Hungarian national minority). A detailed report on the results of the final examination achieved by the pupils who are members of the national minorities in the school year of 2018/2019 is available in the website of the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation³³⁷.

³³⁵ Information on the number of pupils that attended classes in one of eight national minority languages and/or on those who attended bilingual classes were provided by the MoESTD.

³³⁶ The maximum overall total number of points for all the three tests taken together is 40, where the maximum scores for the tests in mathematics and native language are 13 points for each test respectively, and the maximum score for the combined test is 14 points.

³³⁷ The report is available at: <https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/izvestaj-o-rezultatima-za-skolsku-2018-2019.pdf>.

An overview of average achievements of pupils who are members of national minorities in the final examination in 2018 and 2019

Native language	The school year of 2017/2018 ³³⁸		The school year of 2018/2019	
	Language in which the examination was taken	Number of pupils who took the examination	Average score	Number of pupils who took the examination
Albanian	644	13.22	611	12.04
Bosnian	1,509	8.13	1,424	8.77
Hungarian	1,552	10.81	1,498	8.70
Romanian	82	8.80	79	9.21
Ruthenian	72	10.54	49	11.80
Slovakian	367	10.93	304	10.00
Croatian	26	13.85	29	11.76

Mathematics	The school year of 2017/2018		The school year of 2018/2019	
	Language in which the examination was taken	Number of pupils who took the examination	Average score	Number of pupils who took the examination
Albanian	644	9.22	611	11.79
Bosnian	1,509	8.21	1,424	10.43
Hungarian	1,552	8.32	1,498	9.40
Romanian	82	7.27	79	9.03
Ruthenian	72	8.85	49	9.28
Slovakian	367	9.01	304	9.99
Croatian	26	10.25	29	9.97

Combined test	The school year of 2017/2018		The school year of 2018/2019	
	Language in which the examination was taken	Number of pupils who	Average score	Number of pupils who

³³⁸ Average scores for the entire population of pupils in the Republic of Serbia who took the final examination in 2018 show that the pupils had the highest score overall in the combined test (with the average score of 12.60 points), followed by the score achieved in the test in Serbian language (where the average score was 11.99), and that the pupils were the least successful in the test in mathematics (with the average score of 10.04 points). Data for 2019 shows that the overall situation changed – pupils had the highest score overall in the test in Serbian language (11.92 points), followed by the score in the combined test (of 11 points) and the lowest score again achieved in the test in mathematics (10.46 points).

	took the examination		took the examination	
Albanian	644	11.31	611	11.08
Bosnian	1.509	11.33	1.424	10.75
Hungarian	1.552	10.08	1.498	8.69
Romanian	82	9.85	79	9.85
Ruthenian	72	11.19	49	9.90
Slovakian	367	11.10	304	9.74
Croatian	26	12.46	29	9.50

Source: Institute for Education Quality and Valuation

Pupils who are members of Bulgarian national minority take the final examination in Serbian language since 2016. In 2018, the final examination was taken by 81 and the average scores in the tests were as follows: *Serbian Language* (they have been taking the test in this language since 2016) 8.90; the test in mathematics 10.20; the combined test 11.10. Final examination in 2019 was taken by five pupils who were members of the Bulgarian national minority and these scores were not considered.

Secondary education, just like the primary education, is realized in Serbian language and in the languages of eight national minorities (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian and Croatian languages). Secondary education is realized in secondary schools (gymnasiums, mixed schools³³⁹ and secondary vocational schools) in which the educational work is realized in Serbian language and in a national minority language (classes provided with instruction in Serbian language and classes provided with instruction in a national minority language), and in a small number of secondary schools the entire educational work is realized in a language of a national minority. In the school year of 2019/2020, classes in:

- ***Albanian language*** were attended by **2,545** students;
- ***Bosnian language*** were attended by **3,085** students;
- ***Bulgarian language*** were attended by **151** students;
- ***Hungarian language*** were attended by **4,972** students;
- ***Romanian language*** were attended by **111** students;
- ***Ruthenian language*** were attended by **292** students;
- ***Slovakian language*** were attended by **378** students;
- ***Croatian language*** were attended by **198** students.

The total number of students who acquired their secondary education in a national minority language was **11,732**³⁴⁰. The territorial distribution of schools is mainly matched to the distribution of primary schools.

The plan for enrolment of students in secondary schools for the school year of 2019/2020 envisaged a higher number of future students than the actual one, in order to provide broader

³³⁹ Schools with gymnasium classes and classes attending vocational secondary educational courses.

³⁴⁰ Data on the number of students was obtained from the MoESTD.

range of available options for selection of educational profiles for students in the languages of the national minorities, which was observable in the Catalogue for enrolment of students in the 1st grade of secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia for the school year of 2019/2020, for the schools founded by the Republic of Serbia, Autonomous Province or a local self-government unit³⁴¹.

1.1.2. Elective subject/program Native language/speech with elements of national culture

Elective subject (relating to the grades in which teaching is conducted in accordance with the curriculum, in the school year of 2019/2020 those were the 3rd, 4th, 7th and 8th grades of the primary school), i.e. the *elective program* (relating to the grades in which teaching is conducted in compliance with the plan and program of teaching and learning, in the school year of 2019/2020 those were the 1st, 2nd, 5th and 6th grades of the primary school). *Native language/speech with elements of national culture* is organized for the students who are members of the minority national communities who are attending classes in Serbian language, in compliance with the laws regulating primary and secondary education and upbringing.³⁴²

Starting from the school year of 2019/2020, the program for *German Language with Elements of National Culture* was introduced, so that since the said school year, this elective subject/program has been attended by the members of 16 national groups – Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Bunjevac, Vlach, Hungarian, Macedonian, German, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Croatian and Czech.

Native language/speech with elements of national culture (number of students/schools) – last three school years

School year	Number of students	Number of schools
2019/2020	1,3826	374
2018/2019	1,3939	321
2017/2018	1,5950	310

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technical Development

The status of this elective subject/program has been enhanced by the adoption of the Technical Instruction on the formation of classes and method of financing in primary and secondary schools for the school years of 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

1.1.3. Serbian as non-native language

In 2018, a new concept of the subject of *Serbian as Non-Native Language* was adopted for the entire up-to-university education, which was developed by the IIE in cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Serbia. This teaching and learning program was produced in two formats according to the European Framework of

³⁴¹ Source: web site address - <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019-2020-KONKURS-ZA-UPIS-U-SREDNJU-SKOLU.pdf>.

³⁴² Article 12, paragraph 5 of the Law on Primary Education and Upbringing and Article 5, paragraph 5 of the Law on Secondary Education and Upbringing.

Reference for modern languages, and it was designed to enable the members of national communities who are attending educational courses in their native language to achieve functional knowledge of the language that would facilitate their inclusion in the broader community. A dictionary of compulsory lexicology was prepared for the first educational cycle that is available for downloading from the IIE website. The adoption of this program can be related to the activity 3.8.1.12. from the Action Plan for Chapter 23.

The IIE is monitoring the implementation of the new teaching and learning program for the subject of *Serbian as Non-Native Language* by performing analyses of the test results of the primary school pupils from the first and fifth, second and sixth grades and first grade gymnasium students from selected schools which are providing instruction in one of eight national minority languages. The analysis of the results of students' achievements covered the achievements from the beginning and the end of the school year and it showed that the biggest progress was achieved in homogenous communities (achievements better by 2% at the end of the school year) and/or in the classes that were learning Serbian language as non-native language according to the A Program³⁴³. Classes in heterogeneous communities and/or classes taught according to the B Program did not achieve any observable progress. The IIE Working Group concluded that the test results were also indicative of the teachers' attitude towards this subject and to the new program of teaching and learning. In addition to that, the analysis of the questionnaires filled out by the teachers showed that approximately 30% of the teachers had not attended training and that they had not provided instruction in compliance with the new program, which was among the indicators of suboptimal students' achievements.

In addition to the above, the IIE, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, designed and created a trainings' plan for advisors from school administrations for planning, realization, monitoring and assessment of the subject of *Serbian as Non-Native Language* according to the new models.

1.1.4. Textbooks the languages of national minorities

In April 2018, the new Law on Textbooks³⁴⁴ was adopted, which, among other things, prescribed establishing of a Centre for Low-Circulation Textbooks (activities 3.8.1.6. from the Action Plan for Chapter 23).³⁴⁵ In 2016, memoranda and annexes to the memoranda were signed between the MoESTD, Institute for Textbooks and eight National Councils of National Minorities (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Croatian) with the aim of providing the lacking textbooks in the national minority languages, whereby printing of 184 textbooks (some of which were translations into the language of a national minority, while some of the textbook titles were being originally prepared by the authors) was planned. By the end of January 2019, 123 textbooks out of the planned number were printed (67% of the planned

³⁴³ Program A – for the students with the native languages that do not belong to the group of Slavic languages and those who are living in homogenous communities (the basic level of the standard); Program B – for the students with the native languages belonging to the group of Slavic languages and who are living in multinational communities (the medium–proficient level of the standard).

³⁴⁴ The Law on Textbooks ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 27/2018).

³⁴⁵ The Centre was established as an organizational unit of the Public Enterprise Institute for Textbooks and its primary task is to provide textbooks in the languages and scripts of the national minorities.

total).³⁴⁶ Slowing down of the realization of the memoranda signed has come as the result of a reform of the teaching and learning plans and programs for primary school. In the IIE and MoESTD needs for new textbooks that will be prepared according to the new plans and programs of teaching and learning have been mapped.

In accordance with the new teaching and learning programs, so far the textbooks for mandatory subjects and elective programs in the following languages have been approved:

Approved textbooks in the languages of national minorities for mandatory subjects and elective program

Language of the national minority	Number of textbooks approved
Albanian language	13
Bosnian language	78
Bulgarian language	33
Bunjevac language	2
Hungarian language	39
Macedonian language	1
Roma language	4
Romanian language	15
Ruthenian language	14
Slovak language	24
Slovenian language	1
Croatian language	44
Czech language	1
Total	269

Source: The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

Textbooks approved according to the old curricula will remain valid for the grades and subjects for which there are still no textbooks produced in accordance with the new plans and programs of teaching and learning. According to the revised Catalogue of Textbooks in the national minority languages, 1,112 textbooks will be used in the school year of 2020/2021³⁴⁷.

A bilateral agreement between the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Serbia in the field of education is currently being agreed between the two parties as the result of a series of working meetings, two of which were organized on the ministerial level. The agreement defines that the parties will support harmonization of contents in the textbooks which are related to the national culture, history, geography and ethnography of the two countries.

1.2. Progress achieved in the reporting period

1.2.1. Teaching and learning

³⁴⁶ Printing of 184 textbooks based on memoranda signed was a part of another measure of the Sectoral Reform Agreement – IPA 2016 and it was planned to print all the 184 textbooks by the end of 2019.

³⁴⁷ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PRELIM-KATALOG-MANJINE-2020-21.pdf>.

In the course of 2019 and in the beginning of 2020, by-laws were passed which are prescribing the teaching and learning program for the mandatory subject of *Native Language and Literature* in primary and secondary education (for the grades in which instruction is provided in compliance with the teaching and learning plan). Programs have also been adopted for *Native Language/Speech with Elements of National Culture* that has the status of an elective program in primary school and in the teaching and learning plan for gymnasium³⁴⁸ belongs to the segment of other forms of educational work.

In 2019, IEQV, in cooperation with the National Councils for national minorities, developed standards of achievements for the end of the first cycle of primary education and upbringing for the subject of *Native Language* (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian and Croatia), and in the beginning of February 2020, the National Education Council provided the positive opinion for this document, which is expected to be published in the official gazette.

In 2019, amendments and supplements to the Rulebook on contents and method of keeping records and issuing of public documents in primary school were adopted, based on which the primary schools can keep their records by electronic means and bilingually³⁴⁹; diplomas issued for the end of school years were created bilingually – in Serbian and in a national minority language (for eight languages of national minorities in which the teaching and learning process is realized); esDnevnik (electronic system grade book) has been translated into eight national minority languages in which the teaching and learning process is realized.

In accordance with the adopted Technical Instruction on the formation of classes and the method of financing in primary and secondary schools for the school year of 2019/2020³⁵⁰, teaching of this elective subject/program is realized based on the results of a pool for parents of all the pupils/students is filled out by September 5 of the current school year. Where the group of pupils/students for the subject/program *Native Language/Speech with Elements of National Culture* on the level of a school grade comprises of less than 15 pupils/students, the school shall address a reasoned request (for the approval of a group consisting of less than 15 pupils/students) to the competent school institution by September 16 of the current school year. In addition to the group formed on the level of a school grade, a school may form a heterogeneous group consisting of pupils/students of different ages (for example, on the level of two or more grades, and/or on the level of the first or second cycle). A heterogeneous group comprising of pupils/students from two grades may comprise of up to 15 pupils/students, and a group comprising of pupils/students from three or four grades may comprise of up to 10 pupils/students. The heterogeneous groups can also be formed on the level of a number of schools in a single local self-government upon approval from the competent school

³⁴⁸ Rulebook on amendments and supplements to the Rulebook on the program of teaching and learning for the first grade of gymnasium (“Official Gazette of the RS – Educational Gazette”, No. 8/2019).

³⁴⁹ Rulebook on amendments and supplement to the Rulebook on contents and method of keeping records and issuing of public documents in primary schools (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 56/2019).

³⁵⁰ Technical Instruction on the formation of classes and the method of financing in primary and secondary schools for the school year of 2019/2020 is available on the following web address: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Strucno-uputstvo-o-formiranju-odeljenja.pdf>

administration. Support in the process of pool taking by the parents and formation of groups can also be provided by a national minority Council.

Towards the end of February 2020, the MoESTD published the Revised Catalogue of textbooks in the languages of national minorities for pre-school, primary and secondary education and upbringing for the school year of 2020/2021³⁵¹ which comprises of the textbooks approved according to the new teaching and learning programs, as well as the textbooks which are applicable until the approval of new ones.

In 2019 programs of specialist professional training were realized too, for the teachers who are providing instruction in the national minority languages, and specifically: the *Training Program for teachers for the realization of learning outcomes oriented teaching*; *Teachers' training for application of general standards of achievements for the end of secondary education for the subject of Native Language and Literature* (the program has been approved by the MoESTD as a program of public interest; the training has been successfully completed by 89 teachers from 65 schools); *Digital Classroom/Digitally Competent Teacher – introduction of electronic grade textbooks and digital educational materials*.

In addition to the realized training for application of general standards of achievements for the subject of *Native Language and Literature*, the IEQV prepared, in cooperation with the representatives of the National Councils of the national minorities, and uploaded on its web site the manuals in electronic form for Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian and Croatian languages.

With the aim of strengthening of language competencies of teachers, the MoESTD and the Institute of Pedagogy of Vojvodina prepared in 2019 a program of specialized professional training – *Training Modules for development of language competencies of the teachers teaching classes in the languages of national minorities*. This program will be realized based on the results of a Public Call by the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy³⁵² and preparation of the online training is in progress and it has been planned to train at least 3,000 teachers. This activity is related to another measure of the Sectoral Reform Agreement – IPA 2016 and preparation of the training program should have been completed by the end of 2017, and it had been planned to train more than 4,000 teachers (teachers providing instruction in the national minority languages in primary and secondary schools) by the end of 2019. Failure to realize these activities has resulted in the failure to withdraw the entire amount of financial means planned for 2017 and 2018 (a report for 2019 by the international evaluators of this Program is expected). In addition to that, this activity is related to the Action Plan for Chapter 23 – *organization of training for teachers providing instruction in national minority languages* (3.8.1.13.).

In 2019, the MoESTD continued establishing cooperation with the Ministries in charge of education in Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary and Romania. These agreements include, among other things, the measures and activities that are aimed at promoting strengthening of language competencies and in relation to that, expert working groups will be formed that will agree on the modalities of language learning within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching and assessment³⁵³, establishing continuous cooperation with a

³⁵¹ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PRELIM-KATALOG-MANJINE-2020-21.pdf>

³⁵² Civil society organisation.

³⁵³ Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1bf>.

view to professional training of employees with the educational institutions and recognizing acquired points by the competent institutions of both the countries.

In its tenth meeting, NEC appointed the *Commission tasked with monitoring education in national minority languages*. Forming of this Commission can be related to the Action Plan for Chapter 23, activity *establishing of an expert team dealing with quality improvement of the contents of textbooks and curricula* (3.8.1.10).

Within the project "Implementation of recommendations from the *Study for Improvement of Teaching and Learning Serbian as Non-Native Language in Primary Schools in Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa*" which is realized by the MoESTD and the Service of Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa with the support from the European Progress Program and Group 484, in the beginning of the school year of 2019/2020 engagement of six assistants for the subject of *Serbian as Non-Native Language* continued in four primary schools in the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac³⁵⁴. The assistants are providing support to teachers in realization of teaching of Serbian as non-native language in classes attending fourth to eighth grades (the total of 37 classes with 667 pupils). Based on an analysis of results of pupils' testing and interviewing of teachers and assistants, recommendations were created, among which those relating to: the inclusion of new, i.e. increasing of the number of assistants; encouraging teachers to apply knowledge acquired in trainings in the classes they teach, in particular those relating to approach to teaching and learning; testing of pupils as a continuous process.

1.2.2. Interculturalism, tolerance, desegregation

Interested students in the Republic of Serbia have the opportunity to learn the languages and culture of national minorities through various forms of extracurricular activities or optional classes, through winter and summer schools, camps, workshops or other forms of work.

The Council of Europe has launched a new project, *Quality Education for All*, to support schools in strengthening democratic competences³⁵⁵ and introducing democratic culture, combat discrimination, as well as establish mechanisms for monitoring these measures, drawing on the results of the previous project *Promoting Democratic Culture in Schools*³⁵⁶. It is planned that the

³⁵⁴Assistants were engaged in the following schools: Ibrahim Kelmendi Elementary School and Seljami Halaci Elementary School - Presevo Municipality, Muharem Kadriu Elementary School and Naim Frasheri Elementary School - Bujanovac Municipality.

³⁵⁵According to the framework of democratic competences of the Council of Europe, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/competences-for-democratic-culture-srp/1680782138>

³⁵⁶The project *Encouraging Democratic Culture in Schools* was implemented in the period 2017-2019 in 20 pilot schools (10 primary and 10 secondary schools) which implemented a series of measures and activities to strengthen democratic competencies and the introduction of democratic culture, the fight against discrimination, as well as establish mechanisms for monitoring these measures. These pilot schools promoted the concept of democratic competencies and democratic culture through teaching and extracurricular activities, as well as through cooperation with the local community, and students learned how to defend their democratic rights and take responsibility. Within the project, the publication "How to achieve a democratic culture in schools – examples of good practices" was made and published, available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/priru%C4%8Dnik-primera-dobre-prakseDemokratska-kultura-u-%C5%A1kolama.pdf>

existing 20 pilot schools (schools from the first phase of the project) continue their own efforts and expand their practices to 40 new pilot schools.

Within the project of the Council of Europe and the European Union³⁵⁷ *Strengthening the Protection of National Minorities in Serbia*, a brochure **on education opportunities in the languages of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia** was prepared and translated into the languages of national minorities (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Bunjevac, Hungarian, Macedonian, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Croatian, Czech and German), as well as the Wallachian dialect. It will be printed bilingually (in Serbian and the minority language) and distributed to parents. An expert report *Analysis of existing models of education in minority languages in Serbia and other countries, with recommendations for amending existing models of education in minority languages* was prepared and presented. It contains examples of good practices from European countries, an overview of the current situation in education of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia and the views of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and national councils of national minorities.³⁵⁸

Within the project *Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization – Cross-Sectoral Cooperation and Strengthening of Educational Institutions for Prevention and Response* (supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO), a round table on "Capacity Development" for the prevention of violent extremism through education in secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia – laying the foundations", which included 27 participants from 18 school administrations, was held at the end of 2019. A training called *Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization* (list of programs of public interest) was accredited and two trainings for teachers and professional associates were held (34 participants from 17 high schools). The project also included the involvement of students (24 students). A final round table was held at which the experiences from the project were analyzed and recommendations were given for further preventive activities in the education system.

1.2.3. Education of Migrant Students – Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The education of migrant children and asylum seekers is regulated by laws and international conventions and recommendations. In May 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development developed the *Professional Instruction on the Inclusion of Refugee/Asylum Seeker Students in the Education System*.

At the end of 2019, there were 173 migrant students/asylum seekers in educational institutions of the Republic of Serbia (118 in primary schools, 50 in secondary schools and five in the preparatory preschool program). The largest number of migrant students is in educational institutions in the City of Belgrade (36%).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development takes a number of measures in order to improve the availability and quality of education of migrant students and asylum seekers. Through the project "MADAD 2 – Continuation of support to increase and improve the capacities for managing the migrant crisis in the Republic of Serbia" (cross-sector project funded by the MADAD fund), various activities in the education sector were implemented. **Development**

³⁵⁷Horizontal Facility (HF 33).

³⁵⁸This document also contains recommendations formulated in relation to: models of education in the language of the national minority, in relation to the education of the majority population, existing didactic and pedagogical measures, scientific, administrative and political measures in the Republic of Serbia, and special emphasis was placed on the need to find other solutions, such as bilingual models of education that are adapted to the situation of education in minority languages in the country.

of the Serbian language as a foreign language – Teaching and Learning Curriculum for the Course Serbian as a Foreign Language was adopted³⁵⁹, designed according to the years of learning the Serbian language and not according to the grades. Achievement Standards for the Course Serbian as a Foreign Language for the end of primary and general secondary education and for the end of adult education³⁶⁰ have also been developed. In order to provide support to teachers for the implementation of the course Serbian as a foreign language, a training course program was accredited – *Teacher Training for the Application of the Standards of Educational Achievements for Serbian as a Foreign Language and the Teaching and Learning Curriculum for Serbian as a Foreign Language* (the program is of public interest), attended by 100 Serbian and foreign language teachers. The activity **Improving the capacities of educational institutions for the inclusion of migrant students in the education system in the Republic of Serbia** was also implemented, thus achieving sustainable integration of migrant students into the education system through improving the professional competencies of teachers and supporting schools attended by migrant students. The activity was implemented through a professional development course *Improving the capacities of educational institutions to include migrant students in the education system* approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (three modules in which 1390 teachers and professional associates participated). **Within the same activity, 51 primary and secondary schools were strengthened for the admission and education of migrant students through the award of 52 small grants.** These grants provided for the teaching aids and didactic materials that enabled better work with migrant students who do not speak the language of instruction. The teachers created their own didactic material; 400 books and textbooks, 450 sets of school supplies and 250 sportswear sets were provided for migrant students; interpreters were hired to help include migrant students in the teaching process, etc. All planned activities of small grants were aimed at developing interculturalism and tolerance, as evidenced by 300 workshops on interculturalism, tolerance, friendship, introduction to the culture of migrant students, anti-discrimination, nonviolent communication, developing empathy and providing support to migrant students and 100 public events with authentic music, cuisine, customs, dance – introduction to the culture and tradition of migrants. Support was also provided by **mentors (10), advisors-external associates**, whose engagement enabled continuous monitoring of the inclusion of migrant students and the quality of work of schools in which these students are educated. The project promoted examples of good practices and achievements of migrant students and asylum seekers through the development of a manual for teachers – Good Practice Catalogue³⁶¹. Given the importance of education for sustainable social inclusion of the migrant population, including minors, especially unaccompanied migrants as a particularly vulnerable social group, during the MADAD project measures were taken to **enrol migrants in secondary schools** – they were enrolled in secondary schools after the second enrolment round, in the schools that are close to the centres in which they are accommodated.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development is also included in the project "Support to the Migration Management System in the Republic of Serbia" (a project funded by IPA II funds – *Special measures for strengthening the response capacities of the Republic of Serbia to cope effectively with the increased mixed migration flows*). The planned time for the project implementation is 18 months (January 2020 – June 2021), and the goals related to education are: improving the capacities of professionals in the education system to provide adequate support to

³⁵⁹Rulebook on Teaching and Learning Curriculum for the Course Serbian as a Foreign Language ("Official Gazette of RS – Education Gazette", No. 11/2019)

³⁶⁰Rulebook on General Achievement Standards for the Course Serbian as a Foreign Language for the end of the first and second cycle of compulsory education, general secondary education and primary adult education ("Official Gazette of RS – Education Gazette", No. 11/2019)

³⁶¹Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MADAD-katalog-dobre-prakse.pdf>.

migrants, creating a stimulating and tolerant educational environment and improving the quality of migrant education at all levels of education.

1.3. 2019 Priorities – Fulfilment Assessment

Priority 1 – Implementation of new professional development training programs for teachers teaching in primary and secondary schools in the minority language, which focus on improving the linguistic capacities for subjects tested at the graduation exam, while improving bilateral cooperation with home countries to increase the quality of training for teachers teaching in the minority language.

Partially implemented. During 2019, professional training course *Training modules for the development of language competencies of teachers teaching in the minority languages* was prepared; professional development course was also accredited. The course will be implemented by the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy, which was, on a public competition, selected as a training provider; online training is being prepared for the implementation of this program.

Priority 2 – Continuation of school support activities and increase of teachers' competencies for providing quality education of migrant students with the implementation of training courses for the subject Serbian as a Foreign Language, as well as for increasing methodological and other competencies in working with students.

Partially implemented. Through the implementation of the activities of the MADAD 2 project, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development resolved structural issues in terms of improving and managing the process of education of migrant children and students, as well as in terms of increasing quality education. The implementation of MADAD 2 activity *Development of Serbian as a Foreign Language* has improved the system of education and competences of teachers through the creation and adoption of teaching and learning curriculum for the subject Serbian as a Foreign Language and training of 100 Serbian and foreign language teachers to apply the new curricular framework. The positive practice of the MADAD 2 activity has been translated into amendments to the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System in the part which prescribes additional support for students who do not know the language. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development continues to improve the availability and quality of education of migrant students/asylum seekers through a new project *Support to the Migration Management System in the Republic of Serbia* under the Special Measure to strengthen the capacities of the Republic of Serbia to respond effectively to increased mixed migration flows, approved under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II). It is planned to train 300 teachers for the application of the teaching and learning curriculum for the subject Serbian as a Foreign Language.

Priority 3 – Increasing the number of textbooks in minority languages available to members of national minorities through the establishment of cooperation with the Centre for Low-Circulation Textbooks and improving cooperation with publishers and the Institute for the Improvement of Education.

Partially implemented. At the end of February 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development published a Revised Catalogue of Textbooks in the Minority Languages for the 2020/2021 school year, which contains a list of the textbooks in the minority languages approved by the decision of the Minister which are in line with the teaching and learning curricula, as well as the textbooks that are not in line with the teaching and learning curricula but are still in use because the new ones have not been prepared yet. There are 1,112 valid textbooks that will be in use in the 2020/2021 school year, of which 269 textbooks were made based on the teaching and learning curricula.

1.4. 2020 Priorities

Priority 1 – Improving teachers' competencies for online teaching and other forms of distance learning, especially for students belonging to vulnerable social groups (children whose families live in unhygienic settlements, migrants/refugees/asylum seekers, national minorities, etc.), in order to increase the availability of teaching in crisis situations.

Priority 2 – Improving the availability and quality of education in the minority languages through improved teacher competencies and the work of the Centre for Low-Circulation Textbooks by printing low-circulation textbooks in the minority languages according to the reformed teaching and learning curricula.

Priority 3 – Improving the availability and quality of education of children and students with a migrant/asylum seeker background through the allocation of grants to schools, mentoring support to schools and increasing the competencies of teachers and professional associates.

Priority 4 – Strengthening the educational role of the school through the development of tolerance, prevention of violence, discrimination and segregation.

Activity from the Action plan for the implementation of the Education Development Strategy in Serbia/AP SEDS 2020:

VA-NM	Development of education of national minorities through teaching in the minority languages and learning the minority languages in accordance with the law.
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2. Education of Roma men and women

For more than 15 years, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has been taking measures aimed at improving the position of students of the Roma national minority in the education system. With a comprehensive approach, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development solves this issue, which in practice means that the measures that are initiated rely on each other and form a circle of support that targets all problems in the education of Roma children. Roma girls are a particularly vulnerable group, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development seeks to ensure that the measures that are initiated have a gender-sensitive characteristic.

2.1. Progress made in the reporting period

In order to improve the position of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, the Government adopted the *Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025* and the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy (the Action Plan was adopted for 2017 and 2018³⁶²). The Action Plan defines the following goal for the field of education: *Ensuring full inclusion of children and youth from the Roma community in quality preschool, primary and secondary education, greater number of Roma men and women in the student population and providing support to schooling of young people and adults who have not been educated or have dropped out of school, with the introduction of effective and efficient mechanisms to combat discrimination and create conditions for the enjoyment of all minority rights for Roma men and women in the education system*. Six operational objectives have been defined within this goal, including measures and activities whose implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, which undertakes activities in order to achieve the defined operational goals, measures and activities.

2.1.1. Measures to increase enrolment rate in preschool and primary education

In order to increase the number of children included in preschool education, the legislative framework has been improved, especially visible in the Law on Preschool Education³⁶³ and the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children³⁶⁴. The law regulating preschool education

³⁶²Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sh/node/19971>

³⁶³Law on Preschool Education ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 18/2010, 101/2017, 113/2017-other law, 95/2018-other law and 10/2019)

³⁶⁴Law on Financial Support to Families with Children ("Official Gazette of RS ", No. 113/2017 and 50/2018)

prescribes various forms of education, which enables preschool institutions to develop full-day and half-day courses, as well as courses that meet the specific needs of the child, family and community, with the aim of providing quality shorter (four-hour) courses to increase the inclusion of all children in the community, especially children from vulnerable social groups. The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children has significantly improved support for the inclusion of children from vulnerable social groups in the preschool system by prescribing reimbursement of the preschool costs (verified by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development) for children: without parental care, with development issues, with disabilities, beneficiaries of financial social assistance. In addition, support in the form of reduced preschool costs is prescribed for children from materially disadvantaged families. The law also prescribes that the right to reimbursement of costs is taken care of by the town, i.e. the municipality.

Due to data indicating that the inclusion of children in preparatory preschool education is not complete, with the inclusion of children from vulnerable social groups, especially children of the Roma national minority significantly lower, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in cooperation with partners, starting in 2015 has been conducting a continuous campaign to increase the number of children included in this course. The campaign includes the printing of flyers and posters in Romani and Serbian, communication with preschools and other institutions involved in the care of children and families at the local level, the formation of local teams, development and implementation of action plans, exchange of experiences between local communities in which the inclusion is complete and those in which it is not, etc. The campaign activities are also aimed at preschool institutions in order to encourage: promoting the importance of early inclusion of children in preschool education, especially children aged 3 to 5.5; increasing the number of educational groups in which shorter preschool courses are implemented that respond to the needs of children, families and the community; finding ways to support the regularity of attending educational courses.

Thanks to the improved legislative framework and campaigns, as well as projects aimed at increasing the number and improving the quality of social care for children at the local level, the data indicate that the number of Roma children in preschool education has increased, including Roma girls **(operational objective 1. measures 1, 2 and 3 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women).**

The Law on Primary Education³⁶⁵ has facilitated the procedures for enrolment in primary school, especially for children from vulnerable social groups and children belonging to national minorities. Children from vulnerable social groups can enrol in school without the parental proof of residence and the necessary documentation, but with mandatory proof of health examination; the examination of the child is performed in the mother tongue using standard procedures and instruments, and if there is no possibility to examine the child in the mother tongue, the school hires an interpreter on the proposal of the national council of the national minority. During primary education, depending on the needs, support measures are adopted through the development of an individual educational plan, and it is possible to include other institutions, such as the centre for social work and health facilities. All this contributed to the increase of the number of students of the Roma national community in primary education **(operational objective 2. measure 1 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women).**

In addition to the given measures, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development also passed bylaws in order to prevent discrimination in education and ensure the

³⁶⁵Article 55 of the Law on Primary Education ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 55/2013, 101/2017, 10/2019 и 27/2018-other law)

application of the given legal solutions. In the field of prevention of discrimination and segregation, two bylaws were adopted: the Rulebook on detailed criteria for recognizing forms of discrimination by an employee, child, student or third party in an educational institution³⁶⁶ and the Rulebook on the institution's actions in case of suspected or identified discriminatory behaviour and insults to the reputation, honour or dignity of the person³⁶⁷ (**operational goal 3. measure 1 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women**).

2.1.2 Pedagogical assistants

Hiring pedagogical assistants in preschool and primary school institutions is part of the systemic affirmative action measures prescribed by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (ZOSOV) and bylaws. The work of pedagogical assistants began at the beginning of the new millennium (2000s through work aimed at children and students of the Roma national minority) through projects of non-governmental organizations and with the support of international organizations and MoESTD. Part of the systemic measures became the adoption of ZOSOV in 2009, when the description of their engagement was expanded, from children belonging to the Roma national minority to all children who need support. **The legal status of pedagogical assistants is regulated by the adoption of a bylaw in 2019 – Rulebook on pedagogical and andragogical assistants**³⁶⁸. The Rulebook defines the scope of work of a pedagogical assistant with children and students of the Roma national minority, especially in providing assistance and additional support in teaching and extracurricular activities, as well as providing assistance and support to teachers in working with students in order to improve their work with this group of children, i.e. students. The job description of the pedagogical assistant also includes continuous cooperation with the parents of children/students in order to strengthen the family and improve the social and emotional status of children and students in the institution. In cooperation with the Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (SIPRU), an internet platform was developed for the database in which data on the work of pedagogical assistants working with Roma children and students would be collected. Data on the educational achievements of Roma students will be entered into the database by pedagogical assistants at least twice during the school year. The Rulebook also defines the necessary professional qualification of a pedagogical assistant for work with children and students of the Roma national minority – a person who has acquired a four-year secondary education, knows the Romani language and has mastered the training program. The training program is implemented by the University of Kragujevac, Centre for Lifelong Learning, which has an accredited training of 36 ECTS. The harmonization of this with other bylaws is in progress, such as the rulebooks on the census and the Catalogue of jobs (in 2018, the position of the pedagogical assistant was included in the Regulation on the Catalogue of jobs in Public Services and other Organizations in the Public Sector³⁶⁹).

In addition, due to the importance of preschool education, a special program for pedagogical assistants for work in preschool institutions has been accredited through cooperation with the

³⁶⁶Rulebook on detailed criteria for recognizing forms of discrimination by an employee, child, student or third party in an educational institution ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 22/2016)

³⁶⁷Rulebook on the institution's actions in case of suspected or identified discriminatory behaviour and insults to the reputation, honour or dignity of the person ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 65/2018)

³⁶⁸Rulebook on the pedagogical and andragogical assistant ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 87/2019).

³⁶⁹Rulebook on the Catalogue of Jobs in Public Services and Other Organizations in the Public Sector ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 81/2017, 6/2018 and 43/2018).

international organization Save the Children for the Northwest Balkans (SCNWB) and the *Available and quality education for Roma girls and boys* Project (2017-2019). Educators who graduated in Romani at the College of Vocational Studies and Vocational School "Mihajlo Palov" in Vršac are also included.

In the 2019/20 school year, the total of 261 pedagogical assistants were engaged, 221 in primary school and 40 in preschool institutions. A total of 229 pedagogical assistants are financed from the budget of the Republic of Serbia and 32 from the budget of local self-governments³⁷⁰. The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities is engaged in the inclusion of pedagogical assistants in mobile teams for Roma inclusion, in those local self-government units in which they have not been involved so far. **(operational objective 2, measure 1 from the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the social inclusion of Roma men and women).**

2.1.3. Optional syllabus "Romani language with elements of national culture"

The adopted rulebooks on the curriculum for primary education also contain the syllabus for the optional syllabus of the *Romani language with elements of national culture*. Selected representatives of the National Council of the Roma National Minority participated in the development of this curriculum with the expert support of advisors from the Institute for the Improvement of Education (IIE) and MoESTD. Based on the positive opinion of the National Education Council, the Minister approved these syllabi for all grades of primary education³⁷¹ **(operational objective 4, measure 1 from the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the social inclusion of Roma men and women).**

The number of students studying this optional syllabus in primary education is shown in the table.

School year	Number of students	Number of schools
2017/2018 ³⁷²	2252	72
2018/19	2860	74
2019/20	2553	68

Source: MoESTD

In accordance with the approved syllabi, textbooks for the first cycle of primary education have been prepared, as follows: Picture book for the first grade of primary school "Romani language with elements of Roma national culture"; "Romani language with elements of national culture" – Reading book for the 2nd grade of primary school for teaching and learning in Romani language; "Romani language with elements of national culture", textbook for the third grade of primary school in Romani language; "Romani language with elements of national culture", textbook for the fourth grade of primary school in Romani. All of the above textbooks are in the Revised

³⁷⁰Data taken from the publication *Availability of services and support measures for Roma children at the local level*, available at: http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Dostupnost_usluga_i_mera_podske_za_decu_romske_nacionalnosti_na_lokalnom_nivou.pdf

³⁷¹Syllabus *Romani language with elements of national culture* is an integral part of the curriculum and are published in bylaws for a particular grade.

³⁷²The Romani language with elements of national culture was in the status of an optional subject in this school year.

Catalogue of textbooks in the languages of national minorities for preschool, primary and secondary education – 2020/2021 school year³⁷³ (**operational objective 4, measure 1 from the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the social inclusion of Roma men and women**).

In order to improve the capacity of employees for the implementation of syllabus *Romani language with elements of national culture*, MoESTD, in cooperation with the Centre for Continuing Education and Evaluation of the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade³⁷⁴ and the National Council of the Roma National Minority organized a one-month course for Romani language teachers. So far, 77 teachers have been certified. A significant number of these teachers are also engaged in schools.

MoESTD has implemented an initiative for the Post-Secondary School of Vocational Studies "Mihajlo Palov" in Vršac to issue a certificate of the knowledge of the Romani language to students who have acquired the title of the vocational educator (or the vocational educator of preschool children) and who have attended part of classes in Romani. It is important to emphasize that within the accredited study syllabus³⁷⁵ of this post-secondary school, undergraduate and master students have the opportunity to learn Romani as a mother tongue (Romani language, methodology of speech development in Romani language, culture of speech in Romani language) and the traditional Roma cultures. In addition to the above, this post-secondary school has accredited a professional training program with the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina entitled *Training for strengthening the competencies of Romani language teachers for optional subject: Romani language with elements of national culture*³⁷⁶ (**operational objective 6, measure 1 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the social Inclusion of Roma men and women**).

MoESTD realized a public competition for participation in the use of financial resources intended for grants to non-governmental and other non-profit organizations important for education. The goal of the competition was to improve the system of education through educational activities that provide support to primary and secondary school students. Out of a total of 40 approved programs, **three programs target the Roma national minority**. The proposed programs implemented activities aimed at improving the Romani language with elements of national culture in primary schools.

2.1.4. Affirmative action measures for the enrolment of students in secondary education and higher education

³⁷³ Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/udzbenici/>

³⁷⁴ At the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade the Lectorate for the Romani language was also established in 2015, and within the study syllabus "*Language, literature, culture*" at the same faculty, these students have the opportunity to study 35 foreign languages, and Romani is one of them.

³⁷⁵ The last decision on the accreditation of this post-secondary school is from April 2019.

³⁷⁶ Also, the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade included the syllabus of the Romani language in undergraduate studies by the Decision of 2015, and it also implements Romani language courses, which enables graduate teachers to acquire certificates of the knowledge of the Romani language and join regular classes in primary and secondary schools in which the subject of the *Romani language with elements of national culture* is taught.

Affirmative action measures for the enrolment of Roma students in secondary school have been implemented since 2005 and have a systemic character, which is confirmed by the adoption of regulations prescribing, among other things, conditions for enrolment in secondary school, including more favourable conditions for children from socially vulnerable groups, including students of the Roma national minority. The last rulebook regulating this issue was adopted at the beginning of 2020³⁷⁷, and one of its parts refers to the enrolment of students of the Roma national minority under more favourable conditions in order to achieve full equality.

The Rulebook on enrolment in secondary schools determines several affirmative measures:

- The number of points that Roma students achieve on the basis of performance in primary school and on the basis of the final exam is increased by 30% of the number of points they lack up to 100 points;
- For students living in a family that is a beneficiary of financial social assistance, the number of points they achieved based on the performance from primary school and the final exam is increased by 35% of the number of points they lack up to 100 points;
- The primary school, starting from the seventh grade, has the obligation to inform the parents, i.e. other legal representatives of the students of the Roma national minority about the criteria and procedure for enrolling students in secondary school under more favourable conditions **(operational objective 2, measure 2 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the social inclusion of Roma men and women)**.

Results of the affirmative action. Starting from the 2005/2006 school year and ending with the 2019/2020 school year, 10,533 students were enrolled (of which 55% were girls). More than 65% of the enrolled through this measure, and who are scholarship beneficiaries and have mentoring support, complete secondary education. By monitoring the application of the affirmative action, it was determined that in the 2017/2018 school year 1,969 Roma students were enrolled in secondary schools, while in the 2018/2019 school year 2,220 students were enrolled, and in the 2019/2020 school year 2,009 students (56% are girls).

Affirmative action for enrolment in higher education institutions dates from 2003/2004, and so far a total of 1,743 male and female students have been enrolled (51% are girls). Specifically, in the 2016/2017 academic year by applying this program, 182 students were enrolled in the first year (49% of girls), in the 2017/2018 academic year 154 students (55% of girls) were enrolled, in the 2018/2019 academic year 120 students were enrolled, of which 51% were girls **(operational objective 5, measure 1 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the social inclusion of Roma men and women)**.

2.1.5. Measures in the area of pupil and student standards

The pupil and student standard aims to create conditions (material, cultural, social, health, etc.) that encourage the education, social inclusion and development of the pupil's/student's personality. Conditions for exercising rights in the field of pupil and student standards are prescribed by the law governing this area³⁷⁸. The law, among other things, includes *awarding*

³⁷⁷Rulebook on the enrolment of students in secondary schools ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 20/2020).

³⁷⁸Law on Pupil and Student Standards ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 18/2010, 55/2013, 27/2018-other law and 10/2019).

scholarships and loans. Pupils/students from vulnerable social groups (according to the law, this includes the Roma national minority) exercise their rights, including the right to a scholarship **by applying more lenient criteria prescribed by the Minister.**

Scholarships awarded to Roma secondary school students from the budget of the Republic of Serbia in the last five school years

School year	Number of scholarships	Condition according to school performance	Percentage of girls
2015/2016	176	excellent school performance	65%
2016/2017	150	excellent school performance	60%
2017/2018	303	very good and excellent school performance	63%
2018/2019	547	very good and excellent school performance	60%
2019/2020	704		
Total	1880		

Source: MoESTD

In the last five school years, 1,880 scholarships were awarded from the RS budget for students of the Roma national minority in the monthly amount of 5,400 dinars. In the first half of 2019, the Rulebook on student loans and scholarships was adopted³⁷⁹ regulating more detailed conditions for exercising the right of pupils/students to loan, i.e. scholarship, including those from vulnerable social groups. This rulebook stipulates that MoESTD determines up to 10% of the total number of student loans and scholarships for pupils/students from vulnerable social groups who have the right to be ranked according to lenient criteria, which enabled an increase in the number of scholarships awarded to Roma students (including those pupils who did not have excellent school performance). In this way, MoESTD managed to increase the chances of Roma students to receive scholarships, which resulted in an increase in the number of scholarships that Roma students received in the 2017/2018 school year (303 scholarships), in the 2018/2019 school year (547 scholarships) and the 2019/2020 school year³⁸⁰ (704 scholarships). It is noticeable that a continuously larger number of scholarships are awarded to girls (60% or more). Given that the participation of Roma girls in secondary education is significantly lower than that of Roma boys, awarding more scholarships to students supports their involvement in secondary education and reduces the existing gender gap³⁸¹. Special mention should be made of the good cooperation and great engagement of the National Council of the Roma National Minority in informing the community, as well as later, in issuing certificates of belonging to the Roma national minority (which are a necessary administrative condition), as well as assisting in filling out forms and collecting documents. As in the previous years, in 2019 a competition was announced for the

³⁷⁹Rulebook on pupil and student loans and scholarships ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 36/2019).

³⁸⁰By announcing the Competition for awarding student scholarships to secondary school students in RS for the 2019/2020 school year, the information campaign on lenient criteria for students from vulnerable social groups continued, with a special emphasis on Roma students, and the planned number of scholarships for Roma students increased compared to the previous school year.

³⁸¹Source: Serbia Multiple Indicator Survey 2014 and Serbia – Roma Settlements, Multiple Indicator Survey 2014. Available at: http://www.unicef.rs/files/MICS5_Srpski_web.pdf.

award of scholarships and loans to students of higher education institutions for the 2019/2020 academic year.

In addition to the mentioned scholarships, secondary school students, according to the established criteria, have the right to scholarships awarded by the relevant line ministry in cooperation with international organizations. Within the *Development, implementation and monitoring of a sustainable state mechanism for awarding scholarships to Roma secondary school students* Project - IPA 2014, in May 2019, a competition was announced for the award of scholarships to Roma students. The number of applicants in this competition was 2,149, and out of this number, 504 applications were approved (145 of those who continue to receive scholarships and 358 new ones). A new competition will be announced for 500 new scholarships in 2020. In order to provide comprehensive support to students of the Roma national minority, in the 2019/2020 school year mentoring support continued for 180 scholarship holders of the Roma Education Fund (REF) through a project under IPA 2014.

The support measures for students from socially vulnerable groups also include measures of the exemption from tuition fees, as well as measures on the basis of which student centres should purposefully determine up to 10% within their accommodation capacities (**operational objective 5, measure 1 from the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the social inclusion of Roma men and women**).

2.1.6. Education of students returned under the Readmission Agreement

MoESTD has launched a series of systemic measures in order to provide support to students from vulnerable social groups, including students returned under the Agreement on the readmission of persons residing illegally (hereinafter: the Readmission Agreement)³⁸². One of the measures is learning "Serbian as a foreign language", which is prescribed by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System³⁸³ (Article 23, paragraph 2). In accordance with the legal regulation, a bylaw was passed which prescribes the syllabus of "Serbian as a foreign language"³⁸⁴, as well as an act prescribing general standards of achievement for Serbian as a foreign language³⁸⁵. Other measures have been adopted, which include:

- Obligation of the institution to prepare an individual educational plan (IEP), in support of learning the Serbian language and Cyrillic, mathematics and other subjects;
- Providing free textbooks – 75 students received free textbooks in the 2019/2020 school year;
- Work of pedagogical assistants with students, which includes support in learning and monitoring students in regular attendance. In addition, they provide support to the families of these students;

³⁸²"Agreement on the readmission of persons residing illegally" was signed in 2007 between the RS and the EU, and confirmed in the National Assembly in the same year by the Law on the Ratification of the Agreement between the Republic of Serbia and the European Community on the readmission of persons residing illegally ("Official Gazette of RS – International Treaties" No. 103/2007), entered into force on 1 January 2008 and regulates the area of the return and admission of persons returning under this Agreement.

³⁸³Law on the Foundations of the Education System ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 88/2017, 27/2018 - other law, 10/2019, 27/2018 - other law and 6/2020).

³⁸⁴Rulebook on the enrolment of students in secondary schools ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 20/2020).

³⁸⁵Rulebook on General Achievement Standards for subject Serbian as a foreign language for the end of the first and second cycle of compulsory education, general secondary education and primary adult education ("Official Gazette of RS – Education Gazette", No. 11/2019).

- Increased cooperation of the school with the returnee family and advisory work in small groups;
- Mediation of the school administration in the procedure of recognition of certificates;
- Enrolment in primary schools without the necessary documentation (they are obliged to submit it by the end of the school year). The Qualifications Agency – the ENIC/NARIC Centre organizational unit, in the 2019/2020 school year, processed 65 applications for the recognition of foreign school documents, i.e. nostrification of diplomas.

During the 2019/2020 school year, in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the total of **77 students** enrolled in primary schools, who are returnees under the Readmission Agreement (32 girls and 45 boys). Students were enrolled using a simplified procedure (without documents), a test of knowledge and competencies was performed, after which they were included in regular classes. Most of the students, returned under the Readmission Agreement in the 2019/2020 school year, were enrolled in the age-appropriate class (70 students - 91%), while the others were enrolled in lower classes in accordance with the results of the test of knowledge and competencies. These students were included in 19 primary schools³⁸⁶ in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, and the largest concentration is in the school administrations of Belgrade, Zrenjanin and Leskovac. A student who returned during the same school year is not treated as newly enrolled by the school, but is assigned to the same class, which allows him/her not to fail the school year and is provided with additional learning support.

2.1.7. Projects of non-governmental organizations in support of the education of Roma men and women

An important support for systemic measures is the work of domestic non-governmental organizations which implement projects aimed at increasing access to education, as well as the acquisition of education by students belonging to the Roma national minority (or students coming from families of low socio-economic status, most often students belonging to the Roma national minority). Some of these projects are *Available and quality education for Roma girls and boys*³⁸⁷, *Educational support in the prevention of child marriages and dropouts*³⁸⁸, *Together towards secondary school*³⁸⁹, etc.

2.2. Priorities for 2019 – assessment of fulfilment

Priority 1 – There is a plan to award 700 scholarships

Fully realized. In the 2018/2019 school year, 547 scholarships (60% of scholarships for girls) from the budget of MoESTD and 303 scholarships in cooperation with REF were awarded, **850 scholarships** in total. In May 2019, the Competition for the award of scholarships to secondary school students of the Roma national minority for the 2019/2020 school year was realized and within the *Development, implementation and monitoring of a sustainable state mechanism for awarding scholarships to secondary school students* Project (IPA 2014). This competition in 2020

³⁸⁶The schools including the students returned under the Readmission Agreement are located in the territory of the school administrations of Belgrade, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Valjevo, Sombor, Čačak, Kruševac, Kraljevo and Zrenjanin.

³⁸⁷The Project of the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and Save the Children.

³⁸⁸The Project of the Centre for Educational Policies and UNICEF.

³⁸⁹The Project of the Centre for Educational Policies and Pestalozzi Children's Foundation.

will include an additional 500 scholarships for students of the Roma national minority who finished the previous grade with general performance, i.e. with an average grade of at least sufficient (2) and having at least a grade of good (3) in conduct. Through the IPA 2014 Project, mentoring support continued for 180 REF scholarship holders, who exercised the right to renew the scholarship in the 2019/2020 school year.

Priority 2 – Continuation of the training of pedagogical assistants, since in 2018 they completed only the first module.

Fully realized. With the aim of expanding the network of pedagogical assistants and hiring 50 new pedagogical assistants, a call was announced to primary schools to apply for hiring a pedagogical assistant on the basis of established criteria. Out of 104 registered candidates, 50 were selected who were trained as pedagogical assistants (along with 15 pedagogical assistants who were previously hired) in cooperation with the University of Kragujevac (Centre for Lifelong Learning, which has an accredited training of 36 ECTS). According to the instructions of the Ministry of National and Regional Development, the schools changed the systematization in order to hire a pedagogical assistant. In the 2018/19 school year, 261 pedagogical assistants were engaged in primary schools and preschool institutions.

2.3. Priorities for 2020

Priority 1 – Improving the education of Roma students through the application of prescribed measures to support pedagogical assistants, mentoring and scholarships.

Priority 2 – Improving the capacity of pedagogical assistants to work with students, family, preschool and school institutions through the application of prescribed training, with a special emphasis on early development.