POLICY IMPACT ANALYSIS

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

GOVEMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SERBIA

SOCIAL INCLUSION
AND POVERTY
REDUCTION UNIT

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Violeta Đokić

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LIST OF ABREVATIONS

CEB	Council of Europe Banka
ChA	Child's Allowance
CIP	Centre for Interactive Pedagogy
CSW	Centre for Social Work
DAP	Decade Action Plans
DILS	Delivery of Improved Local Services
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ESL	Early School Leaving
FOS	Fund for an Open Society
FSA	Financial Social Assistance
GPA	Grade Point Average
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HBS	Household Budget Survey
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
IEQE	Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation
IMPRES	Improvement of Pre-school Education in Serbia
ISC	Inter-sectorial Committee
ISP	The Republic Institute for Social Protection
LBE	Law on Basic Education
LFES	Law on the Foundations of the Education System
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LFSFC	The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children
LPE	Law on Pre-school Education
LPSS	The Law on Pupils' and Students' Standard
LSE	Law on Secondary Education
LSG	Local Self-government
LSW	Law on Social Welfare
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoESTD	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
MoLESP	The Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sport
NEC	National Education Council
NES	National Employment Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action for Children
PA	Pedagogical Assistants
PE	Primary Education
PPP	Pre-school Preparatory Program
PPS	Purchasing Power Standard

PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
REF	Roma Education Fund
RPD	Rulebook for the Professional Development and Career Advancement of Teachers, Career and Expert Associates
RSA	Regional School Authorities
RSO	The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SE	Secondary Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SILC	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
SIPRU	Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
WB	World Bank

FOREWORD

The motivation for undertaking the analysis of the support provided to vulnerable groups in education is not new. It resides on several anchors, ranging from the general value of just and equitable society, which calls for ensuring equity of its education system as well, through inspecting empirical data showing lower educational attainments and outcome measures of children from families of lower social-economic status, to the understanding that many characteristics of education systems are traditionally set in ways which favor middle or upper class children, and that changing this set-up is a serious long-term multidisciplinary task, which can be accomplished only in a series of many iterations, adjustments and fine-tunings – accompanied also by periodical analytical scrutiny. The current material is aiming to provide this kind of scrutiny.

The immediate purpose of this analysis is to contribute to the development of measures for more effective support to the students from vulnerable groups at all pre–university education levels and to provide recommendations on legislative and institutional changes required for that sake. The broader purpose of the analysis is to offer a thinking tool for advocacy, sustained awareness and broad social commitment towards respectful integration of children from vulnerable groups and poverty background in education that will enable and empower them to seek prosperous employment and live a life with dignity.

The analysis is predominantly focused on current pro-poor education measures with inputs included about selected social welfare measures, about measures initiated and implemented by NGOs, and about measures which are international best practice, all of which are also separate reports included as annex in the present volume. The analysis yields drawing up of recommendations including measures for which also costing and cost benefit calculations are added.

The current analysis is based on a thorough review of the legislation in the area of education and social welfare, a brief review of relevant policy documents, review and small survey of activities provided by NGOs, it also draws upon available empirical evidence, i.e. primary research studies pertinent to the implementation of specific policies or the need to further elaborate them and it provides costing of the recommended measures and their cost-benefit analysis. However, the analysis did not explore legislation and practices in areas that could be tangentially relevant for the implementation of pro poor measures such as the taxation system or the public administration at national or local levels.

During the analysis we found somewhat different definitions of the target group of the *pro-poor measures* that included the following:

- The definition of vulnerable groups used in education-related legal texts in Serbia: Roma, refugees, deportees, children with special needs, children without parental care, migrants.
- The definition of vulnerability used in social welfare related legal texts in Serbia, which to the previous definition includes also low income, parental neglect and/or abuse, substance abuse, risk of being subject of violence, trafficking, family conflict or any other reason to use the social welfare services.
- Poverty related analyses: the lowest quintile of SES
- The definition used in OECD documents: children with disabilities, with learning difficulties, from disadvantaged background

The analysis focuses primarily on low SES families (including Roma) defined as the lowest quintile of SES as the target group of our interest, which corresponds to the OECD definition of children from disadvantaged background, and can include also parental unemployment, low education, and life in remote

rural areas. However, in order to allow for a wide scope of analysis we are, where appropriate, referring also to vulnerable groups in terms of children with disability and/or learning difficulties.

We did not look into measures targeting national minorities except Roma nor into language policies except for the Roma.

Members of the team that prepared the analysis are:

- Tinde Kovac Cerovic, lead researcher being responsible to prepare the part of material focused on education, to coordinate the team and to integrate the joint report,
- Aleksandra Lakicevic Dobric, consultant responsible for preparing the part of material pertinent to the social welfare measures,
- Ivana Ceneric, consultant responsible for providing a report mapping the measures initiated and implemented by NGOs,
- Raisa Vainälänen, consultant providing an overview of international practice regarding support measures for students from vulnerable groups, and
- Svetlana Mladenovic, consultant for providing inputs in respect of financing the recommended measures.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study provides an overview of the institutional and legal framework, policies and measures aimed at enhancing the education of poor and vulnerable children in Serbia (with focus on measures within the educational and social welfare systems) and/or that should be analyzed further with respect to their social and financial impact. Based on the analysis of the current situation - primarily focused on low socioeconomic status families (including the Roma), the study provides recommendations on introducing new and reviewing and enhancing the existing measures, including recommendations for legislative amendments where necessary. Furthermore, the study recommends policies/measures that require additional research/primary data collection, or those which should by further analyzed in view of their social and financial impact.

The institutional framework for addressing the issue of education of children and youth affected by poverty exceeds the boundaries of the ministry responsible for education and encompasses the sphere of the ministry responsible for social policy, as well as the institutions and bodies responsible for minority (Roma) rights and, in some aspects, the ministries responsible for youth and local government. These matters are also dealt with by a wide range of national institutions (Institute for the Improvement of Education, Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, Institute for Social Protection), councils (National Education Council, Council for Vocational and Adult Education, Council for Improving the Status of the Roma, Roma National Minority Council) and parliamentary committees (Committee on Education, Science, Technological Development and Information Society; Committee on Social Affairs, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction; Committee on Health and Family; Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Committee on Children's Rights). On the regional level, this issue is in the mandate of: the Provincial Secretariat for Education of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina and school authorities, as well as the Provincial Secretariat for Health, Social Policy and Demography and Provincial Institute for Social Protection, while, at the local level, social affairs departments within local administrations and centers for social work are the main actors in charge of these issues, in addition to schools and preschool institutions.

The effectiveness of addressing education of children from vulnerable groups and low socioeconomic status families depends on: coherent delineation of complementary mandates of all institutions mentioned above, clear communication and decision-making channels inside and between the education and social welfare bodies, viable data gathering, sharing and reporting and a high capacity of all the abovemnetioned stakeholders to tackle these issues.

The Law on the Foundations of the Education System (LFES, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2011) is the key law in the area of education that prescribes measures for enhancing education of poor and vulnerable children, in particular inclusive education measures. The measures introduced by the LFES are elaborated in specific by-laws and special laws - the Law on Preschool Education, the Law on Basic Education, the Law on Secondary Education, and support measures for poor and vulnerable children, notably scholarships, pupils' and students' loans and dormitories, are regulated by the Law on Pupils' and Students' Standard.

Although all these legal instruments provide solid system-wide support to poor children and the children under the risk of social exclusion, their implementation needs to be enhanced, whereas systems should be harmonized and coordinated.

The Education Development Strategy by 2020 sets, as one of its main objectives, the development of fairness and equity of the system of education, as well as reduced drop-out in the education system.

Several groups of measures relevant to education of poor and vulnerable children are currently in place and/or are envisaged by the relevant strategic and legal framework and call for further improvement of their implementation:

- The policy of mandatory attendance of preschool education in the last year prior to primary school (in force since 2006);
- Increased coverage of children by the system of preschool education;
- Free pre-school education for children older than 4 years until mandatory preschool programme;
- Diversification of programmes and methodology in the system of preschool education;
- inclusive education and Roma integration policy (applied since 2009–2010);
- School entry with an assessment of needs for further support, with an opinion of the Intersector Committee;
- Introduction of the Individual Education Plan;
- Changes in evaluation policy;
- Possibility of learning the Romani language;
- Anti-discrimination measures;
- Introduction of pedagogical assistants;
- Affirmative measures in secondary education;
- Training of teachers in inclusive education;
- Creation of the network of experts providing support for inclusive education;
- Grants for schools and municipalities to implement and enhance inclusive education;
- Free textbook provision policy targeting students of 1-4th grade of primary education;
- Free school meals and transportation for the most vulnerable groups of children;
- Prevention of drop-out;
- Parent participation;
- Free extra-curricular and sports activities and
- School development policies (emerging).

The majority of said policies is integrated in education-related regulations; however, only one third of the measures is financed from the Republic budget and the rest is financed from local funds and donor funds and programmes.

The Social Welfare Development Strategy (2005) has defined '- improving the status of the poorest population as one of the main strategic goals. **The key legislation governing pro-poor measures** reflects the strong focus on achieving equity. Two key laws defining the structure, measures and instruments of the

social welfare system, including poverty-related policies, are the **Law on Social Welfare** (LSW, 2011) and **the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children** (LFSFC, 2002, 2005, 2009). However, given that a number of bylaws are still pending, the full implementation of all measures under the LSW has not commenced yet. In the area of social policy, the relevant policies that directly or indirectly support education of the children from poor and Roma families are the following::

- Financial social assistance;
- Child allowance;
- Preschool attendance benefits (nationally provided – for children without parental care and children with disabilities, and locally provided – for children from financially deprived families);
- One-off financial assistance from the republic budget;
- Social welfare measures implemented by centers for social work;
- Local policies (one-off social assistance, cash and in-kind, and community-based social services).

The Serbian civil society is very active in working with vulnerable groups and the Roma. It fills the gaps and provides support in several aspects that are not adequately covered by the education and social welfare systems. Non-governmental organizations provide day care, preschool services, extended stay, remedial teaching, preparatory teaching for school-leaving examinations, clubs and out-of-school activities free of charge or for a small fee; organize activities that bring together children from vulnerable groups and mainstream population; work with parents of children from vulnerable groups and mainstream population, individually or in the community; develop children's social skills and prepare them for school; work with education staff on improving their competencies and raising awareness; provide assistance in collecting documents and guidance in administrative and bureaucratic procedures; organize information campaigns, round-table discussions, conferences etc. They also provide material support (clothing, school supplies, textbooks, meals), and in some cases also stipends.

A detailed analysis of **poverty - or vulnerability - related measures foreseen by laws in the areas of education and social welfare** was performed by examining possible scenarios and bottlenecks throughout the expected education trajectory of a child from a poverty background.

Enrolment bottlenecks at all education levels: The main enrolment barriers in Serbia are related to the issue of preschool and school network optimization, to insufficient outreach to particularly vulnerable groups, due to the weaknesses of enrollment logistic at local level, which hence do not even apply for their legally stipulated rights to support, and to the (as yet not stabilized) functioning of the new inclusive education policy and the support for its implementation, especially the implementation of the inter-sectoral committees' recommendations. Lack of identification documents is also a significant problem in access to any right for the “invisible population”. Despite the long-standing tradition of free-of-charge compulsory education in Serbia, these bottlenecks still persist and affect children from particularly vulnerable groups.

Attendance barriers at all education levels are mostly related to insufficient, inadequately targeted and/or poorly managed social assistance to children and families, and to local governments meeting their financial liabilities regarding transportation. The greatest barrier seems to lie in the fact that meals, clothing and school supplies are not provided systematically. The problem with targeting financial social assistance (FSA) and the outdated criteria for access to child allowance (ChA) place a significant share of children from poverty backgrounds at risk. The education system most often does not recognize its responsibility for introducing measures aimed at addressing these barriers and hence misses an opportunity to provide the

necessary support. Lack of links between centers for social work and schools leads to the fact that school attendance conditionality has not been consistently applied and managed for child allowances' clients. Absence of an integrated education data base also hinders adequate monitoring of enrolment, attendance, achievements and progression of students by socioeconomic status quintiles.

Attainment of outcomes bottlenecks at all education levels are related to education quality. Although these bottlenecks (in terms of ensuring both intellectual and social outcomes) could affect all children, families with more resources will manage to mitigate them, while those from poverty backgrounds and marginalized groups will not, and will only rely on what is provided by the school. The analysis has shown that, although the introduction of inclusive education has somewhat changed schools' openness to children and youth from marginalized groups, schools – as a rule – neither use the available means to ensure higher standards of education for children and youth at risk, nor do they actively seek new ways to compensate for their disadvantaged background. Many education reforms pertaining to quality have not been adequately implemented yet (e.g. teacher competencies, modern teaching methods, parent participation, formative assessment, training in school leadership, quality assurance); as a result, schools do not provide appropriate care to children from poverty backgrounds.

Progression bottlenecks at all education levels most clearly reflect the lack of system-wide measures to ensure that children and youth from poverty backgrounds and from vulnerable groups reach decent employability. Although serious progression bottlenecks in the early phases of education (until grade 4) have been removed and/or smooth progression has been ensured, in the higher grades the system is still quite rigid. The requirement for all pass grades and the requirement of enrollment into the desired secondary education track based on the external school leaving examination lead to a situation that students' further education prospects largely depend on their families' social and economic status. Students from low socioeconomic status families are at a higher risk of class repetition, dropping out or enrolling in low-quality education tracks not leading to decent employment or further academic studies. Horizontal mobility measures to counteract progression bottlenecks have not been introduced yet either.

In addition to these problems, which affect all education levels, each level is affected by its specific problems.

Preschool education: Underdeveloped preschool network, lack of subsidies for transportation costs, high prices for preschool services and inadequately targeted subsidies for poor and/or vulnerable children present major barriers. The enrolment criteria still prioritize children of employed parents, and provision of identity documents and heath checks still present problems for a part of marginalized families. Research shows that children from poverty backgrounds and vulnerable groups have lower access even to compulsory preschool education and are more often placed in segregated groups.

In *primary education*, the most prominent bottlenecks are the progression from the fourth to the fifth grade, affecting children from rural communities, the Roma and children with disabilities and learning difficulties, owing to transportation difficulties and lack of appropriate education and training for subject teachers, and the preparation for progression to secondary education, which usually requires private tutoring. Owing to affirmative measures targeting the Roma, growing numbers of Roma students complete primary education and enroll in secondary schools.

Secondary education is a significant bottleneck in the education trajectory of students from low socioeconomic status families. For poor students, secondary school attendance hinges on financial assistance (scholarships, loans) and access to student dormitories, as well as student canteens in cases where the school is not in the vicinity of one's home. However, the scholarships and loans system currently puts far greater emphasis on academic performance than on social needs, and poor children who are not

excellent students do not have access to them. As a result of combined barriers at lower education levels, students from low socioeconomic status families can easily find themselves in the least attractive vocational schools, with poor employment prospects, without motivation and at high risk of dropping out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of bottlenecks in the education trajectory of low socioeconomic status children provided an insight into areas that require designing new measures and areas in which the existing measures should be enhanced or redefined or further research is needed.

The recommended measures are grouped into three categories – the first concerns strengthening the basic support, in particular material, for vulnerable and poor children, the second – enhancing education support for these children, and the third – enhancing active inclusion and outreach social services.

1. Basic education support measures for vulnerable children

1.1 Child allowance is a long-standing program in Serbia and the largest program targeting poor children.

This measure should be improved in terms of targeting, coverage and modernization and its link to school attendance, i.e. its function as a conditional cash transfer, should be strengthened.

1.2. Meals and clothing are essential needs of children from poor families.

Clear responsibility for the daily provision of meals and periodic provision of clothing must be established, since the support is currently fragmented, insufficiently predictable, unsystematic and lacking full coverage.

1.3. Modernization of instruments of support for children from disadvantaged families by co-funding their education costs. It is necessary to ensure the provision of free textbooks to poor and vulnerable children in all grades, better targeting of the scholarships and dormitories system and introduce a mentoring system in support of education of children from vulnerable groups and poor families.

2. Education support improvement measures

2.1. Modernization of instruments for early childhood preschool inclusion of vulnerable children

The education and social welfare systems should review and modernize preschool attendance benefits. Preschool attendance subsidies should be available to beneficiaries irrespective of whether they receive child allowance or not. Local governments and preschool institutions should be supported in planning and providing services, and private service providers' capacities should be used.

2.2. Reviving and modernizing remedial teaching

It is necessary to amend the framework of laws and bylaws, include the quality of remedial teaching as an indicator in both external evaluation and self-evaluation, develop a framework for its implementation at the school level (with focus on preventing failures, rather than remedying them), develop manuals, offer training, monitor coverage and impact (pedagogical value added), reward good practice. The modality of provision should be in line with children's needs and possibilities. Since this measure is already funded (through teachers' workload), only minor additional investments in training and manuals are required.

2.3. Put school libraries and ICT to use for support measures

It is necessary to enable everyday use of libraries and IT equipment for students (open access to books, provide comfortable space to spend time in libraries, set up IT equipment for students' use, extend library opening hours to cover the entire day, from morning till evening), organize school

campaigns for furnishing and adaptation of libraries, promote libraries in schools (develop projects on different subjects, exhibitions, meetings, classes), train librarians in a new proactive role and enable the involvement of parents as assistant librarians.

2.4. Reviving school development planning

It is necessary to introduce small school grants to pilot innovative school campaigns for dropout prevention (a wide range of activities, e.g. creating an alumni organization, organizing visits by successful alumni who come from poor/marginalized families, mentoring, peer learning, parental involvement, networking etc.), conduct evaluation, reward success and disseminate good practices.

3. Provision of active inclusion and outreach social services

3.1. Enhance systematic provision of outreach services to the poor

It is necessary to initiate systematic identification of these services and providers and define minimum standards for a set of services (parents, information on entitlement etc.), which is the basis for licensing service providers and, therefore, also for recognizing their importance through local governments' funding decisions and systematic country-wide implementation. Local social planning should recognize the need to fund these services, and IPA funds should also be directed towards them.

3.2. Prioritizing education needs of vulnerable children in the interventions by centers for social work

Case management and active inclusion should apply to each beneficiary of financial social assistance and of child allowance in case of school-age children; capacities of centers for social work should be strengthened; institutional cooperation among centers for social work, municipal offices, schools and inter-sectoral committees should be enhanced.

3.3. Ensuring parental participation and training

Training in parenting should be provided to all families receiving child allowances and financial social assistance as a social service provided by the municipality; identification of these services and service providers and the definition of minimum service standards should be initiated, which will provide the basis for licensing service providers and recognizing their significance through local governments' funding decisions in accordance with the mechanism provided by the Law on Social Welfare. Regular training in how to support the education of their children should be provided to all parents who have not completed secondary education – as schools' obligation; the training program, manuals and fact sheets for parents should be developed.

The total annual costs of the proposed package of measures require increasing the budget of the ministry responsible for education by between 7.4% and 10%, i.e. they entail expenditures amounting to between 0.33% and 0.45% of the GDP. On the other hand, the measurable long-term societal benefit resulting from the introduction of these measures, expressed in terms of higher earnings and lower social welfare benefits, is estimated at about €7.8 billion and is about seven times higher than the initial investment.

In addition to the non-measurable societal benefit in terms of better health, higher security and greater social cohesion, the above economic argument of sevenfold return on investment in supporting education for poor children unquestionably supports the need to invest in the proposed package of measures.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CONTEXT IN WHICH VULNERABLE STUDENTS ARE GROWING UP IN SERBIA

1.1. BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

According to the 2011 Census the population of the Republic of Serbia is estimated to 7258753. Largest ethnic minorities are Hungarians (253,900 or 3.5%), followed by Roma (147,600 or 2.1%) and Bosniaks (145,300 or 2.0%), while the share of all other ethnic groups is less than 1% each (Albanians, Askhali, Bulgarians, Bunjevaks, Croats, Egyptian, Greeks, Jews, Macedonians, Romanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Vlach). The rate of population growth in relation to the previous year is negative and amounts to -4.5 per 1.000 inhabitants. In the period from 2002 to 2011, the population decreased by nearly 241 thousand, the average annual growth rate was –3.3 per 1.000 inhabitants. In the same period, the proportion of the population aged under 15 and over 65 in the total population ranged as follows: the percentage of young people (0-14) fell from 16.1% in 2002 to 15% in 2011, while the population aged 65 and over increased from 16.6% (2002) to 16.8% (2011). The average age of the population in Serbia increased from 40.2 years (2002) to 41.6 (2011). The declining demographic trend has serious implications for the reform of the education system, in particular regarding the school network, but it has also considerable significance for education policies. Given the shrinking working-age population, it will be even more crucial that the education system succeeds in increasing participation in the labor market and the performance and productivity of workers to generate greater growth for Serbia, by raising the employability and adaptability of the workforce.

The Roma population has the highest population growth in Serbia, due to a high birth rate and it is a young population with an average age of 27.5 years and large families (5.3 members per household on average). The Roma will not be affected by the same process of ageing like the rest of the population. On the contrary, the challenge will be to integrate large numbers of young Roma people particularly at risk of social exclusion. Roma people are one of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in Serbia with acute social problems, ranging from lack of appropriate housing, high unemployment and inactivity rates, low qualifications, lack of access to education, health care, social counseling and employment support, and affected by high insecurity and also violence and crimes.

The educational structure of the population has changed between the 2002 and 2011 Census. The percentage of population without any education decreased from 5.66% to 2.68%, and the percentage of those with only basic education also decreased from 23.88% to 20.76%. The majority of population in 2011 has secondary education qualification (48.93%)[1]. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Serbia is 1.01 for primary

[1] RSO (2012) *Census 2011*

and 1.02 for secondary schools. Among children living in Roma settlements, the GPI for primary school is 0.96. Among children whose mother has primary education the GPI is 1.00 and in the richest quintile it is 1.01. The GPI for secondary school is 0.72, meaning that girls are disadvantaged in secondary education[2]. The unfavorable position of persons with lower levels of education is substantiated by the April 2013 Labor Force Survey (LFS) Data: persons from this group (with basic education and lower) are characterized by a very low level of employment of 30.3% and activity of 41.2%, compared to the respective rates of the general working age population 15-64 (45.8% relative to 61%). High vulnerability remains the main characteristic among women (with employment and activity rates of 29.2% and 39.7.2% respectively), people with low levels of education (for those without any education 0.6% and for those with low educational level 19.8%) and young people aged 15-24, whose employment and activity rates are very low (4,4 and % 6.4%). In the observed year, employment rate in increased by 1.7% if compared to October 2012, while employment rate increased by 0.4%.

Unemployment rate decreased by 1.4%, compared to April 2012, and employment rate increased by 2%[3]. In 2011 there was 3,4% of illiterate persons, biggest share in the age group over 65, and this percentage was much larger among female population, 5.7% (<65 – 21.6%) relative to 1.1% among males (<65 -3.3%).[4] Data from international studies (PISA 2009 and TIMSS 2011) show that at the age of 15 our students score below OECD average in math, science and reading (PISA, 2009), while according to TIMSS 2011 children in 4th grade elementary school score above average in math and science.

As regards the coverage of students on various education levels, the program of obligatory pre-school education covers less than 90% of pupils, while primary education (compulsory attendance) covers almost 96%. The number of pupils in primary schools shows a decrease of 2% in 2010/2011 school year, which is a common trend in recent years, mostly due to decrease in birth rates in the country. Drop-out rates at all education levels, and particularly among vulnerable groups, represent a serious concern for Serbia since the consequences of not finishing school are serious and costly to both society and individual students. The drop-out rate in primary school was on average 5.6% in 2008/2009. Drop-out is higher in upper grades (from 5th to 8th) than in lower grades (1st to 4th) of primary education, 3.8% compared to 1.6%. However, according to the generation survey 2000–2008, the drop-out rate in primary education amounted to 7%. According to Eurostat data, early school leaving overall rate is 8.50%, and it is slightly higher among male population (9.66%) comparing to females (7.18)[5]. The First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction shows even more concerning data, early school leavers represent 30% of the Serbian population aged 18 to 24 compared to 14.9% in the EU. According to MICS 2005 and 2010, ESL among Roma students is higher - it varies from research to research from 5 times more to 16 times more than the national average[6]. Over 99% of pupils continue education after completing primary school, but the coverage in secondary schools is 85% due to dropout of pupils after enrollment to secondary schools.

Despite significant improvements, Roma children are still insufficiently integrated into the education system, as evidenced by the significant gap between Roma and other children in terms of school enrolment at all levels and the low rate of completion at both primary and secondary school. Only 8 % of children in Roma settlements, aged 36–59 months, attend an organized early childhood education program. In the Roma population, 91 % of children start primary education on time (attending first grade) and only 89 % of

[2] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia(2010) The *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (*MICS*) *2010 Serbia*, UNICEF
[3] RSO (2013) Labor Force Survey
[4] RSO (2012) *Census 2011*
[5] Candidate countries and potential candidates: living conditions [cpc_psilc]
Last update: 26-06-2013 Early school-leavers %
[6] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia(2010) The *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (*MICS*) *2010 Serbia*, UNICEF

children of this age attend primary school further on. Lower attendance is present among Roma children living in rural areas (83 %), those whose mothers have no education (79 %) and the children living in households within the poorest quintile (79 % as well). Factors such as poverty, lower educational attainment of the mothers, living in rural areas and/or being a girl, all reduce the probability of reaching the last grade. As for children age 15-18 years only 19 %t of children from Roma settlements are attending school. [7]

Coverage of children with pre-school education is generally low in Serbia, given the European benchmarks – it grows with age from 20% in crèche to 47-48% for 3 to 5.5 years old, and around 95% in the compulsory pre-school program (UNICEF, 2012). Most children are in public pre-school institutions[8]

***Table 1**: Children in pre-school education institutions*

				Number of age groups		
	Provider	**Number of Institutions**	**Number of Children**	**Total**	**0,6-3**	**Older than 3**
2012/2013	**Total**	**2411**	**188340**	**9359**	**1831**	**7528**
	Public	2330	185012	9083	1760	7323
	Private	81	3328 (1.7%)	276	71	205

In 2010, 9.2% of the population of Serbia, or i.e. approximately 669,000 people, lived below the absolute poverty line[9], with a monthly consumption of less than RSD 8,544 (€83.5)[10] per consumer unit. Poverty is more pervasive among younger and older members of the population with younger children being particularly vulnerable to economic fluctuations. The percentage of children living below the poverty line was above average (13.7%) in contrast to the poverty of adults, which was slightly below average (8.5%). While a high increase was recorded in child poverty, poverty among the elderly (aged 65 and more) has only slightly increased in 2010 compared to 2008.[11] According to DevInfo database 24% of population from 0-17 years is at risk of poverty. [12]

In 2011, there were 584,828 clients of the social welfare system according to records of the CSWs, which makes 8.14% of the total population[13].

[7] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia(2010) The *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (*MICS*) *2010 Serbia*, UNICEF
[8] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
[9] Poverty in the Republic of Serbia, 2008–2010, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia April 2011
[10] Exchange rate EUR/RSD: 102.3. Source: EC inforeuro (2010)
[11] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia(2010, 2008) *The Household Budget Survey*
[12] DevInfo database: This database contains the official statistics for monitoring the global and national Millennium Development Goals and indicators related to Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction. The data is available for the level of the Republic of Serbia. I-U-S 216 Indicator 275 Area 2 Area Level 2 Time Period 40 Source 32 Data 4,322 Last updated 7/2/2013
[13] The population in Serbia is 7,186,862 according to the Census 2011, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. The number of clients decreased by 2.2% comparing to 2010 in absolute terms, but in relation to new census data it increased as the percentage in the total population (in 2010 it was 7.23%) The reasons for the decline of clients can also be found in the new reporting form for CSWs and new registry system of the CSW clients.

***Table 2**: Subcategories of CSW clients according to the CSW records in 2011*[14]

Clients of CSWs as per active records in 2011			
Clients	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Children (0-17)	86,728	73,858	160,586
Youth (18-25)	29,876	27,601	57,477
Adult (26-64)	129,203	143,504	272,707
Elderly (65+)	34,832	59,226	94,058
Total	**280,639**	**304,189**	**584,828**

Children up to age of 17 represent 27.6% of all the CSW clients, and with youth (18-26), which constitutes 9.8% make in total 37.3% of all CSWs clients, the second largest client group of CSWs clients. Considering that children represent 18 percent of the general population this is a high representation of children among CSW clients. More than half (57.2%) of all children clients belong to the poor children i.e. children from socially and financial deprived families[15], 10.4% are Roma children and 6.3% are children with disabilities[16] .

45,050 CSW clients are from the Roma population, which is almost one third of registered Roma according to the Census data 2011, 147,604. Among the Roma population the share of social care clients is almost four times higher than among the general population in Serbia, which corresponds to the overall poverty level of the Roma population. According to the age structure of Roma clients 47.2% are adults, 31.1% are elderly, while children and youth constitute 21.7%.

CSWs records provide data on the education status of only 70.4% of children clients of social welfare system in the age groups 6 to 17 in 2011, although it is expected that the data on education status of each and all clients, and children and young people particularly should be available.

***Table 3:** Education status of the children clients of CSW*

Age group	Pre-school	Primary school	Secondary school	Course	Do not attend school	Total
6-14	5,693	36,988	1,673	300	6,567	51,221
15-17	0	5,544	15,882	938	7,311	29,675
TOTAL	**5,693**	**42,532**	**17,555**	**1,238**	**13,878**	**80,896**

Alarming fact is that 17.1% of children clients for whose education data are provided do not attend school, which means that this percentage might be even higher. Among the children, 42.5% attend primary school, 21.7% attend secondary school, 7% attend pre-school institution, and only 1.5% attends non-formal education courses.

[14] Report on the Work of the Centers for Social Work for 2011, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade 2012

[15] Main clients groups among children are 1) neglected children and/or children at risk of neglect; 2) children victims of violence; 3) children with behavioural problems; 4) children whose parents are having a dispute about the manner of care for the child; 5) socially and financially deprived children, and children with other needs for social welfare system support. The child depending on the type of vulnerability may be categorized in more than one client category.

[16] Particularly vulnerable children groups are: 1) children with disabilities; 2) children victims of human trafficking; 3) Roma children; 4) homeless children; 5) children returnees (by readmission agreement); 6) children victims of international child abduction; 7) unaccompanied minors foreign citizens.

1.2. INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK – SUMMARY

The institutional and legal framework reflects a serious care for social inclusion, provision of support and care. The Institutional framework is comprised of two respective line ministries, a broad array of national level institutions, committees, councils, as well as local institutions and other bodies. The Serbian legal framework regulating measures supporting the education of children and youth from poverty background is divided in two subsets – the legal and sublegal acts (bylaws and orders) regulating education and those regulating social welfare. The analysis looks at effectiveness of the relevant institutions in addressing education of children from vulnerable groups and low SES families, and identifies potential synergies and discrepancies between the two legal subsets and how they are enacted at lower levels of government.

A detailed overview of the institutional and legal framework is provided in the **Annex 1** – Institutional and Legal Framework, while the following table presents a brief overview of the key institutions and jurisdictions.

Table 4: *Institutions and their responsibilities in the area of education and social welfare*

Name of the institution/body	Jurisdiction and gaps	
The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD)	The highest regulatory authority for developing regulations, financing, supervision, policy development and development and implementation of programs and projects in the field of education, covering the entire education cycle from pre-primary to tertiary education, and adult education. In the field of supervision and external evaluation of the education institutions the Ministry operates through 18 Regional School Authorities - RSAs. RSAs are, also providing advice to on all school related issues and coordinating implementation of development activities and projects. None of the organizational units hold explicit formal responsibility for vulnerable groups or children from poor families. The data collection system is in urgent need of serious upgrading.	
Province Secretariat for Education of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina	Regional authority with several specific responsibilities related to Vojvodina's education system in accordance with the Law. These include providing opinion in the process of development of curricula and education programs, adopting curricula and approving textbooks in the languages of Vojvodina's minorities, and adopting educational programs of interest for national minorities. It also provides grants for school projects and initiatives. Policies and programs focused on the poor or vulnerable children are underrepresented.	
National Education Council	In charge of pre-school, primary and general secondary education, particularly in adopting curricula and a variety of standards. From 2013, the Council has the legal obligation to monitor dropout in pre-university education and prescribe dropout prevention measures, but its capacity to execute this task might be seriously limited.	
The Council for Vocational and Adult Education	Covers similar tasks as the National Education Council but for vocational schools and for the area of adult education, including also the development of the National Qualification Framework.	These councils have no special focus or responsibility

Name of the institution/body	Jurisdiction and gaps	
The National Council for Higher Education	Governing the development of the higher education area, including also initial teacher education. The Council body, the Accreditation Committee is carrying out accreditation of higher education institutions and programs based on standards established by the National Council for Higher Education	on poverty or vulnerability related issues
Institute for Improvement of Education	Curriculum development, coordinating the teacher training system and developing vocational education. The Institute's mandate allows embracing pro poor policies in these domains, however, until now, this has been visible only in the teacher training area.	
Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation	Developing standards, developing examination instruments and procedures, coordinating the development and implementation of external evaluation, and conducting research based on request. The Standards for external evaluation, developed by the Institute, are relevant also for the assessment of school level implementation of pro-poor policies.	
The Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy (MoLESP)	The highest regulatory authority for social welfare and poverty policies and measures in accordance with the Law and accompanying by-laws. It is policy making body and the key financier of centrally managed social services and benefits/financial support. Measures in the field of social welfare, especially child allowance, pre-school attendance benefits and financial social assistance are not well interlinked, poorly targeted, have complicated administrative procedures and lack information adjusted to the abilities of poor population.	
Centers for Social Work (CSW)	CSWs are country-wide offices of the MoLESP deciding on and follow up on the provision of social welfare support, including services and benefits to citizens, provided by local and national levels in line with public functions based on the Family Law and the Law on Social Welfare. CSW operates based on the case management work method, which is relatively new. The main prerequisite for successful case management is inter-sectorial cooperation which still seems to be a challenge. The education data of the CSWs children clients indicates a low intervention in supporting educational needs of poor children and/or children in the risk of dropping out, or actual dropping out.	
The Republic Institute for Social Protection and the Province Institute for Social Protection	ISPs are research and development institutions responsible for monitoring of the quality of work in social welfare, reporting on the delivery of social care, providing recommendations to decision-makers in formulating policies, provide supervisory support to social service providers, social welfare professionals and other actors (e.g. local self-governments) in establishing an effective model of social welfare focused on reducing the level of social exclusion of vulnerable groups. However there is a poor initiative for mainstreaming of the community-based social services for poor population.	
Province Secretariat for Health, Social Policy and Demography of Vojvodina	Performs tasks of the province administration in the area of social welfare entrusted by the Law, defines wider scope of entitlements and more favorable conditions for their acquirements, adopts the Program for the improvement of social welfare, inspects and supports the social institutions at the territory of the province and proposes the social safety measures for the vulnerable groups.	

Name of the institution/body	Jurisdiction and gaps
Local self-governments (LSGs)	In the education area, on pre-school level, the LSG finances the provision, participates in the management and decides on the network of institutions. In the area of primary and secondary education their main responsibilities entail in financing school running costs, deciding on the network of schools, assigning members to the school boards and endorsement of the school board members. LSGs are also responsible for organizing the legal inspection of education institutions. LSG has a clear mandate over managing social welfare support to its citizens and it is accountable for social welfare to its citizens exercised through funding and provision of both local social benefits and community-based social service. Provision of local education and social services (health also) is usually organized within a single local department - local offices for social affairs of the LSG. Inter-sectorial cooperation between the two administrations, education and social systems relevant for enactment of pro-poor policies and actions at the local level is almost non-existent, offices are often understaffed, sector wide isolated and that cross-sectorial interventions toward common topics or target groups are weak. Furthermore, there is no process or single management structure for pro-poor measure at local level but they are kept fragmented within responsible bodies, strictly divided between national or local bodies dealing with the particular measure with no coherence of interventions whatsoever. This strongly hinders coherence between planning of budgets and measures and more efficient identification and targeting of beneficiaries.
The Inter-sectorial Committee for assessing the needs of children for additional educational, social and health support (ISC),	ISC is a new local mechanism for identification of support needed for the education of children from vulnerable groups. The ISC work is supervised by a governmental Joint Body consisting of representatives of the three respective line ministries (education, health and social policy), office responsible for human and minority rights, SIPRU, UNICEF, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, and of the Delivery of Improved Local Services project (DILS), a social inclusion education expert, a social inclusion legal expert, a parent and an NGO representative. ISC recommendations for services and measures are not systematically integrated into local acts on social entitlements, hence financing the support needed can be stalled.
Council for the Improvement of the Status of Roma	An intergovernmental body consisting of representatives of line ministries and the Roma community, mandated for enhancing the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Integration as well as the Decade of Roma Inclusion action plans.
The Commissioner for Protection of Equality	The main mandate is to prevent all forms, types and cases of discrimination, to protect the equality of persons and legal entities in all spheres of social relations, to oversee the enforcement of antidiscrimination regulations, and to improve realization and protection of equality.
The Ombudsman (Protector of Citizens)	Ombudsman has a mandate to oversee the respect of the citizens' rights, establish violations resulting from the acts, actions or failure to act by administrative authorities.
The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (RSO)	Managing statistical surveys, collecting, processing statistical analysis and publishing statistical data in all state sectors. Statistical information in the area of education and social welfare depend on the quality of information provided by the respective sectors. In the education sector the major barrier is the lack of cross-referencing school level data, hence data on education attainments des-aggregated by SES quintile or vulnerability are not available.

Name of the institution/body	Jurisdiction and gaps
Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU)	The SIPRU is mandated to strengthen Government capacities to develop and implement social inclusion policies based on good practices in Europe. Main areas of work: establishing the monitoring system based on social inclusion indicators, developing and integrating of social inclusion policies, strengthening and developing capacities of public administration to implement and report on the social inclusion process.

1.3. SYSTEM CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE POPULATION

The education system's institutional composition in Serbia is described in **Table 5**. Data on employees of the social welfare systems are in table 6.

Table 5: *Institutions, staff and students in the Serbian education system for the 2011/2012school year*

	Number of institutions	Number of groups/classes	Number of students/children	Number of teachers	Number of prof. staff in school advisor unit [17]
Pre-school[18]	2427	9264	184900 plus 66864 in Preparatory pre-school program	16184	Psychologists/ pedagogues 531 Medical workers 3872 Pedagogical assistants 12
Basic (primary and lower secondary) education[19] **(G1-G8)**	1140	25257	571930	51047	Pedagogical assistants 162 Psychologists/pedagogues Social workers (1 per cca 800 students)
Secondary education [20]	497	11112	283173	29821	Psychologists/pedagogues Social workers (1 per cca 800 students)

In order to assess the capacities of the system to cater children and youth from vulnerable groups the ratio of number of vulnerable children per professional staff in both the education and the social welfare systems has been calculated.

Education staff with explicit responsibility, among other tasks, to provide support to children from vulnerable groups are listed under the "other professional staff" column. At school level the main role in supporting children from vulnerable groups is with the members of "professional staff" or "school advisors", consisting most often of a school psychologist and/or school pedagogue. Bigger schools might also have a social worker or "defectologist" (special education expert of a certain profile, most often speech therapist). The main task of this unit is to work with individual children and their parents as counselor, to be involved in violence prevention, inclusive education, professional orientation, administer various tests, work with the students parliament and advice teachers on child development and learning issues. The target group of children and parents with whom the school advisor unit is working individually is not pre-set – they would reach the unit by referral from teachers, by own initiative, or as included in a wider school action, which means that many children and parents at risk might skip attention of the unit. While the teacher-students ratio is in average in Serbia very low (around 1:15[21]), the professional staff-students ratio is very high (1:27 classes, i.e. 1:cca810), and is not differentiated by

[17]School advisors are school psychologists or pedagogues. Schools can also additionally employ social workers, logopedes, defectologists, special educators. From 2011 schools can also employ pedagogical assistants.
[18]Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, data describing the beginning of 2011/2012 school year. Statement No. 101 from 20.04.2012. Number of teachers refers to the number of professional staff in pre-school (pre-school teachers, kindergarten nurses and various professional associates)
[19]Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, data describing the beginning of 2011/2012 school year, Statement No. 78 from 30.03.2012. The data refer to regular schools. Special education is organized in 238 schools, with 5912 students, and basic education of adults in 49 schools and 4561 students. «Number of institutions « refer to administrative units, i.e. main schools. If satellite schools are added, the total number of institutional units is 3467. From the total number of teachers (51047) 31183 were engaged full-time.
[20]Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Statistical Bulletin, no 551, data describing the beginning of 2011/2012 school year. From total number of teachers (29821) 18979 were engaged full time.
[21]http://www.quandl.com/WORLDBANK-World-Bank/SRB_SE_PRM_ENRL_TC_ZS-Serbia-Pupil-teacher-ratio-primary

schools with higher population of children from vulnerable groups or from low-SES families. An approximate calculation of their average working time per child from these groups, in case all of them would be addressed[22] would be 0.37 hours (22 minutes) monthly per child or 0.09 hours (about 5 minutes) weekly per child. Or, alternatively, each child could get a 3,5 hours full attention (including discussion with parents, teachers, representatives of social and health professionals) of the professional staff in average only once a year.

In the social welfare system the indicator of the capacity of the system is the ratio of clients per case managers. The **case management,** work method of CSW, is a person-centered approach, by which case manager in cooperation with the client, assesses the needs, strengths and risks and subsequently plans adequate social support within an individual service plan. Based on the individual service plan the case manager coordinates social support to clients (individual and family) and refers them to social services *regardless of whether the services are nationally or locally funded or provided by state or non-state providers*. The case manager establishes jointly with the client the team of relevant professional staff from the CSW and other agencies and organizations in the community, as well as important persons from the client's environment, that by actively participating in the implementation of the of service plan, contribute to achieving the targets set for the client in accordance with the his/her best interests. According to the findings of a survey among CSW professionals[23] case management is applied in all CSWs, however, still there are many difficulties in its implementation related to documentation and procedures which are not sufficiently developed, tuned to specificities of the cases and not aligned with requirements of the practice.

Table 6: *Employees in CSWs in 2011 as of December 31st 2011*

Employees of CSW					
Financing	**Managers**	**Professional staff**	**Administrative staff**	**Others**	**Total**
Republic	242	1,550	357	216	2,365
Local-self government	21	240	95	214	570
Total	**263**	**1,790**	**452**	**430** (282 legal professionals)	**2,935** (with part time and trainees: 3,235)[24]

Professional staff	
Case managers	994
Supervisors	109
Case managers and supervisors combined	133
Other professionals	554
Total	**1,790**

The organizational structure of centers for social work reflects the importance given to issues of children and youth social welfare, given that units for protection of children and youth account for the largest number of organizational units in all centers for social work across the country, with the highest number of

[22] The current calculation is taking into account that the professional staff would work about 50% of their working hours with other children, and that the lowest SES quintile would be 20%, i.e. 162 children per one professional staff.
[23] UNICEF (2012) *Assessment on the Implementation of the Rulebook on Organization, Normative and Standards of Work of the Centre for Social Work: From the perspective of Centre for social work professionals*, Association of Centers of Social Work
[24] Out of the total number of employees, 258 were employed based on time-limited employment contract and 43 were trainees. The rest are employees with full-time permanent contract.

professionals employed in them, when compared with other units. The number of units for children and youth totals 66 and they are employing 584 professionals. [25] When looking into the workload of case managers, one case manager is, on average, responsible for 314 cases/beneficiaries[26]. The same study also reveals that, when comparing the workload of case managers working with children and youth and the workload of those working with adults and elderly, the workload of the latter is twice as high as the workload of case managers working with children and youth.

Case management as a process is defined by the standards of work[27] and comprises of the assessment of the client, development of the individual service plan which includes referral to adequate social services and support, and review of the plan with up to 4 visits to a child client a year. Regulation on normative for the number of case managers is set by the number of general population of the town/municipality and not by the number of CSW clients, and due to the different nature of cases it is hard to assess optimal workload for the case managers for quality person-centered work. According to the statements of case managers "Little time that the social professional can dedicate to clients, do not allow enough space for development of relationship with a client, and only 22% of case managers states that they have enough time available to go thoroughly through adequate services and steps in managing social support for the client."[28]

In summary, staffing for catering the needs of poor and vulnerable children seems to be far under the optimal level in the education system. In the social welfare system, within limitations given above in the text, the staff-client ratio seems to be closer to optimal level.

[25] Depending on the size of the center for social work, it may comprise the following organizational units/services: 1) service for the protection of children and youth, 2) service for the protection of adults and the elderly, 3) legal affairs service, 4) service for financial and administrative and technical affairs, 5) planning and development service, 6) service for community-based social welfare services, 7) admission service, 8) optional home residence, other. Source: *Izveštaj o radu centara za socijalni rad u Srbiji u 2011. godini, Republički zavod za socijalnu zaštitu, Beograd 2012.*

[26] UNICEF (2012) *Assessment on the Implementation of the Rulebook on Organization, Normative and Standards of Work of the Centre for Social Work: From the perspective of Centre for social work professionals*, Association of Centers of Social Work

[27] Rulebook on Organization, Normative and Standards of Work of the Centre for Social Work, ("Official Gazette RS" No 59/2008, 37/2010, 39/2011 and 1/2012)

[28] UNICEF (2012) *Assessment on the Implementation of the Rulebook on Organization, Normative and Standards of Work of the Centre for Social Work: From the perspective of Centre for social work professionals*, Association of Centers of Social Work

Chapter summary

The analysis of the institutional framework identifies aside of the two respective ministries, a broad array of national level institutions, committees, councils, as well as local institutions and other bodies. This reflects a serious care for social inclusion, provision of support and care. However, the effectiveness in addressing education of children from vulnerable groups and low SES families will depend on a coherent articulation of complementary institutional mandates, clear communication and decision-making channels inside and between the education and social welfare bodies, as well as the responsible bodies, viable data gathering, sharing and reporting procedures and a high processing capacity and integrity in each of them.

In this respect several concerns can be raised:

- *No privileged cooperation channels or horizontal links between the social welfare and the education systems, or between any other national level institutions of the two systems have been detected. There are several working groups, councils and committees in which both of the two line ministries are represented, including the Joint body for overseeing the local inter-sectorial committees, but the decision making power of these committees and councils is low, and consequently, serious commitment cannot be ensured through them.*
- *The two systems use separate data collection systems that are not functionally connected, and also there is no mandatory cross-reporting or data sharing ensured at national or local levels. Data collection is especially weak in the education sector, while somewhat better developed in the social welfare sector.*
- *It seems that the potential of joint departments dealing with social and education issues at LSG level is not utilized sufficiently and universally. Although belonging to the same department, responsibilities for dealing with issues from the two sectors are falling under the portfolio of different employees, and their joint action is not mandatory but optional. The ministry responsible for LSGs has not yet addressed this gap, nor has it been actively involved in any of the bodies. Instead, the Standing Conference of Towns and Cities is from times to times, mostly due to a variety of projects, engaged in developing the functions and enhancing cooperation between and inside of LSGs.*
- *Moreover, social welfare system at local level is fragmented within institutional boundaries and administrative jurisdictions with rare consultations, exchange or functional cooperation among them, i.e. complementary social departments dealing with same target groups, municipal office for child welfare administering child allowance and CSW administering financial social assistance for poor and other services is almost non-existent.*
- *The ISC mechanism is not recognized in the planning process of social services and measures and not integrated in the local regulation on extended entitlements.*
- *Particularly detrimental seems the fact that in the education sector none of the institutes or ministry units has a clear mandate to develop, implement, coordinate or monitor pro-poor measures. Mandating in June 2013 the NEC for monitoring dropout and developing dropout prevention measures and strengthening the request that school policies (school development plans) address dropout prevention and support to vulnerable groups does not seem to remedy the institutional missing links, since dropout prevention is only a part of the pro poor policies, and since the NEC and the schools do not have the operational structures and finances for the set of actions development, implementation, coordination and monitoring requires, nor does the NEC have direct communication channels to the schools or to the social welfare sector.*

- *Staffing for catering the needs of poor and vulnerable children seems to be far under the optimal level in the education system. In the social welfare system the staff-client ratio seems to be closer to optimal level.*

2. PRO-POOR POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1. EU GENERAL PRO-POOR POLICY FRAMEWORK

The European Commission has placed the fight against poverty at the heart of its economic, employment and social agenda – the Europe 2020 strategy. All EU member countries have translated the Europe 2020 targets into national targets and growth enhancing policies. Out of 5 main targets for EU 2020 two main goals relevant for this study refer to: in the area of **education** - to reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% from the current 15%, and increase ECEC coverage to 95% in 2020; in the area of **fighting poverty and social exclusion** - to reduce the number of Europeans living below the national poverty lines by 25%, lifting over 20 million people out of poverty.

Certain groups in the population have emerged as particularly exposed to the risk of poverty. This relates in particular to children, young people, single parents, households with dependents, people with a migrant background, certain ethnic minorities (such as Roma), people with disabilities. The Commission has identified the following areas for action: Delivering actions across the policy spectrum; Greater and more effective use of the EU Funds to support social inclusion; Promoting evidence-based social innovation; Working in partnership and harnessing the potential of the social economy; Enhanced policy coordination among the Member States.

Two key challenges identified as policy priorities are : prevention which is the most effective and sustainable way of tackling poverty and social exclusion and early intervention to avoid that people that fall into poverty remain trapped in ever more difficult socio-economic situations. Education and training systems should be instrumental in supporting upward social mobility and help break, rather than reinforce, the cycle of disadvantage and inequality. Pre-primary education is probably the most crucial factor for breaking the vicious circle of intergenerational transmission of poverty, and it is the investments with the highest returns. Investing in high quality early childhood education and care can support a sure start in life for all. Member States have subscribed the benchmark that 95% of children between 4 years old and the beginning of compulsory education should participate in early childhood education and care. Worrying trends in the number of young people who are neither in education nor in employment underline the need to step up a broader range of **policies supporting young people as agreed in the European Youth Strategy 2010-2018[29].**

Two main flagship initiatives in the area of education and social inclusion are **Youth on the move** and **European platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion**. The European platform against poverty and social exclusion is

[29] Eropean Union (2011) *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion*, The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion

one of flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It is designed to help EU countries reach the headline target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion. The participation of people experiencing poverty is now acknowledged as a catalyst for inclusion strategies; Enhanced policy coordination among EU countries has been established through the use of the open method of coordination for social protection and social inclusion (Social OMC) and the Social Protection Committee in particular. The Commission has proposed that 20% of the European Social Fund be earmarked for fighting poverty and social exclusion; promoting robust evidence of what does and does not work in social policy innovations before implementing them more widely; working in partnership with civil society to support more effectively the implementation of social policy reforms. The participation of people experiencing poverty is now acknowledged as a catalyst for inclusion strategies; Enhanced policy coordination among EU countries has been established through the use of the open method of coordination for social protection and social inclusion (Social OMC) and the Social Protection Committee in particular.

The Europe 2020 Strategy gives new impetus to efforts aimed at addressing child poverty and social exclusion in the EU, as a number of Member States have set specific targets or sub-targets relating to child poverty/social exclusion as their contribution to the headline. In late February 2013 the European Commission (EC) adopted the Recommendation "Investing in Children - breaking the cycle of disadvantage"[30] as part of the Social Investment Package which proposes a long-term social strategy to help overcome the current crisis and to strengthen the capacity of individuals. Main principles that countries should follow when developing policies and strategies to combat childhood poverty are:

- Development of integrated strategies that go beyond ensuring children's material security and promote equal opportunities so that all children can realize their full potential;
- Referring to the relevant provisions of the Treaty on the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, making sure that these rights are respected, protected and fulfilled;
- Taking the child's best interests as a primary consideration and recognize children as independent rights-holders, whilst fully acknowledging the importance of supporting families as primary caretakers;
- Balanced between universal policies, aimed at promoting the well-being of all children, and targeted approaches, aimed at supporting the most disadvantaged;
- Focus on children who face an increased risk due to multiple disadvantage
- Sustain investment in children and families, allowing for policy continuity and long term planning.

The Recommendation[31] provides guidance for European Union (EU) Member States on how to tackle child poverty and social exclusion through measures such as family support and benefits, quality childcare and early-childhood education. Integrated strategies, based on three key pillars should have following priority areas:

1. **Access to adequate resources: development of** policies to support parents' participation in the labor market and provision of adequate living standards through a combination of benefits;

[30] Eurpean Commission (2013) *Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage,* Commission recommendation of 20.2.2013
[31] Eurpean Commission (2013) *Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage,* Commission recommendation of 20.2.2013

2. **Access to affordable quality services:** policies aimed at reducing inequality at a young age by investing in early childhood education and care and improvement of education systems' impact on equal opportunities. Also, since poverty is a multidimensional problem it is necessary to improve the responsiveness of health systems to address the needs of disadvantaged children, provide children with a safe, adequate housing and living environment and enhance family support and the quality of alternative care settings
3. **Children's right to participate:** development of measures that support the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities and policies that put in place mechanisms that promote children's participation in decision making that affects their lives.
4. **Governance, implementation and monitoring arrangements:** Strengthening of synergies across sectors and improve governance arrangements and the use of evidence-based approaches.
5. **Making full use of relevant EU instruments:** addressing child poverty and social exclusion as a key issue within the Europe 2020 Strategy and mobilization of relevant EU financial instruments

2.2. GENERAL PRO-POOR POLICIES IN SERBIA

The most important policy document in Serbia addressing poverty and being relevant to education is still the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) developed in 2002, adopted in 2003, and accomplished by 2009[32].

The PRS legitimized education as a powerful broad measure for poverty reduction, and it also provided a list of measures to be undertaken in order to increase its effectiveness in this respect. These measures, seen from today's perspective, were equal to a comprehensive education reform strategy. They further influenced other education related strategies, such as Decade of Roma Integration Action Plan for Education (2005)[33], Strategy for Sustainable Development (2007[34]), Strategy for Improvement of the status of Roma[35], etc.

Another line of influential policy documents is the set connected to the UN family (UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO) priority areas and actions - the Millennium Development Goals for Serbia (2005)[36], National Plan of Action for Children(2004)[37], and the Roadmap for Inclusive Education (2008)[38], all addressing the need for enhancing the education provision for children in poverty.

The First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia 2008-2010[39] provides an overview of the overall framework relevant for social inclusion and poverty reduction, an analysis of the state of affairs in the relevant areas (financial poverty, employment, social welfare and child protection,

[32] Government of Republic of Serbia (2003).*Poverty reduction strategy*, Belgrade
[33] Government of Republic of Serbia (2005). *Action plan for improvement of education of Roma in Serbia,* Belgrade
[34] Strategy for Sustainable Development ("Official Gazette RS" No. 57/2008)
[35] Strategy for Integration of Roma ("Official Gazette RS" No. 27/2009
[36] Government of Republic of Serbia (2006,2009) *Millennium development goals in Serbia-implementation report,* Belgrade
[37] The Council for Child Rights of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (2004), *National Plan of Action for Children*, Belgrade
[38] Ministry of Education RS (2008), *Inclusive Education Roadmap-National Report of the Republic of Serbia*, Belgrade
[39] Government of the Republic of Serbia (2011) *The First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia 2008-2010*

education, health, pensions, housing, human rights and social participation), challenges and recommendations for future measures. In respect of education the recommendations are highlighting the need for due data collection adjusted to EU indicators, increased efficiency of spending in the education system, flexibility of the school/pre-school network, development of capacities of LSGs to address education, strengthening teacher competencies, support to inclusive practices of schools, speeding up of TVET reform.

Although inter-sectorial, all these policy documents have detailed education and social welfare sections, which are interconnected and complementary. Taken all documents together, the main education measures listed almost in all of them are those which address widening the access to education at pre-school level, ensuring universal coverage with basic education, ensuring attainment of qualifications at least at secondary education level. These broad aims are coupled with more specific intervention measures in several education areas, notably enhancing teacher competencies, modernizing curricula, setting up a new quality assurance system and re-regulating education financing. In the social welfare area measures supporting education of children and youth in the aforementioned policy documents focused on modernizing the poverty related measures (child allowance, financial social assistance, additional outreach services, as well as social services), making them better targeted and more effective.

Most of the measures listed in the policy documents above (PRS, UN-related and the specific sectorial ones) were taken up in the 2009 LFES and in the, 2011 LSW, thus creating a legal frame for pro-poor measures as well, several of them were developed into concrete actions through EU or IFI funded projects, and also served as inspiration for many projects developed by the civil society in Serbia. A detailed account on this will follow in the subsequent chapters.

2.3. NATIONAL SECTOR POLICIES

2.3.1. Education sector policies relevant for poor and vulnerable students

At sectorial level, the Education Development Strategy 2020+[40] has been adopted at the end of 2012, and the action plans are currently under development, hence it has not yet had the chance to influence education policy measures, legislation or large-scale projects. Serbia does not have an integrated pro-poor policy in education. Instead, three narrower national policies related also to education of children from low SES families have been influential during the past 7-8 years. These were:

1. a pre-school policy expanding access and requiring obligatory attendance in the last pre-school year of preparatory education for starting school
2. a broad inclusive education and Roma integration policy
3. a free-textbook provision policy
4. nascent school development policies

In parallel to these new policies, the education system still bears certain characteristics of the predecessor Yugoslav education socialist system which also had a social equity emphasis. Free of charge education, subsidized preschool education, dormitories, scholarships, medical check-ups, compulsory enrolment, etc.,

[40] Government of the Republic of Serbia (2012), *Strategy for Education Development 2020+,* Belgrade

although (as will be seen in the subsequent text) have in many respects eroded, are from that period. Since they do not any more constitute a coherent policy, they will not be described in this section, but analyzed more carefully in the chapter on pro-poor policy implementation and bottlenecks.

2.3.1.1. Pre-school policy

The pre-school policy has in contrast to the pre-2000's understanding of pre-school as childcare assistance to working parents evolved into a policy viewing pre-school as early education and care, inspired by PRS, Decade Action Plans (DAP), MDG, NPA for Children and recently by EU 2020. Elements of the new policy are:

- The introduction of an obligatory pre-school year for all children, with minimum 4 instruction hours daily – introduced by LFES 2003 as a minimum 6-months requirement, implementation started 2006, and expanded to a 9-month provision by LFES in 2009. The effectiveness of this policy has been assessed from an equity perspective, and recommendations for upgrading developed.
- The expansion of access to pre-school for 3-5 years old children from vulnerable groups. Although not an explicit policy in Serbia (except in PRS , MDG and DAP), it has inspired several international, LSG and NGO projects (a REF project, IPA09 IMPRESS, SDC through Red Cross, new phase of CEB Education for social Inclusion project, etc.) and is exerting some impact, which is by now not yet thoroughly assessed.
- Introducing free of charge pre-school education from the age of 4 has been a measure in the DAP, and is expanded to all children in the new Education Development Strategy. However, implementation of this policy line has not yet been further elaborated.
- Diversification of pre-school provision in terms of including private providers, offering different time-schedules suited to parents' needs, and legitimizing the use of internationally accredited pre-school programs.
- Affirmative action for enrollment into pre-school for children from vulnerable groups is a new sub-policy regulated through the LPE 2010, and its implementation is not yet monitored.

All five policy lines pertinent to pre-school expansion are incorporated in the new Strategy of Education development 2020+, where early education and care are presented through a separate chapter.

2.3.1.2. Broad inclusive education and Roma integration policy

The broad ***inclusive education and Roma inclusion policy*** has built upon the Roadmap for inclusive education and the Decade action Plan for Education, combining and elaborating the measures into concrete actions. Although it was not published or adopted in integrity, several documents including project documents for DILS or EU projects have described its major parts and features. Taken all these together, it is possible to distinguish the following parts of the comprehensive policy:

- A new school enrolment policy which abolishes the previous pre-enrollment categorization procedures due to which children with special needs but also many Roma were referred to special education. Instead, full enrolment of all children in mainstream education is promoted, with a variety of support measures in the area of education, social assistance and health. Newly established local inter-sectorial committees assess the need for these support measures. Enrollment in special schools is still possible provided the committee suggests it and the parents agree.
- A new curriculum policy introducing the possibility of education according to individual education plans;

- The possibility for learning Roma language and culture as optional subject;
- Adjustments in the previous assessment policy introducing formative assessment, assessment according to the individual education plans, and adjustments in the final examination according to needs;
- A new human resources policy introducing pedagogical assistants for Roma, employed by schools, and allowing presence of personal assistants in schools;
- Affirmative action policy for enrollment of Roma into secondary and tertiary education (this policy is the oldest segment of the inclusion policies, introduced in 2003) and enrollment of students with disability into tertiary education, coupled with affirmative action for placement in dormitories;
- Mobilization of support systems through:
  - School grants for inclusive education projects
  - Municipal grants for Roma inclusion projects
  - Teacher training for inclusive education
  - Establishment of Network of experts for the support of inclusive education (from regional school authorities, schools and NGOs)
- Anti-discrimination school policy

Most measures of the inclusive education and Roma integration policy have their legal backing as well. However, a comprehensive monitoring policy has not been part of this package, and is not yet developed[41]. Also, the Strategy for Education Development 2020+ while addressing inclusive education does not provide guidance for further the elaboration of its development in a straightforward and detailed way.

2.3.1.3. Free textbook provision policy

The ***free textbook provision policy*** has been introduced by a coalition agreement between the two governing political parties in the period 2008-2012, and enacted as a Government project starting 2009. It first entailed in providing a free of charge textbook and workbook package for all first grade children chosen by the school from the list of approved textbooks, distributed through the school and funded by the Government. In 2010 this provision was expanded to all 1st and 2nd grade children. In 2011 the provision covered also 3rd grade children, but the policy was changed so that the free of charge package covered only textbooks (without workbooks) that need to be given back to schools and reused for subsequent two generation of pupils. In 2012 4th grade children were provided with free textbooks, and grade 1st -3rd received new free of charge workbooks, while re-using the textbooks provided to the previous generation. Although children from low SES families have benefited from this policy, the provision does not cover the entire education cycle. Some LSGs are complementing to the free of charge textbook provision - for example, the City of Belgrade is providing free textbooks up to 8th grade and a duplicate of textbooks to students from 1st to 4th grade, which they do not need to give back to the school. However, considering the sustainability of this policy, as well as its costs, it is still in need for upgrading as a pro-poor measure as well, so that full coverage of children and youth from low SES background is reached by free-textbooks throughout their entire education from G0 to G12.

[41] See overview of studies and a detailed proposal for monitoring inclusive education in: *Development of Comprehensive Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia,* Institute for Psychology, 2013, Project supported by UNICEF and SIPRU.

2.3.1.4. Nascent school policies

School development plans, school curriculum, school self-evaluation, school projects etc. have become new requirements and practice from the early 2000s, and in the last 10 or more years they actually embody school policies. These policies are limited by the low level of school autonomy in Serbia and most often the lack of finances for major investments, however in this limited space they still can influence a particular school ethos and target specific educational aims with additional measures. A detailed overview of enacted school policies is not available; however, Inclusive education and violence prevention have been among the most frequent school policy targets in the past 5-8 years, due to additional support from donors or credits, or proactive school management. The role of schools in ensuring equity, support to vulnerable groups and children from poverty background is recently somewhat strengthened through requirements of the 2013 legislation, and the following measures are mandated as school responsibility:

- provision of school meals for G 1-8
- dropout prevention program, both primary and secondary schools
- parent participation program, both primary and secondary schools
- the school's active role in social protection for G 1-8
- free of charge extracurricular and sports program for G 1-8

It is important to note that these school level measures were present in many (or for some areas only some) schools as a result of projects or pro-active management, but have not been legally binding up to now. However, full-fledged pro poor school policies are still in the zone of proximal development in the Serbian education system, and will require further support, both technical and financial as well as close monitoring.

Most of the listed policies were taken up by education legislation, but only about one third is funded by the republic budget for education and another one third is funded from local funds. Table 7 shows the policy-legislation connections.

Table 7: *Uptake of pro-poor policies in education legislation*

Policies	Measures	Legislation	Funding	Implementing Agency
Pre-school	Compulsory pre-school program	LFES, LPE	Republic	Schools, Pre-schools
	Expanded coverage	-	Local	LSG Pre-schools
	Free of charge pre-school from age 4	-	-	-
	Diversification of pre-school provision	LPE	Local	Pre-schools
	Affirmative action	LPE	Local	LSG Pre-schools
Inclusive education and Roma integratio	School enrolment with assessing needs for support	LFES LBE	Local	ISC Schools
	Individual education plan	LFES LBE LSE	Republic	Schools (School Team for Inclusive Education)
	Assessment policy changes	LFES	Republic	Schools Institute for education quality and Evaluation Ministry
	Learning Roma language	LFES Plan and	Republic	Schools

Policies	Measures	Legislation	Funding	Implementing Agency
		Program		
	Anti-discrimination measures	LFES	Republic	Schools Ministry
	Pedagogical Assistants	LFES	Republic	Schools
	Affirmative action for secondary education	LFES LPSS	Republic	Ministry Dormitories
	Teacher training for inclusive education	LFES Order of the Minister	Local Donors	Institute for Education Development
	Network of support experts	LBE LSE	Donors	Ministry RSA Schools
	School/ Municipal grants	-	Donors	Schools Municipalities
Free of charge textbook provision	Free of charge textbooks for G1-G4	-	Republic	Ministry LSG
School policies	School meals	LBE	Local	Schools, LSGs, Red Cross
	Dropout prevention	LFES LSE	Donors	Schools NEC
	Parent participation	LBE, LSE partially	Donors	Schools LSGs
	Social protection	LBE	Local School	Schools
	Extracurricular and sports activities free of charge	LBE	Local Donors	Schools

LFES – Law on the Foundations of the Education System, 2009, 2011, 2013
LPE – Law on Pre-school Education, 2010
LBE - Law on Basic Education, 2013
LSE – Law on Secondary Education, 2013
LPSS – Law on Pupils' and Students' Standard, 2010

2.3.2. Social welfare pro-poor policies/measures relevant to education

The Social Welfare Development Strategy[42] (2005) set as one of the key policy objectives the improvement of the social welfare for the poorest citizens through securing existential minimum and creation of a more efficient and effective cash benefits system. The main set of state pro-poor policies (provided by local or national level) is regulated by three Laws: the Law on Social Welfare, the Law on Financial Support to the Family with Children[43] and the Law on Red Cross. All of the pro-poor policies and measures directly or indirectly support education of the children from poor and Roma families. More in the **Annex 2** - Overview of Policies and Measures in the Social Welfare Sector supporting education needs of vulnerable children.

2.3.2.1. Financial Social Assistance

Financial Social assistance is the most important state measure against poverty and social exclusion. The financial social assistance is a benefit funded from the central budget and administered by the CSW. The

[42] Government of Republic of Serbia (2005) The Social Welfare Development strategy, Belgrade
[43] The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children ("Official Gazette RS" No 16/2002, 115/2005 and 107/2009)

nominal amount of financial social assistance is set by the Law, with biannual indexation to the living cost. Regular amount of financial social assistance was at 7,530 RSD in June 2013[44]. In line with the reform objective stated above, the legal changes have brought improvement of the financial social assistance in terms of administrative procedures, equivalency scales for calculating the amount of assistance for each subsequent family member, the amount of assistance and inclusion in the program of more family members. As a result the coverage of financial social assistance program increased and the number of individual users and families is higher by one third compared to the period before enforcement of the new Law. In May 2013, number of families of the financial social assistance was 106,714 i.e. 270,358individuals. In May 2013, out of the total number of households 3.76 % received the financial social assistance[45].

2.3.2.2. Child allowance

Child allowance (ChA) is the largest program targeting poor children in Serbia; hence it is not a universal benefit available to all children. ChA is also a typical conditional cash transfer, due to the fact that one of the eligibility criteria is regular school attendance for children/youth up to age of 19 (children with disabilities up to 26). It is administered by the local offices for child welfare while the funding is provided from the central budget. In May 201, the regular child allowance rate was 2,535.11 RSD and the increased child allowance is 3,295.62RSD RSD.[46] In May 2013 there were 389,033 children beneficiaries of the child allowance that is every fourth child i.e. 206,968 families and a slight increase is recorded comparing to the same period of the last year.[47] The share of child allowance beneficiaries in the total population up to age of 18 was at 28.7% in May 2013.

2.3.2.3. Benefits supporting pre-school education of children from vulnerable groups

The benefits supporting early inclusion of the children without parental care and children with disabilities are regulated as benefits in the amount of user participation in the pre-school cost paid by national level and administered by the pre-school institutions. In 2012, the average monthly number of children clients of these entitlements is 303 children, clearly far below the needs, where half of the clients are residents of the city of Belgrade[48].

2.3.2.3.1. Pre-school attendance benefit for the children without parental care

The Law sets different criteria for the acquirement of the benefit for the children without parental care placed in the foster family and in the child home. For fostered children the benefit is considered as a cumulative entitlement exercised only once the child allowance entitlement is acquired, while for the children placed in the child home there is a direct access to this entitlement with no child allowance criteria set.

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[44] For each subsequent adult household member, the basis of the benefit is increased by 0.5, and for a child by 0.3. Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy data, June 2013.

[45] Social profiles of the municipalities in Serbia, database, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy website http://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sektor-za-brigu-o-porodici-opstine.php

[46] The Law recognizes the increased child allowance for single parents, foster parents, guardians and parents of the children with disabilities in the amount of 30% increase to the regular child allowance amount. Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy data, June 2013

[47] Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy data, June 2013

[48] Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, November 2012

2.3.2.3.2. Pre-school attendance benefit for children with disabilities

The eligibility criteria are set differently for the children with disabilities attending the regular or the "developmental" pre-school groups (reserved exclusively for children with disabilities). Contrary to inclusive education objectives, a direct access to the entitlement is only ensured for children with disabilities for enrolling developmental pre-school groups, thus enrollment to regular pre-school groups is not encouraged. The children with disabilities attending the regular pre-school group can exercise the access to the entitlement only as a cumulative entitlement; it is conditional upon the family being eligible for child allowance. In contrast to this, a direct access to this entitlement is envisaged for children with disabilities in "developmental" pre-school group.

2.3.2.4. One-off financial social assistance from central budget

One-off financial social assistance is an instrument provided by the state budget for the most financially disadvantaged families in cases when living standard of the great number of citizens is seriously threatened. Decision on disbursement including criteria and target groups is made by the Government and disbursed by the CSWs. This is an add-up and flexible state measure activated in the crisis situation affecting greater population at once, it is not continually provided, but compensatory measure to remedy crisis consequencesthus it does not improve in a sustainable way the situation of vulnerable groups. To our knowledge this instrument has never targeted strictly children, only indirectly addressing poor families. Within the limitations of the measure, should the Government assesses as necessary, in cases of extreme vulnerability, this measure could be used to target child specific issues.

2.3.2.5. Social measures by the Centre for Social Work

Centre for Social Work is an important player addressing education prospects of children at risk of dropping-out or children out of the education system based on the mandate given in the Family Law. Should the parents fail to perform their duties in relation to education of children, the following measures are envisaged:

a) Preventive interventions through counseling work in the council office for marriage and family;
b) Corrective actions through warning to parents on execution of parental rights, referral to specialized institution for family relations or other parental support;
c) Sanctions - partial or full termination of parental rights in case of parents do not obey the corrective measures;
d) Access to adequate financial and non-financial support including referral to service providers in order to support education needs of children (financial social assistance, equipping for school, clothing, etc.).

These sets of interventions are not exclusively targeted to poor population, but are applicable to the general population. LSW introduces one new instrument of CSW for poor families and children beneficiaries of financial social assistance – an individual action plan within the active inclusion policy. Active inclusion policy for children population is focused on the measures to support the child/young person return to school. This instrument is still not implemented by the CSW professionals, since the by-law on its use is still not ready.

2.3.2.6. Local policies

Local self-governments are providing various support measures from local budgets for children, both legally binding and beyond. As already mentioned, education responsibilities at primary and secondary education

level of LSGs are small, hence local social policies and accompanying measures are mostly focusing on pre-school assistance and on social welfare support to poor families.

2.3.2.6.1. Subsidies for pre-school education of children from vulnerable and from financially deprived families provided by LSGs

The benefit is part of the additional support package stipulated in the Law on the Financial Support to Families with Children aiming at an early inclusion of the children from poor families into pre-school education. In its idea this is an adequate instrument for the achievement the education objectives. Financing of this measure is a local level responsibility, in the form of subsidies to parents' participation in the pre-school cost.

2.3.2.6.2. One-off social assistance

One-off social assistance is support program provided by the local self-governments aiming at providing an immediate assistance for the persons/families in the state of unexpected or temporary social need. It can be provided in the form of financial and in-kind benefit. The target groups and eligibility criteria are defined by the local self-governments, while the disbursement of one-off social assistance is done by the CSWs, but also can be provided by the LSG's offices directly.

According to earlier survey in 30 municipalities[49] almost all LSGs allocate funds for one-off payments to people most in need and almost one-third of LSGs allocate budget funds for in-kind assistance and humanitarian support. Social benefits represent dominant share in the social expenditures at local level.[50] One-off social assistance often supplements financial social assistance by the central level and thus target beneficiaries of financial social assistance as an additional support package. These types of support are among others soup kitchens, subsidies for utility costs, scholarships for children from vulnerable groups, increased one-off financial assistance, and transportation for persons with disabilities, school material, etc.

LSGs also allocate funds for other types of support to their citizens e.g. monthly bus tickets, excursions, summer vacations, scholarships, population policy benefits etc. Their implementation across Serbia - criteria, target groups (whether poor, Roma, talented, merit-performance) and disbursement procedures (whether through CSW, or school or directly local social office) vary significantly. Often benefits are merit-based and not targeted to poor (e.g. scholarships), or the benefits are universal - available to all children (, free excursions, free meals) which open an issue of efficient use of already scarce local finances. Majority of LSGs allocates funds for benefits that replicate nationally provided benefits e.g. population policy measures – child birth support, etc. while there are no funds for basic social support package (e.g. services to poor are not provided due to lack of funding).

[49] Centre for Liberal democratic Studies (2006), *The Situation Analysis on Social Welfare at Local Level*

[50] Social benefits make 71%, or 56% (if Belgrade is excluded) in social expenditures of local seld-governments. Financing Social Welfare at local level in Serbia, draft, UNICEF, 2013

2.4. COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES SUPPORTING POOR AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Community-based social services supporting poor and Roma children are an essential element within effective and efficient pro-poor policy packages. The following chapter gives an overview of social services provided to poor and vulnerable children in Serbia, by identifying main resources, existing capacities and potentials for further sustainable development of this important segment that well complement pro-poor policies existing state measures (FSA, ChA, distribution of the in-kind support, etc.) presented in the sections above.

The Law on Social Welfare provides regulatory framework for regular provision of quality community-based social services that is based on the national minimum standards for services, licensing of the providers and professionals, and mechanism of commissioning of the social services and providers by the state and local self-governments. This regulatory framework facilitates sustainable planning and provision of community-based social services tailored to the needs of the local vulnerable population. It creates a very new setting, approach and practice in providing social services and social welfare at local level in general and still it is not fully applicable and knowledge is still not widely spread across Serbia.

Many of community-based social services are mainstreamed. According to the Social services mapping study [51] eight social services are recognized by the system: home care, day care, drop-in center for street children, support to independent living for young people, personal assistance, shelters and safe houses, respite care for children with disabilities and counseling service. For this services the national minimum standards are adopted, many local self-governments provide them and they are part of their local strategy documents and local acts on the social entitlements. A pool of competent service providers among civil society organizations exists and with recently adopted Rulebook on licensing service providers and professionals it is expected soon to become licensed service providers. Donor organizations and the MoLESP itself have invested a lot of efforts in developing these community-based social services however their availability across the country is still limited, and therefore this is an area of further continuous support and investments.

By analyzing different studies and the registry of the community-based social services[52] it is evident that among the present community-based social services there are no social services specifically targeted to support poor families and children for which one could claim that they are mainstreamed and regularly provided in the system of social welfare. The examples of this type of services are parenting support, outreach services for poor population, legal assistance in providing documents, etc.[53] These services are provided in Serbia, but on an ad-hoc basis or as donor-led initiatives delivered by civil society organizations with still no sustainable financing mechanism from local self-governments and no mainstreaming initiatives.

[51] UNICEF and SIPRU, *Report on Mapping of Social Services provided by the Local-self Governments*, June 2013
[52] at the website of the Institute for Social Protection http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/
[53] In social welfare system there was a good example of the project funded under the Social Innovation Fund, which provided outreach service for Roma population on raising awareness of the financial entitlements and support them in accessing the entitlements, which attracted more of this social excluded group into the system of social care.

2.4.1. Red Cross

The Red Cross is a traditional service provider of humanitarian and social support programs to the most vulnerable population[54]. Financing of the Red Cross activities and projects comes from different sources - republic budget, province budget, local budgets and donor support. The biggest share of the funds from the national lottery, 24.4% is spent on financing social activities of Red Cross. Out of the funds provided from the local self-governments, 63% is allocated for funding different programs, while the rest is allocated for financing the running and administrative costs of the Red Cross.

The Red Cross social support activities include:

- ***soup kitchens program***,
- ***support in food and hygiene items*** to socially deprived families in the municipalities of II, III and IV level of development,
- distribution of locally donated ***clothing***,
- program for ***recovery of socially vulnerable children*** - provision of 10 days stay at the sea side in the Red Cross facilities[55].
- ***support program to the victims of human trafficking***,
- ***social inclusion program***[56]***for Roma children and children with disabilities*** in 29 LSGs includes support to their education inclusion through mentoring and learning support, parental support, etc. An additional segment of this program is the program on ***Promotion of human values*** aiming at anti-violence promotion and development of the intercultural values and respect of cultural and ethical differences.
- ***solidarity actions*** and traditional assistance actions to the most vulnerable population (gifts for the new-born, new year's gifts, etc.),
- ***programs of one-off in-kind support to the most vulnerable population***- running in 105 LSGs (II-VI development level).[57] In general priority is given to families with no income, single-member elderly families, socially vulnerable families from remote rural areas, single parents with no incomes, families which are borderline cases with no access to rights. All of these general criteria are further adjusted to local circumstances.

According to the Red Cross analysis[58] the most effective short-term programs are the ones which target meeting subsistence needs (food, hygiene, and clothing). In the long term, the best results are achieved with psychosocial support for empowering vulnerable households and individuals (education programs, attitude change, participation, etc.)

Summary of the available social welfare support policies to children is listed in the following table.

[54] There are 186 Red Cross organizations in Serbia (including HQ, and two province organizations)
[55] In 2012, 887 vulnerable children from all over Serbia benefited of this kind of support, the children from Kosovo, from Roma families, children from foster or residential care
[56]the program has been provided since 2002, with support from Danish Red Cross and IFRC, and since 2009 support of SDC
[57]Selection of the eligible families for this support is done by the local committees comprising of representatives of Red Cross, CSW and local self-government.
[58]Red Cross (2012) *Annex 2 to the Strategy: Analysis of the Red Cross Serbia capacities and activities to date in the social area,* Red Cross

Table 8: *Social welfare support policies*

Social welfare measures relevant for education prospects of vulnerable children			
Legislation	**Policy/measures**	**Funding**	**Implementing agency**
Social welfare law	**Social services:**		
	Assessment and planning services, case management	Republic	CSW
	Placement services (foster care and residential services)	Republic and province	CSW, - residential institutions: state and private providers
	Community-based social services	Local/province /donors	NGO providers, state, private
	Earmarked transfers for development of community-based social services in underdeveloped LSGs and/or in LSGs where residential institutions are being transformed and for development of innovative social services	Republic	LSG
	Social benefits		
	Financial social assistance	Republic	CSW
	One-off social assistance	Republic	CSW
	One-off financial and in-kind assistance	Local	CSW and directly LSG office
Law on financial support to family with children	**Benefits**		
	Child allowance,	Republic	LSG office for child care
	Pre-school attendance cost for children without parental care, and	Republic	Pre-school institution
	Pre-school attendance cost for children with disabilities and	Republic	Pre-school institution
	Deduction of the pre-school costs for children from financially deprived families.	Local	Pre-school institution
Red cross law	Soup kitchens program,	Republic, local	Local Red Cross offices
	Support in food and hygiene items	Republic, local	Local Red Cross offices
	Distribution of locally donated clothing,	Republic, local	Local Red Cross offices
	Support program to the victims of human trafficking,	Republic, local	Local Red Cross offices
	Programme for recovery of socially vulnerable children	Republic, local	Local Red Cross offices
	Social inclusion programme for Roma children and children with disabilities	Donor support	29 Local Red Cross
	Solidarity actions	Local	Local Red Cross offices
	Programmes of one-off in-kind support to the most vulnerable population	Republic, local	105 Local Red Cross (II-IV development level
Family law	Public functions in the area of family laws preventive, corrective actions, parental rights, full partial termination of parental rights, fostering, guardianship, adoption, mediation	Republic	Ministry and CSW s

2.4.2. Measures initiated and/or implemented by Civil Society Organizations (NGOs)

Civil society organizations addressing education issues are very active in working with vulnerable groups and Roma, and over the years different organizations implemented various programs and projects for support to poor and Roma students. NGOs are geographically well distributed with the exception of South Serbia. Some of them cover only one municipality but have great local coverage (all schools, or children in that municipality), while others have broader territorial coverage with smaller groups of beneficiaries in one locality. Most NGOs cover from 100-400 children, teacher or parents depending on the type of support. NGOs that work over 10 years have coverage of over 1000 beneficiaries per project/measure. Donor projects and NGO projects in partnerships with big international donors have wider territorial coverage and the number of their beneficiaries that can go up to 20.000-50.000.

NGOs whose primary areas are social services, culture/media/recreation and environment add up to 65% of registered organizations. Social services are a priority for most of NGOs established before 1989 and with the budget range from 20.000-100.000€. As their primary target group, 8% of organizations have persons with disabilities and 7% children and youth. Around 77% of organizations that address education, also provide additional education and training and most of them are located in Belgrade.[59]

There seems to be a wide range of services that NGOs provide[60], as a response to the needs of specific beneficiaries that cannot be fully satisfied in other ways. NGOs cover many support activities for poor students that are not covered by the system. Some of these are activities that the civil sector can address more efficiently locally as grass root organization than government institutions could. Working with the communities and in the communities is a civil sector responsibility. However, sustainable actions depend on sustainable financial resources, which are often not the case.

Measures implemented by NGOs summarized in broad categories are the following:

- ***Material support:*** clothes, food, books, purchased by own funds, through grants or organizing charity events is provided by many local Roma NGOs. Some local NGOs, for example Association of citizens "Rainbow" and "Women Roma Center" and "Palestra" point out that providing material support is one of the most important aspect of support to students.
- ***Organizing day-care, pre-school, extended stay, clubs and out of school activities*** free of charge or with low fees. For example, Association of citizens "Children's Joy" provides programs for pre-school children through mobile playrooms, workshops, open kindergartens. In 2013 they will include around 300 3-6 years old children in their playrooms in Zaječar and surroundings. Group 484 supports participation of children in regular school activities but also out-of-school and especially engagement in creative and art workshops, as they find these activities as most beneficial for creating a positive self-image. NGO "Djurdjevdan" organizes remedial teaching programs and uses a "learning through playing" approach to prepare children for school.

[59] Civic Initiatives (2011), *Assessment of the Situation in the Civil Society Organizations Sector in Serbia,* Belgrade

[60] For mapping the NGO activities and initiative in this field both desk research and a small sample survey with custom made questionnaire was used. The desk research consisted of summarizing relevant government reports, surveys done in the past 5 years, research of available web sites for relevant NGOs, information and material collected from the Office for cooperation with civil sector and donor organizations active in Serbia. The survey was conducted among the most active NGOs in this field i.e. that are part of the Network of civil society organizations working with children and the League for the Decade of Roma.

- ***Organizing activities that bring together children from vulnerable groups and mainstream population***, and working on intercultural competencies of local community, educational and informative events. Many NGOs have stated that sensitization of peers and teachers is crucial for successful integration. For example, organizations as “Kokoro”, “Rainbow”, “Friends of Children of Serbian”, “Children’s Joy” and many others organize workshops, youth clubs, social events, excursions and other activities that bring together children from mainstream population and children from vulnerable groups. Special attention is given to raising cultural sensitivity and understanding for Roma culture, and at the same time, supporting development of cultural identity of Roma children.
- ***Working with parents*** of children from vulnerable groups and mainstream population, individually or in community so that they are enabled preparing their children for school. For example, “Roma Education Center from Niš established cooperation with schools by having their activists as pedagogical assistants, and provided counseling and guidance to families. Organization “Kokoro” provides individual and group psychosocial support to whole families of poor and Roma children. Cultural events, exhibitions and workshops for parents of children from mainstream population and parents from vulnerable groups are most often organized in schools.
- ***Working with education staff on improving their competencies and raising awareness***. Aside of projects such as Education for all, DILS or IMPRESS, funded by WB or EU, several other donors as REF, OSFS , SDC, Red Cross, FOS, **Pestalozzi Children's Foundation,** OSCE in partnership with NGOs (CIP, REC, Stablo, Open Club) support trainings for school staff, teachers, advisors, principals. Most of the trainings focus on raising competencies for individualization of teaching, using and creating IEP, fostering tolerance and cultural sensitivity.
- ***Assistance for collecting documents***: assistance in obtaining and guiding through the administrative procedures. Prices of taxes, complicated procedures, the need to travel far to get the documents rendered nearly impossible for some to exercise their basic rights. Organizations like “Praxis” advocate for children to be enrolled in school without all documents when some schools refuse them, although the LFES guarantees the right to access education without documents. Praxis also finances traveling and shipping costs for obtaining documents, and provides support through lawsuits and court procedures for later enrollment and re-enrollment.
- ***Informational campaigns, round tables, conferences*** etc. The Network of organizations for children and member organizations are very active in this respect. They organize round tables, press conferences, print informational leaflets and brochures. For example, Open Club form Niš developed an advocacy campaign for inclusion in cooperation with Norwegian donors, “Friends of Serbian Children” organized linking NGOs and government institutions and decision makers, enabled children to talk directly to government representatives. Other useful projects were “Children’s right in media”, “Media in protecting of youth”, Strengthening of local capacities for protection and promotion of children’s rights” and publication “Codex- Children and media”.
- Some NGOs also offer ***small stipends***. The Roma Education Fund provided scholarships for Roma students in secondary education for Roma students in the project” Inclusion of Roma students in secondary education in AP Vojvodina”, and also FOS through the project “Equal opportunities in secondary education”.

Paper on the Overview of measures for poor and Roma students provided by NGOs is the **Annex 3**.

2.5. POLICIES AND MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY DONOR FUNDED PROJECTS

Similarly to NGOs, donors and international partners are often filling in the provision gaps. They also provide assistance to national and local actors in developing new services and approaches, in building capacities of the providers and the entire system to respond adequately to the needs of vulnerable population, and support piloting of the new instruments.

Many pro-poor measures were introduced, supported, piloted or developed through a number of large-scale projects in the education and the social welfare sector. The list of these projects is provided in the **Annex 4** – Recent and on-going donor assistance to education and social welfare sectors.

It is to be noted that most of the projects were not joint projects of the education and the social welfare system, and that cooperative and holistic approach projects are more often found among projects of SDC, UNICEF, REF and FOS than in projects funded by other donors. IPA and World Banka (WB) projects, as well as many others, were financing technical assistance, works and equipment but not in-kind or financial provisions for the targeted vulnerable groups. This also means that calculating per child unit costs for the investments is not an applicable methodology. However, such an approach could prove beneficial in the future for targeting the measures supported by projects. Some of the projects were highly instrumental in introducing new practices (e.g. IPA projects or the WB funded DILS), while others are focusing on providing assistance where the national, regional or local budgets are not covering the needs or services are not existing or are insufficient (e.g. scholarship and mentoring programs of REF and FOS, support for obtaining IDs, pre-school and afterschool provision of SDC, early education, UNICEF).

Donor support in the area of social welfare was based on the Strategy for Social Welfare Development (2005). Projects supported the development of decentralized environment of social welfare delivery with an aim to improve efficiency, equity and quality of community-based social service delivery. The UK and Norway have jointly supported the Government to design and pilot a regulatory system for decentralized provision of social services which included development of minimum standards of services, and development and commissioning mechanisms. It also provided capacity building for local self-governments in social policy planning and provision of services. Norway supported the development of the accreditation system of training program for social professionals, and development of the licensing system of providers and professionals. The best donor supported initiatives and lessons learnt have been integrated into the LSW. Donors have been providing, in particular EU funds, grant schemes for development of community-based social services, capacity building of social service providers and capacity building of national stakeholders to monitor, evaluate, and supervise decentralized service provision. UNICEF is active in the field of social integration of children with special needs, and their des-institutionalization. The focus of on-going donor support is on further capacity building of decentralized stakeholders, and promotion of innovative and cross-sectorial approaches to social inclusion initiatives in service provision.

The donor support in the area of education, except of major infrastructure projects of building and equipping education facilities, in the last 4-5 years focused on improving the equity of education, thus providing support for the implementation of the LFES. Through IPA funding the Government has introduced into the system and trained 170 Roma pedagogical assistants, has set up a Second chance education system for youth who have dropped out before finishing compulsory education, and is expanding the pre-school provision in 15 municipalities. Through a WB credit inclusive education has been introduced with all the needed support measures (trainings, grants, etc.), with Swiss donation the Red Cross, NGOs and UNICEF are supporting pre-school education of vulnerable groups in more than 60 municipalities, and with the support

from the REF a highly effective scholarship and mentoring system was established for Roma secondary school students in Vojvodina. Support from UNICEF, FOS and **Pestalozzi Children's Foundation** is also predominantly directed for the further development of different aspects of inclusive education.

For a detailed account on donor funded projects see Annex 1: Recent and ongoing donor assistance to education and social welfare sectors

2.6. MONITORING OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The analysis of the national and local level pro-poor measures in both systems shows a wide range of measures. However, unless those measures are holistically provided to each child, they represent separate interventions with low effectiveness. Policy monitoring in Serbia in general is very weak, and in particular in the area targeted by the current analysis monitoring seems to be the weakest link. The efficiency and effectiveness of the set of available measures, both national and local can hardly be assessed.

Due to the already mentioned low level of institutional cooperation between sectors and levels of government there is no integrated monitoring system of measures provided to beneficiaries at the local level. Leading both to possible gaps in provision to big numbers of potential beneficiaries and possible overlaps of the measures provided to the same beneficiaries.

The indicators used by RSO to be followed by the statistical reports still need further refining within both sectors. On one hand, regarding "invisible" vulnerable groups data are not often available in the official reports and therefore the extent to which coverage of services reflects the needs cannot be seen. On the other hand, education data are not des-aggregated by SES quintile or vulnerability, hence effectiveness of the pro-poor measures cannot be assessed without deploying additional empirical research.

Centers for social work report on their work. Their reports are usually published, and provide comprehensive information on the social welfare provision in the respective community. The Institute for Social Protection prepares a summary report on the work of all CSWs which is available on internet. However, they do not contain information on services identified as a needed across local communities in Serbia.

In the education sector none of the institutions are publishing regular national reports. Exceptions are the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation's (IEQE)reports on the external school leaving examinations and the NEC annual reports (available only electronically at http://www.nps.gov.rs/nps/izvestaji-o-radu/), but none of these address directly pro poor policies as their major target.

Since 2011, the MoLESP launched a database on social profile of local self-governments in Serbia. The database provides an overview of the distribution of main central social benefits across Serbia. Currently, there is no developed database of all social service providers and type of community-based social services available in Serbia, but the recently completed Report on Mapping social services provided by the LSGs in Serbia provides an updated overview of the social services and clients[61]. It is expected that once the licensing system is established, MoLESP shall maintain the registry of licensed social providers and community-based social services.

[61] Project funded by the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and implemented by the Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, June 2013

Financial social assistance and child allowance are well monitored via the MoLESP's information system. Since recently the information on the countrywide distribution of these benefits is available on their website. However, the two databases are not interconnected locally, so there is no information on whether children clients of financial social assistance are also clients of child allowance. This information can be mobilized only in the central information system. Also, the percentage of coverage related to all potentially eligible for the provision is completely missing.

Local budgets provide information on a variety of support to the local children population. Many of the support provided such as free meals in schools for poor or Roma children, free excursions for poor or Roma children, free books from 5th grade, are not explicitly listed in any legislation (except a part of them from recently adopted new LBE), although they are appropriate and needed. In Serbia still standardized reporting and financial records are not ensured across local self-governments on the support provided – which seriously hampers monitoring and analysis of the different existing measures. There is no monitoring system of all national polices implemented at the local level e.g. in education coverage of transportation costs provided to children are recorded only in the local budgets, but in variety of ways as transportation for financially deprived families, or to children with disabilities, etc. Therefore, it cannot be concluded whether transportation is provided as an education or social measure. Moreover, there is no system to record the demands for the existing services, so real disbursement do not provide information on the real coverage of the needs for the services. Similarly, the subsidies for pre-school attendance cost of financially deprived children, regulated as a support provided by the local level by the Law on Financial Support to the Family with Children, are not monitored at the national level. Information on the coverage can be retrieved through analysis of local budgets; still the information is limited with no information on the number of beneficiaries, the amount of subsidies. Data on the coverage of the poor children with this entitlement are available only through additional researches conducted within projects or studies, used in this study.

Since 2003 the Ministry responsible for education is developing a comprehensive database on the education system, but it is only partially functional. A new generation of the database is currently under development, with an updated set of information capturing newly introduced policies, with legal regulation of data protection, including also the possibility to monitor the education indicators sensitive to SES quintiles and vulnerability as adopted by the NEC.

Under the leadership of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for EU Integration an initiative of establishment of the concept and system for monitoring social inclusion in Serbia in the report Monitoring Social Inclusion in Serbia[62]. The report identifies key dimensions of social exclusion of the population, highlights and proposes sets of indicators for monitoring the level of inclusion of certain groups in the relevant aspects, sheds light on the existing sources of information about the given indicators and recommends their introduction into regular statistical collection of data or appropriate surveys.

Currently, the main sources of data for calculation of social inclusion indicators are the Household Budget Survey (HBS) and the Labor Force Survey (LFS). Also, data from vital statistics and education statistics are used as collected by the Republic Statistical Office and the MoESTD, as well as data on health collected by the Serbian Public Health Institute „Dr. Milan Jovanovic Batut."

[62] SIPRU (2010) *Monitoring Social Inclusion in Serbia Overview and current situation of social inclusion in Serbia based on monitoring European and national indicators,* Belgrade,

The Government of Serbia and the RSO a piloting of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) that would allow for advancement of the system of data collection and analysis of the situation of different socially excluded groups and individuals, alignment of monitoring of social inclusion indicators with the EU countries. The SILC survey should become a major source of data on poverty and social exclusion.

In the absence of appropriate monitoring applied education research is providing the bases for assessment of the status of education of vulnerable groups. This research is of varying quality, scope, target and methodology, and usually lacking a comprehensive approach, however, it provides some of the valuable and otherwise missing information on the implementation of pro-poor policies as well. An overview of this research body from the last four years is available in the project report *Monitoring Inclusive Education in Serbia*[63].

The need for setting up a comprehensive monitoring system of the education of poor and vulnerable students remains a high priority.

Chapter summary

Although a comprehensive and targeted policy for the education provision and supports for children from poverty background is missing, a wide array of measures and instruments combined throughout the education and social welfare system is in place, and well complemented by measures implemented by civil society and/or donor organizations.

However, several concerns need to be highlighted:

Firstly, due to the lack of integrated databases and regular monitoring both at local and national level the effectiveness of the measures cannot be assessed.

Secondly, financial allocations for the measures in the education system are embedded in the education finances, and without additional empirical research the allocations for pro-poor or vulnerability measures are available only partially. The same holds true for measure implemented at local level.

Thirdly, the abundance of fragmented measures seems to be set in a highly un-user-friendly way, and without a pro-active agency to assist, poor families are left with an additional burden of finding their way through the system of varied supports for which they might be entitled. Schools are increasingly requested to play a pro/active role in this respect, but their capacities for taking up the new role remain weak.

Fourthly, mainstreaming of innovative measures piloted or implemented through civil society and/or donor organizations is not yet happening on a regular and foreseeable basis, hence many good ideas and even well proved measures are still not part of the system and are not scaled up

[63] Jokić, T., Baucal, I., Kovač-Cerović, T.: Pregled istraživanja inkluzivnog obrazovanja, U: *Monitoring inkluzivnog obrazovanja u Srbiji(* Inclusive education research review, *In: Monitoring of inclusive education in Serbia)*. Institute for psychology, Faculty of Phylosophy, Belgrade

3. ANALYSIS OF PRO-POOR MEASURES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

A detailed analysis of poverty or vulnerability related measures in the education and the social welfare system was conducted following a scenario approach and identifying bottlenecks through the expected education trajectory of a child from poverty background. The requirements of successfully enrolling, attending, reaching outcomes and progressing, which are not always ensured by the system, and consequently can create barriers for children from low SES families or from vulnerable groups, are listed in the following table 9:

The table differentiates between direct and indirect bottlenecks.

Table 9: *Requirements and bottlenecks in the education trajectory of children from poverty /vulnerability backgrounds*

Requirements and bottlenecks			Pre-school education		Basic education		Secondary education
			3-5	6-7	G1-G4	G5-G8	
Enrollment	D	Vicinity of institution	x	x		x	x
		Enrolment logistics		x	x		
		Personal documents	x	x	x		
		Tuition fee	x				
		Pre-school attendance costs	x				
		Local subsidies for pre-school	x				
		Prioritization criteria	x				
		Access to mainstream education			x		
		Clear information		x			x
	I	Capacities of institution	x				
Attendance	D	Clothing	x	x	x	x	x
		Child allowance	x	x	x	x	x
		Preventing absenteeism			x	x	x
		School management acceptance			x	x	x
		Transportation costs and organization	x	x	x	x	x
		School materials	x	x			
		Teacher acceptance	x	x	x		
		Meals in school		x	x		
		Dormitories					x
		Pocket money					x
	I	Peer relationship	x	x	x	x	x
		Financial social assistance	x	x	x	x	x
		Parental support			x	x	x

Requirements and bottlenecks			Pre-school education		Basic education		Secondary education
			3-5	6-7	G1-G4	G5-G8	
Attainment of outcomes	D	Teacher engagement and scaffolding	x	x	x	x	x
		Textbooks			x	x	x
		Learning materials		x	x	x	x
		Engaging learning activities		x	x	x	x
		Individualized instruction			x	x	x
		Formative assessment			x	x	x
		Remedial teaching			x	x	x
		Compensatory/enrichment programs			x	x	x
		Extracurricular and afterschool activities			x	x	x
		School library/equipment			x	x	x
		Parental support and scaffolding	x	x	x	x	x
		Homework/home learning			x	x	x
		Libraries, IT			x	x	x
		Employment or further education possibilities					x
	I	Peer support	x	x	x	x	x
		Quality assurance			x	x	x
		Enriching home environment	x	x	x	x	x
Progression	D	Certification of attendance and school readiness		x	x		
		Passing grades			x	x	x
		Structured preparatory activities for enrolment in next cycle				x	x

The table depicts the multitude of ways poverty of the family can hamper the education of the child. Poverty also correlates with, and subsumes parental unemployment, parental low education level, and a non-conducive social-cultural milieu for child development. In Serbia the poorest are the Roma, who aside of the above listed correlates often live in isolated settlements/slums, might lack identification documents, as well as children from remote rural areas with no access to facilities and basic infrastructure.

The following analysis focuses on identifying provisions targeted at mitigating the bottlenecks listed. A wide range of potential problems apply to all education levels, they will be treated together and analyzed first.

3.1. ALL EDUCATION LEVELS

3.1.1. Enrolment bottlenecks

3.1.1.1. Vicinity of school

The school network in Serbia is unevenly distributed and does not follow demographic changes which happened in the last 20 years. The LFES puts the responsibility of catering and reorganizing the network at municipal level, based on criteria set by the Government (art. 29.), and gives a time limit of 12 months for municipalities to adopt a new network plan for pre-schools and basic schools, while the network of secondary schools is adopted by the Government. Criteria adopted in 2010 (Order about criteria for establishing the act on the network of pre-schools and schools) require non-discriminatory distribution and equal access for all children as the first criteria (art. 2, st. 3, point 1.and 2. and art. 3. st. 3, point 1.and 2). However, only about one fourth of municipalities have handed in the new network plan, hence it is not possible to assess how they enacted the criteria, and availability remains an unresolved problem especially in rural areas and in vicinity of Roma settlements, which affects a big part of poor children. Education institutions are public property, except a minor portion of municipal property (even after the enactment of the new Law on public property, art 72 and 76[64]), which creates a disincentive for LSGs to embark in proactive measures ensuring access to all children, especially in terms of mobilizing other public facilities for education purposes, or closing down those which are in depopulated areas. Also, the political connotations of network changes, especially of closing down of not needed institutions seem to have prevented school network optimizations so far. In addition to the aforementioned problems the introduction of a required pre-school attendance (from 2005 - 6 months, from 2009 - 9 months) has faced the challenge of ensuring access for all children of the last pre-school age, most often in pre-school institutions, but also in many cases in school facilities. In order to prevent non-attendance in case of not available facilities or complicated transportation, a recent sublegal act has introduced the possibility of home-schooling for the preparatory program (Rulebook on closer conditions for organizing the preparatory pre-school program[65], 2012, art 5, st. 3).At secondary education level the school network aside of the aforementioned problems faces an additional one. Given the long stalling of secondary education reform and the reform of the TVET schools, their inherited network has also not changed and at many places the network of TVET schools is not reflecting the labor market needs. Hence the youth from these areas has a forced choice of enrolling in schools in vicinity which do not lead to employment or getting further away from home, given the means, where more attractive schools can be found. This choice is particularly painful for youth from poor families.

In order to mitigate this bottleneck the recent legislative changes introduced the possibility of distance education (LSE, art 27, LBE art 38) and homeschooling (LBE art 38). Both provisions will be developed in greater detail through a sublegal act, and it will be important to monitor the effectiveness of these new provisions especially from an equity perspective.

One more important feature of the school network in Serbia is that it is catering the students in shifts – most often in two shifts. This has a consequence that whole day schooling is not the practice in the country, and it is organized only for 1st and 2ndprimary school grade children upon parental request and based on

[64] Law on Public Property("Official Gazette RS" No. 72/2011)

[65] Rulebook on closer conditions for organizing the preparatory preschool program("Official Gazette RS" No. 5/2012)

consent of the ministry, as extended stay for children whose parents are working and might have long working hours.[66] Such an organizational structure hampers possibilities of preparing homework in the school, having extracurricular or sports activities, both of which are affecting children from vulnerable groups and from low SES families the most.

3.1.1.2. Identification documents

The lack of valid and updated IDs (ID, birth certificate, residence certificate) is a still unresolved issue for several thousands of predominantly Roma in Serbia, who are still without legal subjectivity and most often are referred to as "invisible citizens". Identification documents have been so far an obstacle in accessing healthcare and social welfare, including for social benefits and services, both national and locally provided ones and non-compulsory pre-school education. Procedural requirements for exercising financial social assistance and child allowance exclude all poor population without identification documents. Bearing in mind that additional social support (clothing, textbooks, one-off assistance) supplements these social benefits, it means that poor population without ID s are also excluded from other essential support. Furthermore, CSW does not have jurisdiction over the citizens who are not registered at their territory. It leads further to the fact that wide range of social services available in the community do not reach those most in need.

The problem is twofold. On one hand Roma living in illegal settlements up to now could not get a residence certificate stating their address. In order to solve this problem the Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence of Citizens[67] entered into force end of 2011, according to which if a citizen is not able to register permanent residence on the grounds of ownership of a dwelling, a lease or other legal basis, his/her permanent residence can be establishing at the address of the institution in which he/she is placed on a permanent basis, or at the address of the Center for Social Work in whose area he/she is present (Article 11) but the Rulebook on the Application Form for the Registration of Permanent Residence at the Address of an Institution or CSW[68] entered into force only in December 2012. Hopefully, obtaining residence certificates will not be an obstacle for using the services in the future. In December 2012 it was estimated that about 30.000 persons are affected[69].

The other part of the problem relates to obtaining birth certificates for children whose parents do not have one (and those who do not have access to healthcare do not have access to hospitals for childbirth as well). Subsequent to several action plans, UNHCR[70] and European Commission[71]activities, a new legislation, the Law on amendments of the Law on Non-contentious Proceedings[72], adopted mid-2012 regulates the ways how to obtain birth certificates for children from the "invisible" group. Currently it is estimated that about

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[66] City of Belgrade is providing extended stay up to the 4th grade.

[67] Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence of Citizens ("Official Gazette RS" No. 87/2011)

[68] Rulebook on the Application Form for the Registration of Permanent Residence at the Address of an Institution or Social Work Centre ("Official Gazette RS" No. 113/2012)

[69] Report on the Roundtable *Implementation of the Law on amendments of the Law on Non-contentious Proceedings and Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence of Citizens* http://www.praxis.org.rs/index.php/sr/education-training/workshops-roundtables/item/485-roundtable-implementation-of-law-on-non-contentious-procedure-and-law-on-permanent-and-temporary-residence-of-citizens-held .

[70]On 9 April 2012, the minister for human and minority rights, public administration and local government, the deputy ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia and the head of the UNHCR Representation in Serbia signed the *Memorandum of Understanding* establishing closer cooperation in the implementation of activities aimed at supporting ethnic Roma in the procedure of late registration of births.

[71]Report on the conference of the Government of Serbia and the EC, 2011

[72] The Law on amendments of the Law on Non-contentious Proceedings ("Official Gazette RS" No 46/95 , 18/2005, 85/2012 and 45/2013)

6.500-7.000 people (including children) are without birth certificates. In order to overcome this bottleneck many NGOs are engaged in projects to support obtaining personal documents connected to enrollment to education, obtaining healthcare and social assistance. The two aforementioned legal acts provide a systemic solution for the future, and their application will need to be observed.

The LFES 2009 has abolished the request of IDs for the obligatory pre-school and school enrolment. Art. 98, st. 3 states that the school must enroll children regardless of whether their parents have a valid permanent address, at the site where they request. However, it does not regulate the same exemption for enrollment to pre-school (see for more detail in the pre-school section).

3.1.1.3. Access to mainstream education

In Serbia the neighborhood schooling principle is adhered to. School choice is allowed, however, the neighborhood school is obliged to enroll all children from its territory.

Segregation as forced enrollment into special school was possible in case of children from vulnerable groups until 2010, after an enrolment testing and subsequent categorization as not being fit for enrollment into mainstream education. The LFES 2009 abolished the previous practice of enrolment testing prior to enrolment to G1, based on which many children, most often from Roma or other vulnerable backgrounds were assigned to being educated in special schools. Art 98. Requires free enrollment of all children in regular schools, with a provision to apply for additional educational, social or medical support in case it is needed. The application can also start at pre-school age, based on parental initiative. The assessment of the support needed is regulated at municipal level, through special inter-sectorial committees (ISC), whose roles and responsibilities are set by the Rulebook on Additional educational, social and healthcare support to child and student[73]. LFES additions and changes from 2013 also require ISC opinion in case enrolment to first grade would be postponed by one year (art 23. referring to art 98 in LFES). Eligible support that ISCs can recommend ranges widely. It can include supplies, but also assistance of pedagogical or personal assistant, special transportation, or education in special schools with parental consent, but the provision and financing of the support prescribed is at municipal level (or exceptionally at national level when the support is corresponding to the provisions which are national responsibility, i.e. salaries for pedagogical assistants), and informal evidence shows that in many cases municipal financial means are not available to provide the full support needed. No detailed data collection on this has been completed yet. The work of the municipal committees is supervised by a national inter-sectorial joint body, composed of representatives of the three respective ministries (education, health and social assistance), other experts and institutional representatives. A recent evaluation on the beginning of the ISC functioning[74] shows that in the first year their work was still burdened by several administrative and logistical problems (space, database, security of records on the children), their procedures and financing varied greatly by municipality, but their work was appreciated by the parents and gave the impression of high professionalism and commitment. The biggest challenge is to ensure the financing for the additional support identified by the ISC as need. In the future LSG budgets should use their available budget lines for planning this support (e.g. one –off assistance or include into local act on extended rights). The estimations for the expected financial means needed could rely on the overview of the type and costing of the provisions suggested thus far, and a cost benefit analysis would be welcome in order to strengthen LSG

[73] Rulebook on Additional educational, social and healthcare support to child and student ("Official Gazette R" No 63/2010)

[74] Center for Interactive Pedagogy (2013?): *Educational, Health and Social Support to Children with Developmental Difficulties and Physical Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia - Analysis of the New Concept and Its Application in Practice in Three Towns*

commitment. It would be worthwhile to conduct a new assessment of the work of ISCs, collect and critically assess the experiences of the first two years of their functioning. Based on such an analysis recommendations regarding the financing of the work of ISCs, level of obligation to financially support the measures suggested by the ISC, as well as regarding more concrete procedures connecting the support to the forthcoming capitation formula, to available local funds, or to services provided by local actors, including NGOs, should be developed in order to strengthen the effectiveness of this important new mechanism. Currently, the data on the work of ISCs is being collected on a new web-based application, and after the new appointment of the members of the Joint Body based on the Governmental reconstruction in 2013, further steps in consolidating the ISC are to be expected.

3.1.1.4. Enrollment logistics

In the early stages of education enrolment rate depends also on a clear and easy to follow logistics. The procedure in Serbia in this respect is as follows: LSG is responsible for maintaining records on the children of starting age for school, and informing the pre-school institutions/ primary schools and parents. These records are often not updated and information toward parents on forthcoming enrollment is not adjusted to vulnerable groups. The pre-school institution and the school should, in turn, inform the LSG on the children who are not enrolled, the validity of this information is also hampered by non- updated records, and a lacking tracking system. For the children who are reported as not enrolled into school, and if there is no progress after discussion with parents or involvement of the CSW, the LSG should by the Law request for the initiation of misdemeanor proceeding with subsequent penalties. These rarely happen in practice[75], the penalties are perceived as non-adequate for vulnerable population.[76] CWS involvement in the process is also weak – they react only upon a formally received initiative, and have limited fieldwork and emergency interventions capacities. Gaps and leaks in the procedure result in a lower enrolment rate of vulnerable children. A more proactive role of CSW, the LSG and the school professional staff would be required to ensure full enrollment of all children. The outreach services by the pedagogical assistants and NGOs are currently replacing the main system-based actors.

Section Summary

The main enrolment barriers in Serbia are connected to the long overdue optimization of the network of pre-schools and schools, to lack of organized transportation, to lacking or insufficient outreach to particularly vulnerable groups, and to the not yet stabilized functioning of the new inclusive education policy and the support for its implementation, especially the implementation of the ISCs' recommendations. These barriers endanger the right to education in its most robust formulation. Despite the long tradition of free of charge and compulsory education in Serbia, these bottlenecks are still active and affecting the children from particularly vulnerable groups. They are more prominent at pre-school level than at the primary or secondary education levels.

[75] In Belgrade for the last two and half years 39 parents/guardians were sentenced for not enrolling children into schools, while 486 cases were opened on children not enrolling into school or dropping out of school. Source: Offence Court Belgrade

[76] IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2012). Analysis of the Drop-out from Compulsory Education: Role of Institutions and Processes at Local Level

3.1.2. Attendance bottlenecks

3.1.2.1. Preventing absenteeism

School attendance requirements are regulated through the LFES (art113, st. 2, point 8), and are set at maximum 25 class-hours of absenteeism without medical certificate or parental justification, from which at least 15 after a written warning has been issued by the school to the parent. Exceeding this amount can result in seriously jeopardizing the further education trajectory of the child at secondary education level, it can be expelled from school (art 115, st. 1, point 2). Hence, a big part of school life is organized around registering, justifying and reporting about absenteeism, and consequently, this is also reflected on parent-child and parent-teacher relationships, especially in teenage years, while attending secondary education. The LFES requires that schools notify parents if 5 unjustified hours are reached, and set up a mechanism for the sake of preventing further missing classes. In practice, this notification happens much later, usually when the child is close to reaching the 25 hours limit. A recent study showed that in case of non-attendance and dropping out the pre-schools and schools are not reacting, i.e. they are reaching out to families only in less than 10% of reported cases[77]. This percentage is even lower in urban areas.

In case of risk of dropping out, or actual dropping out, the pre-school institution or school contact the parents with the aim of reintegrating the child into school and finding out the reasons for leaving the school. From recently, pedagogical assistants are instrumental and successful in this, since they can also help families to access other financial or non-financial support available in the community. In case of failure of school-parents talks, the pre-school or school should duly inform CSWs and the procedure of opening a case should start. The CSW should promptly react through counseling work in the council office for marriage and family, through warning to parents on execution of parental rights, referral to adequate support programs, services and benefits for family and child, and as a last resort by initiating partial or full termination of parental rights, However, in reality the prompt intervention by the CSW is missing and there are several barriers to that. Firstly the education barriers faced by children are at low level of prioritization by the CSW professionals compared to other social difficulties. It means that following the standards of work, the case will be opened in the regular procedure within 5 days from the reporting and the first assessment to be completed within 7 days. Considering the consequences of a child being out of school this is a highly late intervention of the CSW. Also, CSW interventions are limited only to cases that are reported by other institution or individual. The fact that the CSW records provide data on the education status for only 70.4%, of children clients also indicates a low intervention rate of the CSW. Furthermore, 17.1% of children clients for whom education data are provided actually do not attend school, and there is no record on the CSW case manager's interventions in this respect. A more proactive role of the CSW within case management should be expected, at least for the children/families who are direct clients of CSW, clients of financial assistance, and for any other case reported by other institution and individual. The next set of barriers is linked to low capacity of field visits of the CSW in many LSGs, which could be overcome by connecting to NGOs and other outreach services, if available in the community. There is a set of barriers linked to the territorial principle of CSW interventions. A child with no residence in the LSG does not fall under the jurisdiction of the respective CSW. Since December 2012 the Rulebook on the Application Form for the Registration of Permanent Residence at the Address of an Institution or Social Work Centre should remedy this bottleneck. [78].

[77] IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2012) *Analysis of the Drop-out from Compulsory Education: Role of Institutions and Processes at Local Level*

[78] Since December 2012 the Rulebook on the Application Form for the Registration of Permanent Residence at the Address of an Institution or Social Work Centre should remedy this bottleneck.

Having in mind the low intervention capacities, all the listed bottlenecks that could cause non-attendance need to be seriously analyzed and remedied.

3.1.2.2. Transportation costs

According to the LFES Art 159 st.2 point 4.transportation costs should be covered by the municipal budget for all children with special needs, for pre-school children attending the preparatory program if the pre-school is more than 2 km away and for school children if the school is more than 4 km away. There is however informal evidence[79] that about 82 percent of municipalities are providing transportation support, others are either avoiding the obligation to cover transportation costs, or transportation is not well organized, hence a closer look to the ways how this provision is implemented at municipal level is needed.

3.1.2.3. Clothing

The legislative framework in education does not address the provision of appropriate clothing for those in need, neither are schools active in organizing support. A recent study[80] has identified lack of appropriate clothing as one of the main reasons for Roma children not attending school. Families in poverty rely on the Red Cross (whose one of the regular activities in great majority of LSGs is provision of clothing) or on humanitarian actions. The social welfare law regulates the provision of clothing for the poor to be provided with in local one-off social assistance, both in-kind and financial ones. CSW records on the one-off social assistance provision do not contain separate data on the provision of clothing[81], it might be part within the general item "other one-off support provided" which leads us to a conclusion that this type of support is not frequently found within the local one-off social assistance. Many schools are active in organizing different solidarity school level actions for providing clothing to poor and pedagogical assistants and NGOs are also active in this respect. However, local coordination of the clothing assistance to the poor without adequate local tracking system of the support provided can create challenges and leave many families unattended.

3.1.2.4. Meals in school

The legislative framework in education addresses the provision of school meals only partially. The new LBE has introduced a soft requirement, i.e. a recommendation for schools to organize meals in every school, but without financial means connected to the actual provision (LBE, art 69). The social welfare regulations do not specifically regulate provision of free meals; however in practice this type of support to poor makes a major share within one-off social assistance allocations, both in-kind and financial. Allocation for food items makes 38.7 percent in the total disbursement of the local one-off social financial assistance, and major share of the one-off in-kind social assistance disbursement in Serbia[82].It seems that data do not refer only to school meals provision, but also soup kitchens provision. It is estimated that about 40 percent of municipalities are providing meals for at least some children in regular school[83], but most often they are providing meals to

[79] Child Organizations Network in Serbia and Coalition for Monitoring of Childs Rights (2011)- *Right to free education monitoring report -Table on the support provided for children by local level,* MODS

[80] IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2012) Analysis of the Drop-out from Compulsory Education: Role of Institutions and Processes at Local Level

[81] One-off financial assistance is allocated in most cases for food items with 38.7%, purchasing of medicines 22.8%, essential household items 14.1%, and for equipping children for school 7.9%. For the in-kind assistance, the CSW data shows that the majority is provided for free meals, while the dominant client groups are Roma people, 70.4%. Source: Republic Institute for Social Protection (2012) *Report on the Work of the Centers for Social Work for 2011*, Belgrade

[82] Republic Institute for Social Protection (2012) *Report on the Work of the Centers for Social Work for 2011*, Belgrade

[83] Table on the support provided for children by local level, Child Organizations Network in Serbia

special schools, which in turn creates additional incentives for low SES parents to want to enroll their children in special schools instead of mainstream education. Again, a closer look to the ways about how this provision is implemented at municipal level is needed. Civil society and humanitarian organizations and the Red Cross are active in providing meals as well. It is also frequent practice that the school provides free meals by negotiating with a supplier every 10 or 15 meal free. A more detailed analysis of this provision would be needed, including the assessment of its impact on attendance rate of children from vulnerable groups.

3.1.2.5. Child Allowance

Child Allowance is the most important program targeting children from poor and low income families In comparison to the EU countries also running the child allowance as a means-tested program (available to children from poor and low SES families) the coverage of children with child allowance is low, according to the findings of a recent analysis[84]. The income threshold level in those EU countries is set higher than in Serbia, making more families and children eligible for it and the coverage can reach more than 80 percent of children. Regarding the rate of child allowance in Serbia, the amount is set equal for all children, with no differentiation to age or birth order of the child, what can be found in many EU countries. The rate of the child allowance set in Serbia, according to the purchasing power standard (PPS) places Serbia in the group of EU countries with lower rates of the child allowance (although with the highest PPS in that group), while according to the share in the average salary Serbia belongs to the majority of EU countries with the range in the average salary being from 3-4 percent. [85] In Serbian context, the rate of the child allowance is almost equal to the amount allocated to the child within the financial social assistance, and this amount is equal to a half of the amount needed for the children aged up to 14 for covering the minimum consumer basket, defined by the absolute poverty line[86]. While there is a space for improvement of the two main features of the child allowance, such considering increasing the income threshold that would allow for higher coverage of the children, and/or differentiation of the rates of the child allowance, the same study identifies further weaknesses of the program influencing effectiveness of the program delivery.

- ***Weakness in targeting*** Child allowance program does not reach each child eligible and vice versa there are children receiving it who do not meet all eligibility criteria. The study identified 59.4% of eligible children do not receive the child allowance, while 52.8% of children receive child allowance although they do not meet the criteria. This symmetry indicates that with a more accurate targeting the needs could be met without substantial increase of costs.
- ***Poor administering of LSGs is reflected in the child allowance distribution inconsistencies*****:** The data on the share of child allowance beneficiaries in the total population up to age of 18 by municipalities shows that the share of child allowance beneficiaries does not correlate with the level of economic development of the municipalities[87]. Among municipalities with the highest shares of the child allowance beneficiaries one can find some of the most developed municipalities (e.g. Beočin with 45.87%) and among those with the lowest shares some of the most underdeveloped municipalities (e.g. Kučevo with only 8.1%)[88].

[84] Child Allowance Program in Serbia: Analysis and Recommendations for Its Improvement, Gordana Matkovic and Bosko Mijatovic, Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, UNICEF, 2012
[85] Share of the child allowance in the average salary is at 3.8 percent, according to the child allowance rate and average salary in 2011. Source: ibid
[86] In 2011, poverty line (minimal consumer basket) is set at 9,438 dinars for adult, and according to equivalency scales for child up to age of 14 is 0.5 of the amount. Ibid
[87] Based on the Government resolution on the level of development of local self-governments in Serbia
[88] Social profiles of the municipalities in Serbia, database, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy website

- ***Lack of appropriate information*** – according to the above mentioned study, more than 20% of those eligible are not well informed about the criteria for exercising child allowance program, but there are also some that do not know for the program at all or are not aware of how to access it.
- ***Weaknesses in administrative procedures set by Law –***
  - *poor and outdated income and assets assessment procedure, precisely cadaster income* makes a barrier for more than half of the eligible agricultural and mixed households (57.9%) to receive child allowance[89] .
  - *Time consuming, complicated and costly administrative procedures* presents an obstacle in applying for child allowance for 15.8 percent of potential beneficiaries covered in the same survey - list of documents required includes 11 official documents, often provided by different local public offices, and it is needed to revisit the requirements for all the documents, e.g. health insurance can be an obstacle for receiving the child allowance. In addition families receiving financial social assistance do not get a direct access to child allowance for children of school age, instead, they collect and submit the same documentation to apply for child allowance. This can be part of the explanation that among the children (0-18) beneficiaries of the financial social assistance 13.1% [90]do not receive child allowance. These two central benefits, as already explained, are administered by two different offices, municipal office for childcare and CSW, which although both local institutions do not have functional institutional cooperation relation regarding the same target group.
  - *Requirement of identification documents and residence permit* have been obstacles for receiving child allowance for children in Roma settlements. The obstacles are expected to be overcome with the new regulations treating residence permit and birth certificate as presented under section identification documents.
  - *Limitation of child allowance by the birth order of the child instead of number of children in the family* as a consequence had lower coverage of the children with child allowance program per family. Many EU countries have limitation only by the number of children who can receive child allowance per family which should be considered in Serbia as well.
    - *Disfunctionality of Child Allowance as a cash transfer measure conditional upon school enrolment and attendance*. The local offices for childcare require school attendance certificate only at the beginning of the school year. This leads to the possibility that some of the children who do not regularly attend school receive child allowance (only 8.8 percent of families do not receive child allowance as a consequence of child not attending a school). In order to strengthen the incentive value of this measure for reducing absenteeism and dropping out risks, there are initiatives requesting that the certificate on school attendance should be more frequently submitted, but no action has been taken on this up to now.

Addressing all of the presented weaknesses for more effective and efficient delivery of child allowance program require necessary changes of the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children.

3.1.2.6. School management acceptance

Schools are managed by School Boards and the School Director/Principal. School boards are composed of 3 parents, 3 teachers and 3 municipal representatives, and for their establishment in schools where children of national minorities are educated, the consent of the national council of the respective minority is

[89] Cadastre income is an obsolete calculation of the potential income from agricultural land, which leads to unrealistic picture of the social standing of these households and the fact that only 5.9% of children in these households receive child allowance. Source: Ibid

[90] Data from the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy, November 2012

required (LFES, art 54). This is particularly important to ensure access and non-discriminatory treatment of children from Roma national minority. Also, Parent Councils need to reflect the diversity of the child population in school (LFES, art. 58.). School boards are selecting the school principals based on a stepwise procedure that includes ministerial view as well. School principals are obliged to pass a specialized training and exam. The Standards for school principals competencies has just recently been adopted by the National Education Council[91] and the appropriate sublegal act is not yet developed, hence currently it cannot be assessed in which way the implementation of pro-poor measures will be enacted through them. School principals were included in trainings for inclusive education, the multitude of their tasks and their leadership role puts them into a very important and proactive role in implementing school policies. Research data also shows (Rado, Lažetić, 2010)[92] that the principal's attitude towards inclusive education might be a determining factor in framing an inclusive education school ethos.

School boards, principals, and in some extent parent councils aside of addressing routines of school life, financing and disciplinary issues have several important school policy instruments. They can use these instruments for promoting or neglecting pro-poor policies at school level. Schools have three years Development plans, a yearly Operation program and yearly budget planning – all being subject to approval by school boards. Many schools also have a Plan of "extended activities" by which they engage in production and/or service provision activities, and subletting parts of the facility. Income from the extended activities is at the disposal of the school and should be used for the improvement of education in the school. A study on 96 schools[93] looking into the ways extended activities are organized and the income incurred this way used has shown that only negligible percentage of this income is used to promote social inclusion and meet the specific needs of students from low SES families or from vulnerable groups. The study also showed that students participating in the extended activities of the school are predominantly excellent students who are interested and motivated, and that the schools miss the opportunity to engage students from low SES families or vulnerable groups in this kind of extracurricular activities. Only 0.2-1.7 percent of the income in average is used for school meals or for other support for students in need, while 61-44 percent was used for school equipping and adaptations and 52-26 percent for salary top-up for teachers.

School principals can also become active in cooperation with CSW, LSG and local businesses for ensuring appropriate support for children in need – the range in which they exert such engagement ranges widely, from almost nothing to almost everything[94]. The new requirements in the LBE and LSE from 2013 might have a positive impact on pro poor actions of the school management - e.g. LBE art 69 requires that income from school cooperatives should be used for ensuring school meals, as priority expenditure.

3.1.2.7. Peer support

Peer violence is a serious issue in the Serbian education system – reports show that a large percent of school children had experience with peer violence in the school. Although school-based research conducted up to now does not show whether violence is higher towards children from vulnerable groups and living in poverty, or whether violence is higher or lower in this group, it can seriously compromise peer support, which these children need. Legal acts, trainings and prevention programs have in the past 5-6 years focused

[91] NPS (2013) *Competence Standards for Principals of Educational Institutions*,,
[92] Rado, P. Lažetić, P. (2010). *Rapid assessment of the implementation of inclusive education is Serbia. Internar report*, UNICEF
[93] Dinkić, M., Ognjenović, K., Branković, A. (2010): *Students' cooperatives and extended activities of schools with the purpose of improving the quality of education and increasing social inclusion of children in the Republic of Serbia.* Beograd: Institut ekonomskih nauka
[94] Consultation with school principals, June 2013, UNICEF

on violence prevention in schools in Serbia. LFES banns all kinds of violence in the school (art. 45) and foresees the possibility of establishing school teams for violence prevention (art 66), sublegal act Rulebook on the implementation of the Special protocol for the prevention of violence, neglect and abuse of children, 2010[95], legitimizes the Special protocol as a regulation for the education system. A similar rulebook has been also adapted in the social welfare system, and the healthcare system. The "Schools without violence" program, initiated by UNICEF and subsequently taken over by the ministry, covering up to now around 242 primary schools. Secondary schools are not yet widely covered by this or any other program for violence prevention (not more than 9 are included), hence lack of peer acceptance of children and youth from poor families might be a more serious bottleneck at secondary than at primary level, regardless of the uniform legal context, applicable to secondary education as well.

3.1.2.8. Financial social assistance

Access to Financial social assistance is listed as an indirect bottleneck for school attendance since it is the most important source of income for poor families (Roma families, single member families, families with many members, the elderly and persons with disabilities who are unable to work), and it provides access to other types of assistance provided by local governments as well, such as one-off social assistance (see more above), subsidies for the payment of utility services, free-of charge school books, transportation and medical treatment, etc. Therefore, if access to FSA is not ensured, support for education of the children will be additionally hampered. With difference to Child Allowance, which is also central transfer, the FSA is administered by the CSW and regulated by the LSW. With Law changes in 2011, the financial social assistance program as already explained has been significantly improved (which introduced new calculation based on equivalency scales, for more member families, higher amounts, etc.) which led to higher coverage of the program. Still, there are some weaknesses in delivering the FSA grouped as follows

- **Weaknesses in targeting** still persist. According to some earlier studies only 8.6 percent of the poor received financial social assistance in 2007, while only 11.4% of households living below the poverty line applied for FSA.[96] While coverage has increased in the last years as the result of the legal changes in LSW and the economic crisis, evidence show that still targeting of FSA still needs to be addressed. As with ChA, distribution by the LSGs shows that the share of FSA beneficiaries in the total population by LSGs does not correlate to the level of economic development of the LSGs. Therefore contrary to expected in some underdeveloped LSGs with very low living standards and significant social problems, the share of households receiving financial social assistance is far below the republic average (3.1%) such as Ražanj 1.85%, Ljubovija 1.72%. LSGs where the share of households receiving FSA is over 5% include both some of the least developed LSGs and some of the most developed ones (e.g. Beočin 7.07% and Vršac 7.04%). It seems staff of CSW in different LSGs uses different approaches when assessing the eligibility of applicants, although the measure is funded from national level.
- **Lack of appropriate information -** poor polices towards better informing of the potential client groups on their entitlements and the way how to access them both at national and local level is a serious access barrier. For the poor population that in majority of cases is of low education status, availability of information on printing leaflets and internet is not enough to reach them. There is a need to link the delivery of the benefit with outreach services by the NGOs or Red Cross that would enable the most excluded groups entering into the FSA system and also accessing other available supports in the community.

[95] Rulebook on the implementation of the Special protocol for the prevention of violence, neglect and abuse of children, ("Official Gazette RS" No, 30/2010)
[96] Living Standard Measurement Study, Serbia 2002-2007

- ***Time consuming and costly* administrative procedures and requirement for IDs –** Although the number of document required for application for FSA has been decreased, costs (e.g. travel) related to the application process for families living in the underdeveloped municipalities with no CSW have to be considered. Requirement of identification documents and residence permits are obstacles for receiving FSA for families in Roma settlements. As already mentioned recent legal changes relating to obtaining personal documents for people without residence permit are expected to enable coverage and social inclusion of "invisible" groups in population.

Significant innovation is the emphasis on the proactive role of social beneficiaries and opening possibilities for their active inclusion. Law provides for a possibility that CSWs conclude an individual action plan[97] with working able beneficiary of financial support on their activation. This provision provides opportunity for more proactive role of CSW professionals towards educational needs of children beneficiaries of financial support, who are currently excluded from case management. However, by-law regulation on active inclusion of beneficiaries is not yet ready, and this opportunity is rarely used across CSWs in Serbia.

Section Summary

Attendance barriers are mostly connected to insufficient not well-targeted and/or not well-managed social assistance to children and families, and coverage of LSG financial responsibilities regarding transportation. This set of barriers is affecting early school leaving, and different aspects of the barriers can affect different subsets of children and youth from poor families and/or vulnerable groups. Additionally disturbing seems the lack of clear responsibility, either local or national in providing food and clothing and education materials to all who are in need. The education system by now most often did not recognize as its mandate to develop measures addressing these barriers, hence it missed the opportunity to identify children at risk of dropping out, to ensure actions which could be organized at school or community level to address some of the barriers and provide support. The new legal acts in education adopted in June 2013 might have a game changing impact in focusing attention on dropout prevention and school meals, provided appropriate financial and technical assistance gets deployed for their implementation. Moreover, integrated community-based initiatives and activation policy of CSW in line with the LSW, better institutional linkages between local institutions, primarily school, CSW and local offices for child care, better monitoring and sharing of databases of clients could on the side of social policy measures significantly contribute to overcoming the attendance bottlenecks, coupled with necessary legal changes as presented. Until then NGOs, donor supported projects, the Red Cross, one-off local social assistance and pedagogical assistant are filling in the gaps, mostly in patchwork manner, not reaching a large number of children in Serbia and not being able to ensure sustainability and predictability of the support for those reached.

[97] Individual action plans shall include activities and obligations undertaken by an adult beneficiary, such as participation in anti-addiction programs, referral to a family therapy, pursuing adult education program, training and retraining, work engagement in public construction works etc

3.1.3. Attainment of standards bottlenecks

3.1.3.1. Teacher engagement and scaffolding

Education of teachers in Serbia is regulated by universities and is different for class teachers and subject teachers. Class teachers get a more profound pedagogical, psychological and methodological education and a fair amount of teaching practice during initial education phase. Subject teachers are primarily educated in their respective subject area, and only optionally in the disciplines pertinent for the teaching profession, which are, in case of teachers for the TVET subjects not even offered as option at their respective faculties. In both cases until recently diversity related subjects were not part of their curriculum. Hence teachers' acceptance of children from non-mainstream backgrounds is an issue that needs to be handled through several additional measures. Without the enactment of these measures acceptance of children especially from Roma families or children with disabilities will depend on the teachers implicit theories and will allow interference of biases and stereotyping, which in turn can affect the quality of education of poor children.

The LFES art.8 sets new requirements for the education of all (both class- and subject-) teachers, applicable from autumn 2012 (LFES, art 179) as of getting a minimum of 30 ECTS in psychological, pedagogical and methodological training as well as 6 ECTS of supervised teaching practice, but it does not regulate the content of the 36 ECTS required. A set of standards for the teaching profession adopted in 2011[98] requires teachers to be capable of working also on supporting student motivation, personal and social development, their self-respect, and diversity, and communicating effectively and building trust with parents. Also, among the priorities of the required teacher training courses, brought by as a ministerial decree in 2012, based on the Rulebook for the professional development and career advancement of teachers[99] (RPD, 2012) the first three of the eight priorities are: violence prevention, prevention of discrimination, and inclusion of children from vulnerable groups in education. However, monitoring of these requirements aimed at changing teachers' attitudes is not yet happening in systematic ways, and there is informal evidence, or evidence gathered through the Ombudsman Office that there are teachers who are reluctant to work with children from vulnerable groups, especially Roma and children with disabilities. Having in mind education research results which has repeatedly proved that beneficial effects of teacher sensitivity are more pronounced in case of children from vulnerable groups, poor children and lower achieving children than those from the mainstream, and the many times proven effect of teacher expectations on student outcomes, whereby lower expectations change teacher behavior and produce lower achievement, teacher quality and quality of teaching is of highest importance for children from poor families.

An additional problem is that in the Serbian education system only one teacher per class or per group is provided (exception pre-school 3-5), which in case of catering heterogeneous groups of children which include also children from vulnerable groups, can increase the burden on the one teacher in class, and additionally contribute to teachers' negative attitude towards these children.

From recently these gaps started to be addressed: in some teachers faculties which provide initial education of class teachers diversity-related subjects started to be introduced in the curriculum (e.g. Pedagogical faculty of Jagodina), a new master program for Education Policy started for professionals in education which also embraced diversity and equity related topics, and students of psychology at Belgrade University have several courses on inclusive education, education of children at risk and intercultural

[98] National Education Council (2012) Standards for the profession of teachers and their professional development

[99] Rulebook for the Professional Development and Career Advancement of Teachers, Carers and Expert Associates ("Official Gazette RS" No. 13/2012 And 31/2012)

education. An IPA project started 2012[100], will address the needs for practical placement of subject teacher students through establishing a network of 41 practice schools throughout Serbia, introduce large-scale training of teachers in learning and child centered teaching approaches, and support production and use of applied education research, thus rounding up the mitigation of missing links in the Serbian education system and enhance teacher preparation. The effects of this project on the equity of education will need to be carefully monitored.

Three additional measures have been introduced to minimize the risk of teachers' neglect and negative attitude:

Firstly, pedagogical assistants have been employed in schools having the role of mediating between parents and schools and providing additional assistance to Roma children and other children in need (LFES, art 117, 121,122 and 132, Rulebook on the program of training for the pedagogical assistant, 2009[101]). Currently 174 Roma pedagogical assistants are working in the system. The establishment of this profession and their training has been supported initially by OSI, then by OSCE and subsequently by an IPA project.[102]In 2009 the Institute of evaluation of education quality has conducted a detailed evaluation of the effects[103] of the engagement of the initial 24 pedagogical assistants, and the recommendations of the study were taken up during the expansion and further regulation of this new position in the education system. Financing of the salaries of pedagogical assistants has evolved from donor funds, through contracts with the ministry of education, to employment by schools and financing through the same mechanisms as all teachers. Based on the needs of schools, and the number of Roma children, it seems that approximately 200 more Roma pedagogical assistants would be needed to ensure appropriate coverage. A new qualitative research[104] taps into the transformation role of the pedagogical assistants, depicting the high value of education among these young professionals and the multitude of ways how they change both the school culture and the culture of the traditional Roma settlement.

Secondly, the presence of personal assistants/guide in school is allowed by LFES art 177, when deemed necessary by the inter-sectorial committee. This provision is of particular importance for children with disabilities, it contributes to the possibility of their mainstream schooling, and it also enables employment of their parents. Personal assistants are not funded through the education system, they are recognized as a community-based social service funded by the LSG. A detailed analysis of the types of needs personal assistants should cater, the possible ways of their engagement and financing, their skills and required training etc. has been prepared in order to enhance the regulation of this new profession[105]. The sublegal act regulating the standards for this provision have been prepared for adoption, however, their job description is not well aligned to their function and does not include them being present in the school.

Thirdly, the number of students per class is reduced in case if children with disabilities, learning difficulties and/or from disadvantaged groups are enrolled in the class[106]. The class size in Serbia is set to maximum 30

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[100] IPA 2011 "Support Human Capital Development and Research - General Education and Human Capital Development"

[101] Rulebook on the Program of Training for the Pedagogical Assistant ("Official Gazette RS" No. 11/2010)

[102] IPA 2009 "Education for All"

[103] Institute for the Evaluation of Education Quality (2009), *Evaluation study: The role of pedagogical assistants for the support of Roma students as a systemic measure for improving the education of Roma*, Belgrade, www.ceo.edu.rs ,

[104]Dauite, C. and Kovacs Cerovic, T (in preparation): *Dynamic storytelling: social transformation role of Pedagogical Assistants in Serbia*

[105]Janjić, B., Beker, K. (?) *Assistant for personal aid to the child as additional support to children and students in education.* UNICEF

[106] The yearly Order on the normative for class sizes, starting form 2009 has introduced this provision, and the new LBE and LSE have included the same requirement in 2013.

pupils in one class, and the reduction in the aforementioned cases is calculated so that one child from vulnerable groups counts as 2 or 3 children, depending on the complexity of its special needs. Only two children from these categories are to be enrolled in one class, hence in these cases the class may have 26 or 28 children.

Preparations for introducing financing of education based on a capitation formula has started, including the calculation of appropriate additional weighs of the unit price for children from vulnerable groups (including children from law SES families). Once introduced, these mechanisms could ensure the financing of additional support to these children incurred in education and in school, including the engagement of additional support staff and reducing class sizes.

In addition to these measures, inclusive education is supported also by project-based resources. Small school grants (4-5000 euro) have been deployed through DILS for developing own practices of inclusive education to 291 schools, selected so that each municipality has at least one of these schools, coupled with intense training of teachers in inclusive education practices. 159 Schools and pre-school with pedagogical assistants have received equipment worth around 20-30.000 euros as well as specialized training through an IPA project[107]. A network of professional support for inclusive education has been established, comprised of experienced teachers, school advisors, school counselors, and particularly successful schools. The network can be accessed by schools, teachers or parents, and assistance can be requested. These mechanisms became highly effective and the new LSE has recognized and legitimized it (LSE, art 12).

All of these additional measures proved successful in terms of acceptance of children from vulnerable groups, including children struck by poverty. Recent research shows (Đević, 2009; Kolić, 2012, Jokić, Baucal, Kovač-Cerović, draft report) [108] that teachers who were included in the trainings as well as grant schools have a more positive attitude and feel more competent in implementing inclusive education. Detailed impact assessment of school and municipal grants is planned for autumn 2013.

An IPA project started 2012[109] will address the needs for practical placement of subject teacher students through establishing a network of practice schools, introduce large-scale training of teachers in learning and child centered teaching approaches, and support production and use of applied education research, thus rounding up the mitigation of missing links in the Serbian education system. The effects of this project on the equity of education will need to be carefully monitored.

3.1.3.2. School materials and textbooks

The legislative framework in education does not address provision of school materials. The basic set of textbooks is in Serbia free of charge for all children in G1-G4 based on Government decree, starting from 2009, as part of the free textbook provision policy described above. Textbooks are distributed by the school, and the set of textbooks needs to be returned to the school. In case the set is ruined, the parent has to pay the cost of the textbook retroactively – which might be the case more often with low SES families, without appropriate housing or workspace for homework. Also, the basic set does not always include all

[107] "Education for All", IPA 09

[108] Đević, R. (2009). Spremnost nastavnika osnovne škole da prihvate učenike sa teškoćama u razvoju (Teacshers' readiness to accept students with developmental difficulties) . Zbornik Instituta za pedagoška istraživanja, 41(2), pp. 367-382.;
Kolić, M. (2012.). Samoefikasnost nastavnika razredne nastave i stav prema inkluzivnom obrazovanju (Class teacshers' self-eficacy and attitudes towards inclusive education) . Faculty of Phylosophy,Belgrade masters thesis;
Jokić, T, Baucal, I, Kovač-Cerović, T (in preparation) Overview provided as background material for the *Monitoring Inclusive Education* project, UNICEF and SIPRU, Belgrade

[109] "Support to Human Capital Development and Research – General Education and Human Capital Development», IPA 2011

teaching materials used by the school, nor does it include additional supplies related to schooling (notebooks, pencils, sports-shoes and clothing, equipment for drawing or other technical equipment). All this is expected to be purchased by the parents and brought to the school by each student. Starting from G5 textbooks are to be purchased by parents, except in Belgrade. Hence, families in poverty need to rely on social assistance in the form of one-off social assistance or humanitarian actions – weaknesses in accessing these provisions are described above, in the section on attendance bottlenecks. Roma NGOs are most active in helping to overcome the gap. Textbooks in Bray are produced (LFES, art 102), and provided by special schools, while children enrolled in mainstream school have trouble of acquiring them, since the Law on textbook publishing does not address this provision, and since the ISCs' recommendations are not duly followed through in the financial supports provided by the LSGs.

3.1.3.3. Libraries and IT in school

Serbia does not have a clear policy regarding school libraries. They have become impoverished during the 90's and although there were several donations during the 2000's addressing school libraries, a big step forward has not been made. There are 1482 school libraries in Serbia, which is compared to 2466 libraries total in the country, around 60 percent of libraries, their stacks constitute almost one third of the total library stacks in Serbia and the number of their registered users is about 15 percent of all library users. However, this number is not covering the entire education system, especially if branch schools are counted as well, and in the poorer areas of Serbia one third of the schools are without a library[110].Also only 78 of the school libraries has available e-sources and services (about 2 percent, the far worst ratio among all types of libraries in Serbia), and although 1628 school librarians are employed more than half of them work only part time, which also means that the libraries do not operate full time[111].There is no data about the condition of the library and the stacks, and the profession of school librarians has been in many cases replaced by redundant teachers with some short term training, and no updated guidelines on library functioning have been developed. The new LBE requires schools to have libraries as cultural school centers, which have also adapted materials for children with special needs (LBE, art 50), but it does not operationalize new guidelines for their functioning. The lack of an open, attractive, well equipped and functioning library is mostly affecting students from low SES families. A recent study[112] found that Roma households possess in average 0-5 books, and the need of children from low SES families in using a well-functioning school library is huge.

IT equipment is distributed and renewed in all schools in the period after 2008, due to a government initiative, so that now each school (excluding branch schools) has at least one computer classroom[113]. Also broadband internet access has been secured throughout the entire education system. Data collected in 2009 indicate that in primary schools there were 35.99 pupils per computer, and in the administration 8.61 teachers per computer. Number of pupils per computer in secondary schools was 17.93, and in administration 8.91 teachers per computer. The ratio has changed in positive terms in the meanwhile, however, IT equipment is used exclusively for IT classes and students do not have free access to it during breaks or after school, which again puts children from low SES families into a disadvantaged position. In order to address this problem area, a new draft document, Guidelines for improving the role of ICT in

[110]Government of The Republic of Serbia (2012), *Strategy For Education Development 2020+,* Belgrade
[111] Source: RSO (2012) Statistical Yearbook 2011- Culture
[112]Kovac Cerovic, T., Vidovic-Vizek, Powell, S. (2010): *Parent participation in the life of school*. Ljubljana: Pedagoski Fakultet, CEPS
[113] The program provided computer classrooms to the main school building, while the branch-schools received one lap-top computer each.

education was developed by NEC[114]. The document aims to provide a basis for successful integration of ICT in the education process and the development of IT competencies of students.

3.1.3.4. Parental engagement, scaffolding and homework

Roles and responsibilities of Parent councils and School boards (consisting partly also from parents) are regulated by LFES, articles 54-58. Art 58 also regulates that parent councils should have representatives of minority children, or children from vulnerable groups in case such children are enrolled in the school. However, there is no evidence on whether schools abide these requirements. The work program of parent councils and parent meetings is the responsibility of the school, as well as of 2013 (LBE art 48, LSE art 20) establishing the program for school - parent partnerships that include parental involvement in decision making in respect of issues pertinent to safety and educational, organizational and financial issues, monthly open door, and obtaining parental feedback and assessment of parental satisfaction at the end of each term. The new provisions will be implemented from the next academic year, and they promise serious improvement of parental engagement in the life of the school. A recent study of parents' perception[115], which also influenced the legislative changes improving parental engagement, showed that in SEE in general, and in Serbia in particular they assess that they are not involved in school life, not getting information from school about homework, not invited to volunteer, and not included in decision-making processes. However, the improvements neglect an additional instrument for increasing parental engagement and influence used in many EU countries – establishment of municipal and/or regional parent councils and their national association.

In situation of unemployed parents the child might be the only person in the family having everyday regular time-bound activities that cannot be skipped or postponed, requiring reorganization of family life. Particularly at the beginning of schooling and/or attending the pre-school class a clear system of informing the parents would be needed, instead of relying on their implicit understandings, based on their own schooling experiences.

Schooling in Serbia requires home-learning for the successful mastering of the curricula, hence homework and at-home parental scaffolding of education tasks has a critical role, however, none of the legal acts foresees school provisions for developing and supporting parents on how to supervise or scaffold home learning activities. Assistance in parenting and assisting a school aged child in learning and doing homework is neither required as a condition for other benefits, nor provided. There are no parent trainings provided, neither by the education nor by the social welfare sector. The same study showed that Roma parents were even more marginalized in all respects than parents of the mainstream population, and that Roma children were spending twice to three times less time in doing homework than non-Roma children. Having in mind that poor parents are most commonly undereducated, their assistance in home-learning is expected to be of poorer quality than the assistance of more educated ones. Therefore, the lack of assistance in parenting directly contributes to increased inequities. An additional finding adds to the problems described. Serbia is one of the countries with high percentage of students having individual private tutoring, even from early schooling ages[116]. Children from affluent families benefit from private tutoring most, hence inequities further increase, and children from poor families have a meager chance for being successful in school.

[114] National Education Council (2013 draft): *Smernice za unapređivanje uloge informaciono-komunikacionih tehnologija u obrazovanju (Guidelines for improving the role of ICT in education),* Belgrade
[115] Kovac-Cerovic, T., Vidovic-Vizek, V., Powell, S. (2010): *Parent participation in the life of school*. Ljubljana: PedagoskiFakultet, CEPS
[116] OECD (2011), Quality Time for Students: Learning In and Out of School, OECD Publishing, Paris.

3.1.3.5. Engaging learning activities

Being immersed in engaging learning activities at school is for children whose everyday life does not provide sufficient stimulation and resources for extracurricular activities of crucial importance. The type of teaching methodology is in Serbia not legally regulated, except through the general principles, aims and general outcomes of education (LFES articles 3, 4, and 5). Art 3. St1., point 4.requires that teaching should be child centered, organized through diverse learning situations, which are tuned to the diverse needs of students, develop their motivation for learning and ensure high achievements; art 4, st. 1., point 5 and 6 sets as aims of education gaining problem solving skills and developing motivation for learning; art 5., st. 1requires among the general outcomes of education also learning to learn and using critical and creative thinking. However, the main act that is influencing the teaching process and the methodologies used, the curriculum (in the Serbian education system a set of sublegal acts), does not reflect these legal principles. Curricula in general education have not undergone serious reforms for decades. Slight changes have been made in terms of modernizing contents, but only for the 7th and 8TH grade of basic education has a requirement for using constructivist teaching methods been introduced. Curricula are factual, over-demanding, rigid and in many content aspects also outdated. A major curriculum reform is planned to start in 2013/2014, supported by an IPA project[117]. Curricula in the VET schools are partially renewed and modernized through a variety of projects, but since scaling up of the new profiles was stalled, only around 12 percent of secondary VET students benefit from a more motivating curriculum.

On the other hand, the need for modernizing teaching methods and creating engaging learning situations has inspired numerous teacher training programs already from the 90's, and during the last two decades tens of thousands of teacher have been trained in using them in their everyday teaching practice. Programs as *Step by Step, Active learning, Critical thinking, Good-will classroom*, etc. have promoted constructivist teaching/learning methods, they are used individually by teachers who are interested, but they did not become a required, standardized and predictable school practice.

Additionally, class sizes in Serbia are set at 30 students for all grades in pre-university education, which is too high for easily engaging in constructivist (i.e. active, participatory, cooperative, etc.) teaching/learning methods.

As a result of all this, motivation for school learning has remained an issue. A new report on the views of children and youth[118], collected from a sample of 1358, aged 12-18 shows that the assessment of satisfaction with a variety of aspects of the school, although in average predominantly positive, decreases rapidly with age, especially satisfaction with the quality of textbooks, the teaching methodology of teachers and the applicability of acquired knowledge. Part of the main recommendation of the students is to educate teachers in how to motivate students and use interactive teaching methods and to modernize curricula by making them more applicable and meaningful.

A study focused on assessing student motivation and the implicit theories of teachers on student motivation[119] conducted on the PISA 2009 sample showed a quite unfavorable picture. Only 17 percent of students fell into the most promising group of self-efficient, motivated and low anxiety students, while the others were dispersed into the following groups: not interested and high anxiety 42 percent, interested and

[117]"Support to Human Capital Development and Research – General Education and Human Capital Development», IPA 2011

[118] Child Rights Center (2012), *Report on the implementation of child rights in the Republic of Serbia from the perspective of children and youth*, Belgrade

[119] Kovac-Cerovic, T., Baucal, A., Pavlovic, D., Djuric, V. (2011). *Školska motivacija: Izveštaj o istraživanju(School motivation, research report)*. Institute for education quality and evaluation

high anxiety 22 percent, not interested and low anxiety 19 percent. It is interesting to note that all groups of students, especially the ones not interested in school have shown a high level of acceptance to academic fraud. The analysis of teachers' implicit theories showed the other side of the coin, i.e. that teachers are mostly not aware of their role in motivating students. Only 26 percent could be categorized as satisfied and motivating, 36 percent of teachers showed dominantly authoritarian attitudes in respect of students' and teachers' roles, 24 percent were categorized as "laissez-faire" and 14 percent as unsatisfied and burned out.

3.1.3.6. Individualized instruction

Individualization of instruction according to the students' needs is a new practice, introduced by the LFES 2009 art.77as a procedure primarily to be used for education of children from vulnerable groups (or for talented children) in case they need teaching methods or curricular adjustments for their successful education in mainstream schools. Individual education plans are developed by school teams for inclusive education, and based on the pedagogical profile of the student, can contain slight or major modifications of teaching methods, organizational changes, use of additional equipment and assistive technologies, but they can also involve content changes and lowering or increasing the outcome standards. They are reassessed every 3 months (in the first year of schooling with IEP), or every 6 months (during subsequent years) and in case of lowered standards the ISC has to approve them. A sublegal act, the Rulebook on closer instructions for determining the right to Individual Education Plan, on its implementation and assessment (2009), is regulating all aspects of development, assessment and implementation of the Individual education plans. It distinguishes 3 forms of IEP: The first contains adjustments in teaching methodology, characteristics and organization of additional assistance and compensatory activities ("adjusted program").The second type includes besides the previous also decreased learning outcomes and their specification ("changed program"), the third is used for enriching the education provision for talented children ("enriched program").

A team of teachers from each school was trained on all practical aspects of conducting education with the use of IEPs, and support teams were set in place to assist schools, based on request, in implementing the new model. Research data[120] detects a concern that IEP type 2 is misused in terms of more Roma students being educated according to this possibility than should be expected, and that teachers need further training on how to assess progress according to the IEPs.

3.1.3.7. Formative assessment

Education research shows that formative assessment containing timely feedback coupled with instructive suggestions is the most powerful aspect of teaching and learning, contributing to attainment of learning outcomes. For children who cannot afford private tutoring, and whose parents are undereducated, formative assessment in school is a high priority requirement.

Formative assessment has been introduced by the LFES 2003 and the requirement further expanded through the LFES 2009 and the Rulebook for Grading in Basic Education[121] adopted in 2011. According to the new procedures (art 108, st 1.and 2.) formative assessment is required in all grades, along with summative assessment, while in G1 this is the only assessment type to be used. The 2011 rulebook provides all details, and support frameworks for formative assessment, and the Institute for evaluation has

[120] Jeremić, J., Lažetić, P., Petrović, D., Rado, P. (2012). *Monitoring inkluzivnih obrazovnih praksi (Inclusive education practice monitoring- project report)*. Belgrade: OS

[121] Rulebook For Grading In Basic Education ("Official Gazette RS" No. 74/2011)

trained a group of 4 persons from each basic school (altogether around 4800 persons), and around 100 advisors from the Regional School Administrations for the implementation of the new procedures. Reports on the actual assessment practice in schools are not yet available.

3.1.3.8. Remedial teaching

Remedial teaching organized by the school is the major mechanism to prevent school failure and dropping out. In their weekly workload teachers in Serbia are obliged to have 20 regular instruction hours, and 4 hours devoted to remedial instruction, individual instruction, organizing additional top-up activities for talented children, and preparatory teaching for forthcoming exams (LFES, art 136, st. 1, point 1.).The concrete assignment of each teacher to the listed tasks is the responsibility of the school principal. As part of the required weekly workload, remedial teaching is paid through the regular salaries of teachers, it is free of charge for the students, and it is recorded in the school documentation. However, further guidelines, quality assurance and monitoring/reporting procedures are not developed, and the fact that there are only two1-day accredited Teacher training programs addressing remedial teaching[122], no published guidebooks, and no research data on this issue all indicate that the remedial teaching legal provision has not gotten integrated in any of the school policies addressing the education of vulnerable groups or children from poverty backgrounds. The fact that high percentage of families revert to financing private tutoring and hiring teachers from another school, or from the unofficial market of good teachers, for individual remedial instruction also indicates that the legal obligation of conducting free of charge remedial teaching in schools is in practice highly ineffective or missing. A recent UNICEF study[123] showed that 36 percent of Roma basic and secondary students participating in an afterschool program see as their biggest school-problem doing homework and learning the lectures, and consequently 38 percent see help in learning and doing homework as their most important need. It is interesting to note that financial assistance was prioritized as the most important need by a smaller percentage of the students (19%). Responding to the need not met by the education system one of the priority lines in NGO activities is the provision of remedial, after/school and preparatory classes to a limited number of mostly Roma children and students.

3.1.3.9. Compensatory and Enrichment programs

Compensatory or enrichment programs are not legally regulated, monitored or evaluated in any systematic way, and are not listed in any policy document, but schools can engage in these kinds of activities through their own projects, in collaboration with LSGs, NGOs, or Int'l organizations. The only exception is the legal possibility that schools organize language courses in the language of instruction for students who for any reasons might need this kind of compensatory program (LFES, art 69. st. 2 and 3.). This provision can be especially useful for Roma students, but there is no evidence collected yet on whether this provision is offered, how often and in which ways.

3.1.3.10. Extracurricular and afterschool activities

The importance of extracurricular and afterschool activities is underestimated by the Serbian education system. These activities are major vehicles for the development of attachment to the school, peers, community, but also self-respect and motivation. The curriculum foresees only a limited range of these

[122] Institute for the development of education (2012) Catalogue of accredited programs
[123] Djorić, G. et al. *Developmental-Educational Centers in South Serbia: Where are the users of the program and what are their educational achievements?* UNICEF, manuscript

activities. School excursions are regulated through the Rulebook on school excursions, and are organized for each grade with increasing number of days per grade (G1 – G4 one day, G5-G7 two days, G8 – three days). Schools can organize a week of out of school learning (in a recreational facility) in the first to fourth grades if at least 80 percent of students would attend – a practice that has somewhat diminished during the last decades, and most often children from lower SES families are unable to meet the costs. School sports, cultural, musical or other artistic activities can also be organized by the school, but are not mandated, and depend on a proactive leadership of the school. However, all of these activities are voluntary and paid by parents, and can become additional sources of inequity unless they are subsidized. A detailed overview of different LSG and school practices is not available, but there are examples of LSGs and schools that are providing financial support for poor students' participation in extracurricular activities, therefore it would be worthwhile to explore them in order to disseminate the good practice. In some localities NGOs provide these learning opportunities to children from vulnerable groups. The new LBE foresees the expansion of extracurricular and afterschool activities, and it will be important to monitor the effectiveness of these provisions, especially from an equity perspective.

3.1.3.11. Quality assurance

An important novelty in the quality assurance system is the introduction of standard-based whole-school external evaluation starting from 2012. The standards for this evaluation, adopted by the NEC in 2011, and enacted through the Rulebook on evaluation of the work of education institutions 2012[124] and the Rulebook on the standards for evaluation of the work of education institutions 2012[125], comprise important aspects pertinent of education provision for children from poor families as well. One of the seven areas of the standards, area *Support to students,* is directly relevant to education of poor children and children from Roma families. It assesses the ways in which the equity policies introduced in the system are implemented at school level. Support to students is assessed through three standards:

- the support system to students is functioning in the school (indicators for this are: students are informed about the support in learning provided by the school, support measures are implemented based on the students' attainments, in providing the support the school is in communication with his/her family, teams for supporting students are functional in the school, the school is cooperating with other institutions for providing the support needed);
- the school is supporting the personal, professional and social development of students (indicators for this are: extracurricular activities are tuned to needs and interests of students, programs for developing social skills are offered, there is a higher rate of student involvement in extracurricular activities than the previous year, etc.);
- the system of support to children from vulnerable groups is functioning in the school (indicators: the school is proactive in enrolling children from vulnerable groups, it is implementing measures to ensure their attendance, the school uses IEPs whenever needed, organizes compensatory and enrichment programs, cooperates with relevant institutions to maximize support)

Also in five other areas some of the standards and indicators are reflecting some aspects of the new policies:

- In the area *School program and annual work program* support to the education of poor children is assessed based on standard – school program and annual work program address the diverse needs

[124] Rulebook On Evaluation Of The Work Of Education Institutions ("Official Gazette RS" No. 9/2012)
[125] Rulebook On The Standards For Evaluation Of The Work Of Education Institutions ("Official Gazette RS" No. 7/2011)

of students with an indicator: in the annual work program schools includes the work on development of IEP based on the analysis of the progress in learning of students.

- In the area *Teaching and learning* – standards on teacher adjusts work at class to the educational needs of students, (where all indicators may be applied) and teacher creates positive/motivating working atmosphere at class with almost all indicators.
- In the area *Education attainment of students* – standard school continuously contributes to the success of student while the most relevant indicator is Students with IEP make progress in line with objectives set in IEP.
- In the area *School ethos, and School Organization and management* and *Resources* there are no explicit standards for education of children form poor and Roma families, but still equity polices can be somewhat assessed through information on the existence of new structures (e.g. School Team for Inclusive Education) or a proactive resource management approach .

Since the implementation of the new system started only mid - 2012, with approximately 50 schools evaluated, data are not yet available. However, it seems that they will provide many valuable information to assess the effectiveness and school-level impact of pro-poor policies. In order to ensure that the standards and the Quality Assurance system as a whole indeed register the implementation of pro-poor policies at school level a recent guidebook describing the possible widening of relevant indicators has been published[126].

Section summary

Attainment of standards bottlenecks are connected to the quality of education. Although lack of quality (both in terms of ensuring intellectual and social outcomes) will affect all children, the more resourceful families will manage to mitigate them, while the ones from poverty backgrounds and from marginalized groups will not, and will rely only on the provision from the school. The analysis showed that although the introduction of inclusive education has somewhat changed the schools' openness to children and youth from marginalized groups, the schools still are neither using all available means to ensure higher standards of education for children and youth at risk (e.g. active/cooperative learning methods, remedial teaching, afterschool extracurricular activities, etc.) nor are they actively seeking new ways to compensate for their disadvantaged background (i.e. parent education, libraries, ICT, cooperation with businesses, school alumni, etc.). As with the attendance bottlenecks, the new provisions in the LBE and LSE regarding parental engagement and extracurricular activities might have a highly beneficial impact – it is too early to judge how the new provisions will be enacted.

[126] Jovanović, V. (Ed)(2013): *Koliko je inkluzivna naša škola?* (*How inclusive is our school?),* Beograd: Centar ya obrazovne politike

3.1.4. Progression bottlenecks

The Serbian education system was an attritive system[127] in terms of formal requirements for progression, and also a selective one at the beginning and at the end of compulsory education. It is not an exaggeration to say that traditionally it has built more on principles of coercion than of incentives and motivation. Slight changes of this orientation have been introduced by the way how LFES and the new LBE and LSE is regulating progression, however, they are only partial.

At the beginning of the education cycle the major bottleneck of enrolment testing and categorization of children "not fit" or "not ready" for enrollment has been abolished, as described in the chapter on enrollment, and progression criteria are somewhat flexible. The first progression from the mandated pre-school year to school enrolment requires a certificate of attendance. Students get enrolled into school even if they do not have the certificate – which, on one hand is a flexibility measure, on the other hand it can reduce the possibilities of children from disadvantaged backgrounds to start school with competences comparable with those of children from families which provide a rich prior to school educational environment. In the first grade of basic education assessment is formative and no failing is possible. In the second and third grade students with failing marks at the end of the academic year progress to the next grade and instruction is individualized for them (LFES, art 108).

3.1.4.1. Class progression

Class progression in all further grades becomes stricter, and requires all passing marks at the end of the academic year, otherwise the class has to be repeated. Students with one or two failing marks at the end of the term can take a remedial exam, and if they pass they are allowed to progress to the next grade, if not, complete class repetition is required. The exception from this are students of the finishing year of basic and secondary education, who in case of failing marks can finish the education cycle later, as irregular student and with paying the tuition fee, as well as in exceptional cases students of secondary school under the same arrangement as described above (LFES, art.108). This slight flexibility was introduced with the aim of reducing class repetition and dropping out from school in the sensitive adolescence period, however, the fact that the arrangement calls for paying the tuition fee as irregular student actually deepens the gap between students from low SES and high SES families.

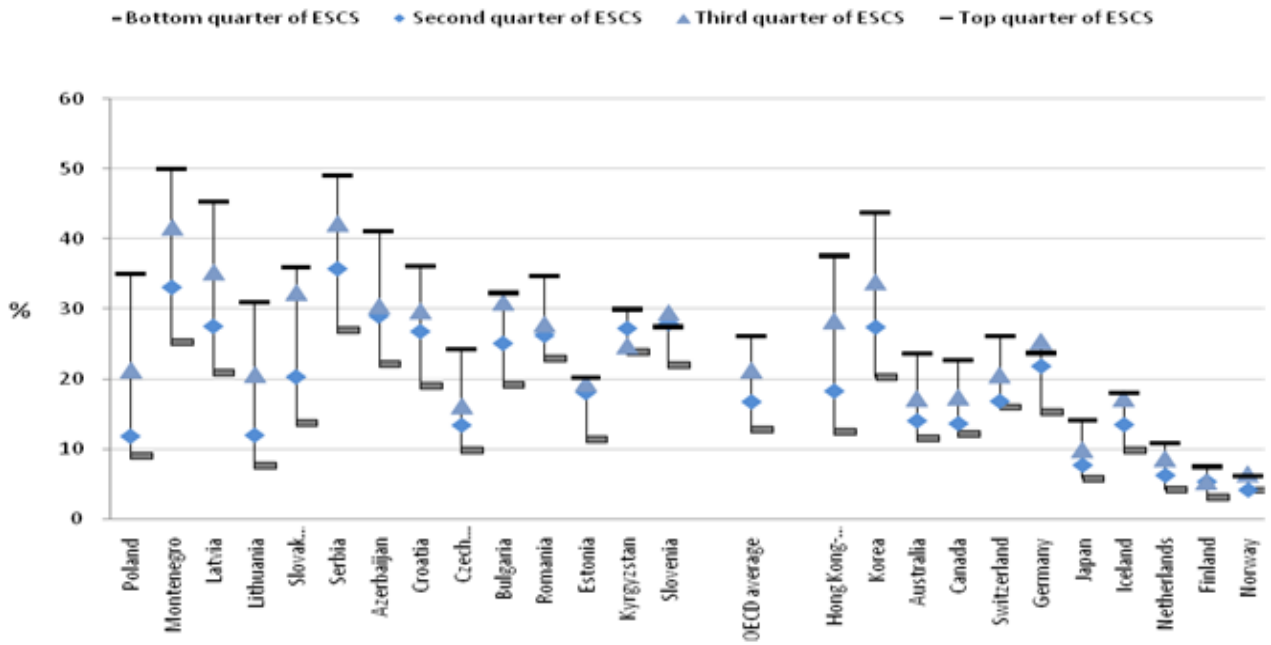
3.1.4.2. Enrollment into secondary education

Enrolment into secondary education is based on the average grades from G6 to G8 and the results of an external school leaving examination, previously entrance exam. The school leaving examination is not criterion based, hence the results are not hampering basic school completion, neither access to secondary schooling. However, the success on this exam influences the actual placement to a particular type of school and to the particular school, thus it is a high stake examination. Schools are obliged to organize preparatory classes, however most families who can afford it resort to private tutoring. This way, again, students from low-SES families are implicitly discriminated. Surprisingly, according to data from the 2009 PISA survey, parents even from the lowest quintile engage in using private tutoring, compared to other countries at a higher extent (see figure 1), which witnesses about how high this pressure is. The pressure derives from the fact that this is the most important point when tracking into academic or professional or vocational secondary education starts, and most of the professional and employment future of the students can be influenced by the fact in which kind and which schools they will get a possibility to enroll. Secondary

[127] Rado, P. (2011): Psiholoska istrazivanja

analysis of PISA 2009 results show that students who are among the 20% best performing ones on PISA, but are coming from the lowest SES quintile have a 3 times lower probability to enroll in general secondary education than their equally well performing peers whose SES is average[128].

Figure 1: *Share of students attending one-to-one lessons with non-school teachers for selected countries, by quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status*[129]



For Roma students this bottleneck is partially reduced, due to an affirmative action policy for enrolment into secondary and tertiary education, and due to many projects of nongovernmental organizations helping Roma students to prepare for the school leaving exam. Affirmative action for the transition between basic and secondary education has been introduced in 2003, and kept in the subsequent years. Roma students if they are not satisfied with the placement they can get based on their school leaving/enrolment exam can have a second chance: they get on the list of the Roma National Council and the ministry responsible for human and minority rights, get an additional 30 (of 100 total) points and get placed at the schools from their list of wishes where their number of points is at the level or above the average of the students already placed. The predictability of this sustained procedure has multiplied several times the number of Roma in secondary education enrolled through affirmative action during the last years, from a starting point of around 50 to more than 350 in 2012 (see table 6). The areas of study with most Roma enrolled through affirmative action are healthcare, tourism, and economy and business administration, while enrolment in general secondary education is among the less frequent (only 1-5 percent of the yearly affirmative enrolments). Although administrative data about the number of students enrolled is easily available, more detailed analysis is lacking.

[128]Baucal, A. (2012). *Ključne kompetencije mladih u Srbiji u PISA 2009 ogledalu(Youth key competences in Serbia, PISA 2009 in mirror)*. Institute for psychology, Faculty of Phylosophy and SIPRU

[129] OECD (2012). *Strengthening Integrity and Fighting Corruption in Education: Serbia,* OECD Publishing.

Table 10: *Number of Roma students enrolled in secondary education through affirmative action by year*

Academic year	Number of students enrolled in 1st grade in secondary education through affirmative action
2005	67
2006	136
2007	165
2008	183
2009	219
2010	261
2011	300
2012	369

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development – data prepared for presentation at the Decade of Roma Integration Steering Committee meeting, Zagreb, 2012

3.1.4.3. External school leaving examinations at the end of secondary education

External school leaving examinations at the end of secondary education are under preparation to be introduced from academic 2017/18 (Vocational school leaving examination) and 2018/19 (General Matura, Technical and Arts Matura)[130], with the aim of also partially replacing the current entry examination system for tertiary education. The current school leaving system at secondary level requires the preparation of a small-scale thesis and a written examination in mathematics and mother tongue (four years secondary education) or one of the major subjects (or year technical education), or a school based final exam (for the 3 years vocational schools).

3.1.4.4. Horizontal mobility

Mobility of students through different tracks in secondary education is no more possible after enrolment into a particular type of school. Horizontal mobility is though mentioned in the LFES, but no measures and instruments are foreseen or developed to provide this possibility, partially also due to the fact that the National Qualifications Framework is not yet developed. In the absence of the NQF, moving from one track to the other is allowed only if a wide range of prerequisite exams are passed (most often exams from all subjects at the particular track up to the point where the student from another track would enter, which equals to starting anew, without instructional support). Also, there is no bridging year foreseen or organized for students wanting to pass the General Matura after a 3-years vocational track (access to General Matura is possible after a 4-years TVET, LSE, art 60), nor is an exit to vocational education from the general education track ensured. Such rigid organization of the secondary education system has been subject to many critical remarks, both in terms of financial inefficiency and in terms of meeting the labor market needs, however, even the new Education development strategy 2020+ is not addressing with due care this shortcoming.

[130] The LFES 2009 has foreseen the introduction of external school leaving exams in secondary education from 2013/14 and 2014/15 (LFES 2009, art 171). The LFES 2013 has postponed this for four years (LFES 2013, art 43)

Section Summary

Progression bottlenecks are reflecting in the clearest way the lack of system-wide measures to ensure that children and youth from poverty background and from vulnerable groups reach decent employability. Although at the early phases of education (until grade 4) serious progression bottlenecks are abolished and/or progression is made smooth, at the higher grades the system is quite rigid. The requirements for all passing grades and the requirement of enrollment into the desired secondary education track based on the high-stake external school leaving examination, coupled with the lack of high quality remedial and preparatory instruction organized by the school creates a situation in which the further education prospects of students heavily depend on the social and economic status of their families. Students from low SES families are at high risk of class repetition, dropping out or enrolling in low-quality education tracks not leading to prosperous employment or further academic studies. Measures for horizontal mobility to counteract the progression bottlenecks are also not yet introduced, hence the Serbian education system is especially inequitable in this respect, and Serbia is losing investments and human resources due to the lacking instruments of flexible progression.

3.2. SPECIFIC EDUCATION LEVEL RELATED BOTTLENECKS

3.2.1. Pre-school

The most important specific bottlenecks at the level of pre-school education at the age between 3 and 5 years are connected to direct and indirect costs of attendance, to obtaining of personal documents and medical checkup, as well as to prioritization criteria in case available capacities of pre-school institutions are restricted. Additionally, data shows that information about the benefits of attending pre-school has not reached out and gained wide acceptance, especially in low SES families where parents are unemployed (54 percent of Roma families do not see pre-school as important according to MICS 4[131], and 78 percent of rural families, according to Cvejic et al., 2010[132])

3.2.1.1. Costs for pre-school attendance

Costs for pre-school attendance are covered by LSG budgets up to 80 percent of the actual costs (LFES, art 159, st. 2, point 1), while 20 percent of the costs is the parental contribution. However, in reality in Serbia in 2011, according to the DevInfo data, parents participate in average with 33 percent in economic price of the pre-school.

Exemption from parental contribution is regulated by the legislation in the area of social protection i.e. LFSFC and it entails of the following: for children with disabilities and children without parental care it is covered from the republic budget, while for children from poor families it is covered from local budgets through *Subsidies for pre-school education of children from vulnerable and from financially deprived families.* For all

[131] RSO (2010) The *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (*MICS*) *2010 Serbia*, UNICEF
[132] Cvejić, S., Babović M., Petrović, M., Bogdanov, N. i Vuković, O. (2010) *Socijalna isključenost u ruralnim oblastima Srbije (Social exclusion in rural areas of Serbia)*, Beograd: UNDP.

three benefits/subsidies take-up is extremely low and it is far from meeting the real needs, indicating both low awareness about these measures, and the process of acquiring it. Also, there is a low interest and no efforts from the pre-school institutions in utilizing these instruments in greater extent based on the fact that admission criteria for pre-school institution at the local level do not prioritize low SES children.

Since LSGs are regulating and financing pre-school institutions the governmental inclusion policy is not thoroughly reflected on local level and implemented in pre-schools. Hence, pedagogical assistants are rarely employed by pre-school institutions. Developmental groups are often continued to be opened for children with disabilities. The LFSFC is differently targeting developmental groups than mainstreamed children with special needs (the first have direct access, the second is conditional upon the family being eligible for child allowance), the problem of segregation still is maintained. How the two, regulations, LFES and LFSFC, having conflicting orientation regarding the approach to inclusion of children with disabilities, actually play out on the ground should be subject to further empirical analysis, but the disparate legislation definitely creates difficulties in practice for potential beneficiaries. In the procedures for approving the benefit for pre-school costs to children with disabilities, the opinion of the Commissions for categorization of children with disabilities is required. These Commissions have been replaced with the newly established ISC, but the administrative procedures for awarding the benefits do not recognize recommendations by the ISC.

Coverage of transportation costs are not regulated for the 3-5 years old children, neither the coverage of other indirect costs as clothing, equipment and workbooks used in pre-school institutions.

3.2.1.2. Lack of personal documents

Lack of personal documents (ID, birth certificate, residence certificate) as presented under section identification documents has been a serious barrier in accessing wide range of services for poor population, social and health, but also to non-compulsory pre-school education. Without IDs parents cannot be sure that the neighborhood pre-school will enlist their child. Without healthcare they cannot organize the medical checkup required prior to enrolling to pre-school.

While, the LFES art 98.,st 3. regulates the exemption for vulnerable groups from providing all requested documentation for enrollment to school the same exemption for enrollment to pre-school is not envisaged. The LPE regulates the exemption for providing full documentation only for enrollment in the obligatory pre-school program, and not the pre-school for 3-5 years olds (art 13 and 14). In overcoming this obstacle NGOs provided support obtaining personal documents connected to enrollment to education, obtaining healthcare and social assistance.

3.2.1.3. Capacities of pre-school institutions

Capacities of pre-school institutions are unevenly distributed, with more serious shortages in South Serbia, in rural areas and in big cities. In case of restricted number of places, the LPE foresees that children from vulnerable groups should have priority (art 13), however, actual **prioritization criteria** are regulated at the level of the pre-school institutions' statute, adopted by the LSG Assembly. In these statutes most often children whose both parents work have priority, holding this way to the previous function of pre-school as child care center, and at the same time ensuring that those who pay full contribution are enrolled. Although LFSFC envisages subsides for pre-school education provided by the LSG as an instrument for early inclusion of the children from poor families, the implementation of this instrument is not monitored at the national level, or the use of the instrument in any form guided. There is no information on the number of users or the criteria for its disbursement. Furthermore, in case of not applying this instrument there are no penalties of any kind for the LSGs. According to DevInfo database out of all children enrolled in pre-school

education, 22 percent of parents do not participate in pre-school costs i.e. for them the pre-school costs are fully covered. Data collected on 15 municipalities for the Situation Analysis Report of the IMPRES program[133] show very different percentage of enrolment from vulnerable groups i.e. children receiving child allowance (from less than 10% to 44% are included in the pre-school), indicating different practices of municipalities in this respect but also relatively low coverage of poor children.

In order to bridge these systemic shortcomings, providing pre-school programs has become a frequent line of activity of NGOs and independent projects, especially those assisting the Roma (see description of these later).

Not diminishing the actions taken and policies introduced to expand access to pre-school, this education segment remains largely not accessible for families with low SES background, unemployed parents and living in remote rural areas. A comprehensive up-to-date overview, situation analysis and needs assessment is also missing.

3.2.1.4. Preparatory pre-school program

Since the preparatory pre-school program is obligatory, several of the bottlenecks listed for the non-compulsory pre-school have been eliminated through the new legislative acts. Identification documents are not required (LPE, art 14), participation fees are not required for the obligatory daily 4 hours program (LFES, art 91 st. 1 point 2), transportation costs for distances above 2 km should be covered by municipality (LFES, art 159), and capacities need to be ensured either in pre-school or school facilities. A study assessing the implementation of the preparatory program in 2008[134] showed that due to the new policy of obligatory pre-school attendance 40 percent of children in the preparatory program are for the first time attending pre-school education, and that the program contributed to a significant increase in pre-school coverage. However, several further problems are still not resolved, and according to the same study serious disparities were found a) between SES strata of the family – among the poorest the coverage is 36% lower from the national average, while among the most affluent it was 21% higher than the national coverage; b) between regions in Serbia – in Vojvodina almost complete coverage was achieved, while in Eastern and Central Serbia it was much lower. It was also found that in rural and underdeveloped areas group sizes can be as high as 50 children, and that in these areas usually only half-day stays are offered, often with not well trained pre-school teachers. Additionally, attending the preparatory program, although free of charge in respect of tuition fee, is costly for poor families, especially since meals and educational materials are not provided by the pre-school.

Section Summary

Pre-school education, although under intense development for already several years still faces many shortcomings which affect children from poor families the most. The underdeveloped network lacking universal placement possibilities, no coverage of transportation costs, high tuition fees and not well targeted subsidies for poor children are the major barriers. Additionally, the free textbook provision is not applied to pre-school materials, placement prioritization criteria are still in favor of children of employed parents, and obtaining personal documentation and medical checkups is still a problem for a part of marginalized families. Research shows that even to the compulsory pre-school year children from poverty background and vulnerable groups have less access than mainstream children, and more often are placed in segregated groups.

[133] SOFRECO (2012) *Situation Analysis Report* -IMPRES

[134] Pešikan A., Ivić I.(2009) *Education against poverty: Analysis of effects of PPP introduction in Serbia*, Belgrade :Ministry of Education of Republic of Serbia,

3.2.2. Secondary Education[135]

Aside of the aforementioned lack of high quality preparatory courses which are jeopardizing the educational trajectory of poor children much more than the non-poor, successful **enrolment** in secondary education depends also on having clear information on professional career options and on enrolment requirements to particular schools.

3.2.2.1. Career guidance

Career guidance is a new policy increasingly introduced in Serbia during basic education in the last couple of years,. Legally, professional orientation and career guidance is one of the many responsibilities of school psychologists and pedagogues (Rulebook on the program of all areas of work of school/pre-school councilors, 2012[136]). A strategy for career guidance has been adopted in 2010 and the MoESTD and MoYS started the professional orientation program for 7th and 8th grade students in schools, covering around 90,000 students[137]. Students are in the lack of this support mostly left to decide about their future profession based on parental suggestions, suggestions from relatives or peers.

Enrolment requirements are regularly published early spring as a booklet together with the call for applications for all secondary schools in the next school year, with the number of places and approximate number of points to enroll (based on previous year's data). However, this publication is not free of charge, and due to its complexity (types of schools, profiles, locations, etc.) its use calls for parental guidance, consideration and studying, which might be lacking in families living in poverty.

The new LBE and LSE has included professional orientation (LBE art43) and career guidance (LSE, art 15) as part of the school program governed by a school team for professional orientation, based on the experiences from the above described project.

3.2.2.2. Financial aid (scholarships, loans and placement in student dormitories)

Attendance of secondary education for poor students can depend on getting financial aid (scholarships, loans), and placement in student dormitories, including meals in case the school is not in the vicinity of the place of residence. The Law on Pupils' and Students' Standard, 2010 (LPSS)[138] regulates access to these provisions. Art 4 st. 5 of LPSS prioritizes students from poor families among vulnerable groups, and it refers to lowering the criteria for their access to the provisions. However, a detailed look on the actual requirements and procedures leads to a different conclusion.

Loans are provided by the MoESTD for schooling for professions where the workforce is lacking at the market (identified by the NES). This is not a means tested but a merit based mechanism, only the GPAs are taken into account and a pre-requisite is a pre-employment contract with a firm in the areas identified by NES (Rulebook on pupils' and students' loans and scholarships, 2011[139], art 4.). The loan repayment schedule is unusual compared to international practice: those students who get employed by the firm with which they have a contract and stay employed there, are exempt from repaying the loan (LPSS, art 9).

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[135] All bottlenecks faced in primary education G1-G8 are shared by some of the other levels, hence they were addressed in the chapter on all education levels.

[136] Rulebook on the Program of All Areas of Work of Expert Associates in Schools ("Official Gazette RS" No 5/2012)

[137] The program is supported by GIZ and it entails a five-phase dynamic model implemented within extracurricular activities leading students to the decision on the profession and active planning of careers. The program has been introduced in all primary schools in Serbia.

[138] Law on Pupils' and Students' Standard ("Official Gazette RS" No. 18/2010 And 55/2013)

[139] Rulebook on Pupils' and Students' Loans and Stipends („Official Gazette RS" No. 47/2011 And 56/2012)

Scholarships are also merit-based, accessible only for students with continuous excellent grades (GPA 4,5 and above), with the exception of 10 percent of scholarships that should be reserved for students from vulnerable groups, based on a special decree of the Minister[140]. For the 90 percent of scholarships the ranking of applicants a marginal variance is left for accounting for low economic status: 0,30are points received in case the per capita income is falling under the 20th percentile of the national per capita income average and 0,15 points in case it is between the 20th and 40th percentile, compared to maximum 5 point for GPA and maximum 1 point for being in the last year of secondary education (Rulebook on pupils' and students' loans and scholarships, art.17). However, it is not clear what are the ranking regulations regarding the places reserved for vulnerable groups. Table 7 shows the data on the number of scholarships and loans approved in general, and in particular for each of the vulnerable groups listed.

Table 11: *Number of scholarships and loans approved in 2011/12 and 2012/13, with breakdown for vulnerable groups in 2012/13*

Year	Number of loans	Number of scholarships	
2011/2012	375	11995	
2012/2013	330	12210	
		For vulnerable groups 2012/13	Total: 1615
		Students without parents	591
		Students with 1 parent	305
		Roma students	501
		Students with disabilities	96
		Students whose parents disappeared during the war	7
		Students refugees or deportees	114
		Readmittees	1

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

In accessing placement in dormitories SES is accounted for somewhat more than in the case of scholarships – it is maximum 5 points in case of family income per capita being between 0-19 percent of average family income per capita, with a sliding scale to 1 points for those between 80-99 percent, compared to maximum 27 points gained on GPA and awards. In case of equal points, priority is given to students without parents, students who acquire more points based on GPA and students with awards (Rulebook on accommodation and meals for pupils and students, 2010[141], articles 4,5, and 7).

It seems that although the Serbian education system operates 63 secondary school dormitories and there are 10.566 pupils accommodated and meals served for them (from these 67 places are for students with hearing impairment in a specialized institution)[142], students from low SES background have limited chances to use this provision unless they have excelled during their prior schooling. During the academic year 2009/2010, a considerable percentage of secondary school students could not be accommodated due to lack of capacities in the dormitories – for example in Čačak (where some 43% of the applications are rejected), Užice (about 42%), Kruševac (about 35%) and Kragujevac (about 31%)[143]. In addition, the

[140] The decree was valid in the period 2008-2012,further developments will need to be observed.
[141] Rulebook on Accommodation and Meals for Pupils and Students ("Official Gazette RS" No. 36/2010)
[142] MoESTD data
[143] Source: Social inclusion in education, Feasibility report prepared for Council of Europe Bank, 2011

equipment in some of these dormitories is old and obsolete – including kitchens, toilets, libraries and sport facilities and does not provide the needed quality of a learning environment.

Attainment of outcomes – aside of those listed as general to all education levels, two more points need to be raised.

3.2.2.3. Pedagogical competencies of teachers of vocational subjects

Teachers of vocational subjects are those who are least prepared for the teaching profession, their initial education does not contain any professional areas needed for working with students. Hence, all the negative consequences of undereducated teaching staff add up in secondary vocational schools, and their teaching style and behavior predominantly reflect their implicit educational theories. A multi-year project addressing reform of vocational education (from 2003 through CARDS, form 2008 through IPA funds) has included hundreds of teachers in in-service programs to upgrade their competencies (although without a direct focus on equity issues), however, only somewhat more than 10 percent of students are benefiting from being enrolled in the new programs, and working with more competent teachers. The lacking competencies of vocational teachers might be one of the reasons for the high dropout rate from vocational schools. It will need to be observed whether and how the new requirement for upgrading initial teacher education by 36 ECTS devoted their professional studies and school practice based on LFES will impact the competencies of the VET teachers.

3.2.2.4. Employment possibilities

Secondly, the major incentive for excellence at this education level for all those who are in technical and vocational education and are not striving to continue academic education is a solid employment possibility. However, the Serbian vocational education system is not a dual system where the students would be already during their schooling in part time practical placement at businesses, and could hope for future employment due to their demonstrated competences, which in turn, would raise their motivation[144]. The high unemployment rate and possible protectionism in employment all are factors stripping education from the incentive of employment, thus further decreasing student motivation. This caveat can have higher negative effects on students from low SES families.

3.3. VIEWS OF NGOs AND DONOR ORGANIZATIONS ON PRO-POOR MEASURES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

The views of the surveyed NGOs on systemic weaknesses in the design and implementation of pro poor policies in Serbia is identifying the flip side of policy implementation with regards of vulnerable groups. The main issues in pro-poor measures identified by NGOs surveyed for this analysis are:

1. **Fragmentation of measures**: lack of strategy and cooperation on all levels and between sectors.
2. **Problems faced by poor children require comprehensive measures**, covering a wide range from material support in form of clothes, books, meals to development of social skills and support to the

[144]A new project of MoESTD with GIZ is under preparation to pilot the dual system in cooperation with German and other interested companies for a select number of 3-years VET profiles, among others, also with this rationale.

entire family. There are numerous programs and projects focused on solving different problems but they can often be short-term (one donation, one activity), focused only on one measure without covering other needed aspects (e.g. providing free books or clothes but not covering meals or transportation) or have small coverage in terms of beneficiaries. This raises both the question of sustainability and predictability of the support, and the question of effectiveness since the effects are most often short term and partial. Solving these shortcomings demands coordinated actions focused on working with poor students, Roma population, community, parents of children but also working with mainstream population in terms of their sensitization.

3. **Measures prescribed by relevant laws are not uniformly implemented**. Many children do not exercise their legal rights due to the fact that their parents are not informed or they are not in a position to adhere to administrative procedures. NGOs often point out that educational institutions and LSGs fail to reach out and inform a certain percentage of parents about timeline and procedures for enrollment. Frequently, access to municipal provisions is not transparent and the proposed measures do not reach all those in need. The call for enrolling in pre-primary is not distributed in Roma settlements, and there is no reaction from the system if the child is not enrolled. The right to health insurance card is guaranteed but Roma and others with no permanent address can get it only in some municipalities. NGOs point out that the success in this respect is often the result of their advocacy.
4. **Criteria for enrolment in pre-school are prioritizing parents' employment**. Even if Roma families manage to collect all the prerequisite documentation for enrolment, Roma children do not gain the necessary number of points to enroll into pre-school because their parents are usually unemployed.
5. **Lack of tracking, data bases and systemic measures for parents who do not enroll their children**. The number of poor children living in the streets or Roma children is usually based on estimation. Also, there is no tracking of absenteeism, and no reaction of the system in case of dropping out.
6. **Coverage by Early Education and Care programs** is far from being sufficient and there is no systemic measure which targets children of early age in the streets or Roma settlements.
7. **Extended stay in school, after-classes or pre-classes are not organized everywhere, or is not free of charge**. Many NGOs try to organize day-care, clubs and other out of school activities that could keep children out of the streets, develop their social skills and provide support for learning and homework.
8. **Fulfillment of basic needs as "conditio sine qua non" for education and staying in school**. Basic needs like food, clothes, hygiene and transportation are often out of reach for children from families with low SES, especially for children from Roma settlements. As the biggest problems identified is that children are not provided with free snacks and lunch, and free books for grade 1-8. Also, children cannot integrate properly if they cannot fulfill basic hygienic needs, and have appropriate clothes. They can easily be excluded by their peers because of their appearance, put to back seats and quickly discouraged to be regular in schools.
9. **Limited services**: the number of pedagogical assistants is not enough and the support they provide to Roma children is more diminished by the fact that they are often turned into personal assistants and thus fail to perform the tasks intended for them.
10. **Invisible children-lack of personal documents**: Children from vulnerable groups often don't have personal documents, as well as their parents, and they are not capable of getting them because of illiteracy, social exclusion, living in closed communities with no information flow. Sometimes they don't see the need to have documents and are not aware of the consequences that has on their and their children's life. Many support measures that they could use are out of their reach because

they cannot handle administration and bureaucratic procedures. NGOs are very active in this domain and often provide help with obtaining documentation needed.

11. **Discrimination, lack of motivation, neglect**: Lack of willingness among education staff to work with children from vulnerable groups, exclusion of students by teachers, peers or parents and as a reaction repulsion of school by those students. Insufficient support to integration and social inclusions from public level and media.

Donors (international organizations) surveyed for this analysis see the same problems and gaps in the system as the NGOs and find investing in improvement of financial status, satisfying primary needs and keeping children in school through a wide range of activities as the most productive measures. They also point out that the lack of data bases and cooperation with responsible public bodies and services is a major problem.

Donors and NGOs from different areas of intervention all agreed that best practices/measures/activities are the ones that focus on:

1. Satisfying basic need such as clothes, food and transportation.
2. Using a "Whole-person approach", i.e. development of cognitive, social and cultural skills.
3. Working with mainstream and vulnerable population on integration.
4. Organization of out of school activities, programs, day care, extended stay etc.
5. Assistance in collection documents, administration and constant information flow.
6. Reaching the ones that the system and schools do not, especially children and parents in Roma settlements.
7. Charity actions and participation of the entire community.
8. Involving parents of children as much as possible in the education process and school life.
9. Working with teachers and schools staff on development of their competencies.

As seen from the survey most NGOs plan to have projects and measures focused on direct support to children and parents, organization of out of school programs, preparatory programs, monitoring and tracking of children in risk and from vulnerable groups. A major priority area is early childhood education and care.

3.4. SUMMARY ON BOTTLENECKS

The detailed analysis of the existing and the missing supports on the education trajectory of children from low-SES families and other vulnerable children describes the picture of a system under intensive development. It is clear that Serbia has committed lots of resources and energy in the last 5-10 years in the education and in the social welfare system to develop, regulate and implement a wide range of measures that aim to improve the education status of children from various vulnerable groups. It seems that these measures have created sufficient synergy and complementarity between actors at national level, including the two line ministries, a wide range of background institutions and councils, the international donor community and the civil society. The question however remains in which extent is a similar synergy created at the local levels.

However, the impact of these measures is not duly registered, monitored, and assessed. Lacking databases, disconnected between the social and education sector, between national and local levels seriously hampers the possibility to assess the impact of any of the newly introduced measures. A large number of specific

research studies show both some progress and some implementation problems, but leave unattended many possible others, and usually do not reach the attention of decision-makers.

Since the development described was and is governed by a broad equity, quality and efficiency agenda, and not a more focused pro-poor policy in education, the supports for the education of poor and vulnerable children identified in the system are not complete, partly due to a-synchronicities characteristic to every large-scale development process and partly due to the fact that measures designed for supporting vulnerable groups and/or quality improvement measures are only partially reaching children from low-SES families.

The analysis has detected four broad kinds of gaps. The description of these follows:

- Firstly, the analysis detected that regarding pro-poor measures in education there is a clear dis-balance between measures aimed at ensuring equitable access to primary education and the measures which should ensure attainment of outcomes and due progression. The first set of measures addressing access at this level seems to be well articulated and coherent, by which the most important bottlenecks to access are systematically diminished or eased up, except those connected to geographic distribution of school facilities. Although several of these measures are explicitly addressing vulnerable groups, mostly Roma, children with disabilities, children with learning difficulties, they are by and large effective also for children from low SES families, children of undereducated and unemployed parents. Issues can be raised regarding their correct implementation, but most of the important measures are identified, regulated and enforced. On the other hand, the bottlenecks affecting attainment of outcomes and due progression, i.e. those connected to equitable quality of education, or quality of education per se, are in large extent left not dealt with. Policies in this respect are nascent, some measures are regulated but not yet implemented (e.g. dropout prevention, parent participation, teachers' competencies), some have started implementation, but data are not yet available and effects not yet clearly visible (e.g. external evaluation, formative assessment, engaging teaching methods), and in some cases the problems are not yet identified and did not even become subject of comprehensive policy discussions or deliberation (e.g., remedial teaching or school libraries). The interpretation of this dis-balance can be two or threefold. On one hand it could be the reflection of a predominantly administrative approach to education, where more complex aspects of education are left less articulated. On the other hand it could also reflect the need to meet the type of traditional input oriented reporting systems which are more focused on administrative data on the number of children in or out of school and less on their attainments and further education or professional trajectories. In both cases it would be essential to adopt a more results oriented and professional than administrative approach to education. In that case the attainment of outcomes and progression bottlenecks which children from low SES families currently face could also be addressed in a more coherent way.
- Secondly, the analysis detected incongruences and mismatches between the education and the social welfare measures, especially in the area of pre-school support (different support to children attending special developmental groups than regular pre-school) and in the area of attendance bottlenecks (meals, transportation, etc.). Most of these mismatches do not derive from differences in policy, but from restricted social welfare funds, from implementation mechanisms and procedures which are often not well tuned to each other even when they are designed to be complementary (e.g. school attendance as prerequisite for gaining access to child allowance, meals support for children with special needs) and from the fact that the two systems are predominantly operating at different levels of governance – the social welfare system as a semi-decentralized

system, the education system as a largely centralized system. Even so, the mismatches create serious gaps which low SES families cannot overcome, and which have long-standing negative effects for the education of children from these families, and the possibility for them to attend the school. All of them need to be detected and urgently overcome by collaborative problem-solving of respective representatives of the two systems, by serious reconsideration of LSG accountability mechanisms and by overall quality assurance mechanisms. However, it seems that none of these will be effective without the reform of public administration.

- Thirdly, it seems that local policies are often not completely in line with national policies (and vice versa). Hence nationally set measures are not duly followed up by local measures, or vice versa, undue duplications or non-zero actions can also occur. The current analysis could not identify these mismatches in detail, but several telling examples call for seriously scrutinizing the area of local provisions and procedures and their attunement to national policy lines (e.g. affirmative action for enrolment in pre-school at national level, while parental employment as enrolment prioritization criterion at local level, ISC recommendations for educational, social and medical assistance not funded by LSG budgets, scholarships provided by the local/regional level duplicate scholarships provided by the national level, since they are merit based, and rarely prioritize children from low SES families). In addition, policies set at the national level within the local level financing responsibility are not monitored and their implementation and effects cannot be assessed (transportation costs, subsidies for pre-school attendance costs for children from low SES families, meals) .
- Fourthly, in both the education and the social welfare system many pro-poor measures are simply missing, are underdeveloped or not appropriately targeted. The list of these areas is long. In this section the most obvious and most burning missing or inappropriate measures will be listed. We see these being the following:
  - An entire set of measures at school level are not developed, regulated or implemented. Remedial education is not used in a proactive way, extracurricular activities are limited, education for parenting skills is not provided, new financing mechanisms are not developed, school own resources are not directed towards the vulnerable target groups, nor are schools seeking out funding available at LSG level, teacher, school staff remuneration does not account for additional work on social integration, schools are not reaching out to the community, and not reacting on the first signs of dropping out. Although the new education legislation provides a good framework for improvement, a comprehensive set of school policies including a wide range of pro-poor measures coupled with upgraded accountability and quality assurance mechanisms would need to be developed in order to reach better results.
  - The financial and in-kind assistance already provided through the education system nationally is not sufficient and/or not well targeted. This applies foremost to free textbook provision, student loans and scholarships, placement in dormitories and pedagogical assistants. While the system is investing high amount of funds into these measures, their impact on the most vulnerable groups is still limited. Measures which would ensure better targeting need to be developed and the current ones re-conceptualized.
  - It is clear that different type of responsibilities for different sets of measures in social welfare flows and meets at the local level, which should be a preferred scenario since the social needs are best met in the users' closest environment. However, in Serbia these different responsibilities - administrative, management and planning, or financing related to the pro-poor measures are not interlinked properly at the local level. There is no process or single management structure for pro-poor measure at local level but they are kept fragmented within

responsible bodies, strictly divided between national or local bodies dealing with the particular measure with no coherence of interventions whatsoever. This strongly hinders coherence between planning of budgets and measures and more efficient identification and targeting of beneficiaries. Thus, the social system at local level seems to be organized by measures and activities and not as person-centered system which is particularly confusing for the clients (every so often also for professionals) and non-responsive to their needs. As a result, the common situation found is that clients stay with their basic social needs unaddressed while the accountability for it lies somewhere in the vacuum between strict boundaries of different institutions. This picture unfortunately is very strong in the pro-poor policies implemented at local level.

- Measures in the field of social welfare, especially child allowance, pre-school attendance benefits (national benefits for children with disabilities and children without parental care, and local for children from low SES families) and financial social assistance are poorly targeted, have complicated administrative procedures and lack information adjusted to the abilities of poor population. This as a consequence has low coverage of the programs not reaching the most socially excluded groups. Discussions initiated for revising the current legal provisions, particularly on the child allowance program and pre-school attendance costs need to be continued. This needs to end up in serious reconstructing of the programs addressing the bottlenecks identified, alignment with inclusive education policy objectives and change in the legal regulation. Though this situation may improve with the implementation of recent legal changes for IDs and residence stay, reaching of these groups as well as other groups excluded from other reasons would require more outreach work, involvement of NGOs providing outreach services, support to poor, collecting documents, etc.
- Supporting a child from poverty background throughout its education most often requires complementary provision of different measures (national or local, benefits and services) pulled together into an effective pro-poor support package tailored to the child's needs. The analysis shows that this is rarely the case and most often support comes as single, often distant measures which in turn fail to provide the desired outcome. The **CSW active inclusion policy is** not yet functional, and a more proactive approach of CSW professionals regarding educational status and schooling prospects of each child registered in the CSW, particularly beneficiaries of financial support, who still do not go through case management system is not the prevalent modus operandi. Opening a case for a child from low SES families facing difficulties in schooling, could facilitate coordination of adequate support available in the community in more systematic manner (from national benefits to access to adequate social services, other local support available one-off assistance for school books at the beginning of the year should, etc.) Functional cooperation with the Inter-sectoral Committees in that sense is essential and would provide the adequate security network for vulnerable groups and low SES families.
- Community-based social services are underrepresented or non-existent in pro poor initiatives at local level. They are usually donor driven and implemented by NGOs with no initiatives for their system-wide provision. The social welfare system offers a regulatory framework for mainstreaming the existing practice in social services (minimum standards, licensing, commissioning and contracting) that needs to be employed. Future and ongoing IPA projects on integrated social services at local level, and related grants scheme to LSGs need to embrace education needs of poor children, develop new initiatives and mainstream best practices, and develop capacities at local level for future use of grant scheme on social inclusion.
- Serbia is not implementing carefully designed conditional cash transfer mechanism which would connect access to assistance from the social welfare system with education attendance

and parent involvement in further education or parent training. Although international discussion in this is partially controversial, these mechanisms, if collaboratively designed with the involvement of representatives of vulnerable groups could provide an important step forward.

- Many shortcomings in the education system, its slow progress in providing higher quality and relevance of education are especially hampering the education outcomes of the most vulnerable. Speeding up the reforms, especially regarding curriculum, teacher and teaching quality, and assessment, with a mandated constant scrutiny on how they are reflected on the education possibilities of vulnerable groups seems to be a necessary precondition for advancing the social inclusion agenda in Serbia as well.

4. POLICIES REVISITED FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND GAPS

In order to inform the Serbian education and welfare system on best practices in providing support for the education of children from poverty backgrounds, as well as assisting in the selection and design of possible new measures for this purpose in Serbia, a comparative analysis has been conducted by an international consultant. The integral text of the comparative analysis is included as an **Annex 5**. For the purposes of the current text we use the summary table on identified promising pro-poor policies, with an added column describing the status of similar policies in Serbia.

4.1. SYSTEMIC MEASURES FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

The first identified areas are **Systemic Measures for Accessibility and Affordability**.

Table 12: *Systemic measures for Accessibility and Affordability*

Systemic Measures for Accessibility and Affordability			
Pro poor policy	**Education level**	**Findings**	**Status of the policy in Serbian Context**
Financial Incentives and Vouchers	PE; SE	Voucher beneficiaries have higher educational attainment, when compared with non-voucher students (e.g. Program for the Expansion of Secondary Education Coverage Colombia 1991).	Policy present as covering costs for ECEC and PPE, and as scholarships/loans for SE, but at both levels not well targeted. **Measures developed but not well targeted– revision of the measures needed**
Early identification and intervention	ECEC, PPE, PE, SE	Early identification and intervention targeted at disadvantaged children can produce large positive socio-economic returns. Research emphasizes effective early identification at the earliest possible stage. Equally it is important that	Use of school readiness testing abolished as a barrier to enrollment. Child health care, along with social welfare and education, part of integrated ISC assessment.

Systemic Measures for Accessibility and Affordability			
Pro poor policy	**Education level**	**Findings**	**Status of the policy in Serbian Context**
		identification and intervention policies are in place at all phases of education cycle. Use of standardized tests in assessing "school readiness" is reducing (White 2012). Early intervention is a joint effort of authorities (Health, Social Welfare etc.).	Early intervention, early support is missing, except in the healthcare system. **Some measures developed, some measures missing, comprehensive** ECEC **policy needed**
Language	ECEC, PPE, PE, SE	In most European countries, all pupils, who speak a language other than the official language as their mother tongue or at home, are provided additional support to learn official language spoken in the particular country. Policies which support instruction in own native language and gradually decreasing use of mother tongue instruction seems to be an effective way to introduce an official language (e.g. Abazi 2006[145]). Preparatory classes are available for instance immigrant children to obtain basic language skills.	Language policy in Serbia supports complete instruction in minority languages (except for Roma), including availability of educational materials. Language classes in the language of instruction for Roma are legally granted but not implemented. ECEC in Romanes is a measure which should be introduced, with gradual move to PPE in the majority language by age 6. Currently provided by civil society **Measures developed, upgrading needed**

Regarding accessibility of the lower education levels policies are in place in Serbia. However, measures targeting affordability are not well targeted and need substantial restructuring, including legislative changes. Early pre-school for Roma children in the native language of the Roma population is currently organized only by NGOs, it would need to be introduced as a systemic provision, and gradual move to pre-school in the language of instruction by age 6 ensured.

[145] Abazi, H. (2006). *Efficient Learning for the Poor.Insights from the Frontier of Cognitive Neuroscience*. . Washington DC: The World Bank.

4.2. STRUCTURING EDUCATION SYSTEM

The second set of policies identified by the comparative analysis is policies of education system structuring.

Table 13: *Education system structuring*

Structuring the Education System			
Pro poor policy	**Education level**	**Findings**	**Status of the policy in Serbian Context**
Tracking and streaming of students	PE; SE	Early streaming has a negative impact on individual level to students assigned to lower tracks, particularly on the achievement levels of disadvantaged children. Tracking can also lead to large variations in performance among schools due to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the communities that are served. Removing early tracking may also indirectly affect the dropout. (OECD 2010, 2012; OECD 2012[146]) suggests removing early tracking or postponing tracking until upper secondary level, combined with the possibility to transfer between school types.	In Serbia, full enrolment of all children in mainstream education is promoted and the new school enrolment policy abolishes the previous pre-enrollment categorization procedures due to which children with special needs but also many Roma were referred to special education. Tracking in compulsory education (G1-8) is not present in Serbia – compulsory education is comprehensive. Tracking starts at secondary level, and can affect low SES students. Measures to mitigate this risk need to be developed. Affirmative action for enrolment in SE for Roma is already in place and effective. **Measures mostly developed, continuation needed**
School Selection	PPE, PE, SE	There is limited research-based information about the impacts of school selection on learning outcomes of children coming from poor families. However, it is evident that there are fears and experiences that the well-off parents send their children to the "best" schools and on the other hand, poor or less educated parents may not have sufficient knowledge or money to make the choice even if they wanted to.. Housing policies support desegregation which would eliminate the possibility to establish Roma schools near their settlements P.15	Neighborhood schooling is the principle in Serbia, but school selection is also allowed. There is some evidence that parents withdrew their child from a school where proportion of Roma children increased. Measures are needed to ensure that' school selection by parents is not used as segregation measure, including busing and local enrolment plans. **Measures developed, upgrading needed**

[146] OECD. .2010. Schools, Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students
OECD. 2012. Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools
OECD. 2010. Overcoming School Failure; Policies that work. OECD Project Description.

Structuring the Education System			
Pro poor policy	**Education level**	**Findings**	**Status of the policy in Serbian Context**
Grade Repetition	PE; SE	Research in various countries suggests and experience shows that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds repeat a grade more often that their advantaged peers. (O'Brien P 2007 cited in OECD 2012[147]) The evidence on the repeating a year is mixed, but it seems that this practice is ineffective in getting the failing students to perform better. At least, it is costly for the education system. Individualized support and catch up opportunities can produce better results than repeating. Preventive strategies include improving teacher's skills to teach in classrooms with diverse attainment levels, extending learning time by introducing remedial classes and strengthening meta-cognitive skills. Also financial incentives to reduce repetition and by making schools accountable for the number of students held back. Equally important is to establish early identification systems which will provide information not only about those under the grade level but also the low achievers, so that support reaches all falling behind in time. Text book publishers should produce remedial materials and adapted materials.	Grade repetition policy has not been abolished, but softened at the beginning and end of schooling, although not tuned to the needs of poor families. Remedial classes are a legal obligation of all teachers, but evidence shows that it is not used or not appropriately used in most schools – further measures are needed to strengthen remedial instruction as a regular and high quality practice. Improving teachers' skills is a developed measure, but needs further support. Financial incentives to schools to reduce repetition and become accountable for the school success of all students is not yet discussed as a possible measure. **Measures not developed, new policies needed**
Providing attractive alternatives in upper secondary school	SE	The projects (e.g. in Norway) where low motivated VET students are offered an alternative shorter and less comprehensive upper secondary program leading to a lower level degree recognized by industry, rather than the full VET upper secondary, have yielded positive results. (Markussen et al., 2009[148]). Austria and Germany for	VET reform is under development, with the aim of making VET connected to business, ensure better employability and making it more attractive. However the reform has been stalled in several periods for a variety of reasons. **Measure under development, implementation needs speeding up**

[147] OECD. 2012. Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools

[148] Markussen, E., Frøseth, M. W., & Grøgaard, J. B. (2009). *Inkludert eller segregert?: om spesialundervisning i videregående opplæring like etterinnføringen av Kunnskapsløftet*. Oslo: NIFU STEP.
Markussen, E., Sandberg, N., Lødding, B., & Frøseth, M. W. (2008). *Bortvalg og kompetanse: gjennomføring, bortvalg og kompetanseoppnåelse i videregående opplæring blant 9749 ungdommer som gikk ut av grunnskolen på Østlandet våren 2002 : hovedfunn, konklusjoner og implikasjoner fem år etter*. Oslo: NIFU STEP.

Structuring the Education System			
Pro poor policy	**Education level**	**Findings**	**Status of the policy in Serbian Context**
		example have diversified offers and obtain graduation rates close to 90%, with VET students making up the majority of the upper secondary graduates. Providing good quality and practice-oriented alternatives in upper secondary education is one of the effective measures which could influence in inequality in education.	
Preventing Drop-out and offering second changes	PE; SE	Dropout prevention is more than tracking attendance. The national Dropout Prevention Center in the US has rated more than 100 programs having strong evidence of their efficiency in reducing dropout. In order to overcome early school leaving, policies must involve action both outside and inside school simultaneously. School-based tracking systems which follow several criteria of attendance, GPA, engagement and discipline three times year seem to be effective. The most successful measures combine components within school, outside school at a systemic macro level. Picking up on a certain number of signals that form an early warning system may require a close cooperation between educational authorities and many other parts of government such as social and labor services, health services and justice system in some countries. Preventing drop-out requires school-level cooperation.	**Measures not developed, new policies at national, local and school levels needed.** Students that dropped out can only enter second chance education, from recently

The pro-poor measures embodied in structuring policies are heavily underdeveloped in Serbia. Exception from this is the new inclusive school enrolment, the affirmative action for Roma secondary students' policies, and the VET reform started. The equity of education in Serbia would seriously benefit from introducing new measures addressing dropout prevention, preventing grade repetition and revitalizing remedial teaching organized by the schools. Also accountability mechanisms would need to be strengthened at all levels (national, local and school level).

4.3. TARGETING SUPPORT TO DISADVANTAGE SCHOOLS

The third set of policies identified by the comparative analysis refers to **policies for targeting support to disadvantaged schools.**

Table 14: *Targeting support to disadvantaged schools*

Targeting support to disadvantaged schools			
Pro poor policy	**Education level**	**Findings**	**Status of the policy in Serbian Context**
Financial Incentives to Disadvantaged schools	PPE;PE;SE	Targeting support to disadvantaged schools can contribute to the increased enrollment of disadvantaged students in these schools and improved learning outcomes. It can make a difference provided the level of additional financing is sufficient and they are accompanied by incentives such as teacher education, additional support to students falling behind. However, providing financial incentives to teachers should be supported with other measures related to learning environments and resources. In Ireland, the DEIS (Delivering Equality of opportunity developed a standardized system for identifying levels of disadvantage in schools and provides a range of support. The last report on Retention in post primary schools shows that the average Leaving Certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased from 68.2% to 73.2% for students who entered post primary level from 2001 to 2004. The DEIS criteria for disadvantaged schools could be further studied to develop criteria to target additional/ specialized support to those schools in need. Also clustering of schools as "learning communities" could be an option to bring the disadvantaged schools at higher level. This clustering could for instance allow teacher exchange between the schools. Financial incentives should be accompanied with quality inputs.	In the Serbian budget system for education there is no allocation for this purpose. The experience in Serbia up to now with targeted school grants financed through projects from donations or national loans is very positive, and the measure should be institutionalized through reorganizing the financial system for education and development of targeted eligibility criteria. There is very limited experience with school clustering in Serbia. **Measures piloted but not developed, new policy including re-composition of education financing needed**
Developing Positive School Climate	PPE;PE;SE	A positive climate can have a powerful and significant impact on student achievement and well-being in disadvantaged schools. There are different options to support positive environments (OECD 2012). School	Developing positive school climate is still a declarative policy in Serbia, without concrete implementation measures developed. Programs like school development planning have

Targeting support to disadvantaged schools			
Pro poor policy	**Education level**	**Findings**	**Status of the policy in Serbian Context**
		leadership, school climate and environment, high quality teachers and classroom learning strategies and cooperation with communities and parents are effective measures to improve school climate.	yielded positive experience, but they were implemented in the frame of national projects funded from donors or loan. School ethos is externally evaluated, but results are not yet published. **Measures not sufficiently developed yet ,new policy urgently needed**
Class size	PPE;PE;SE	A review of European education systems show that in most countries, improvements on the cognitive skills acquired by students seem to be linked to the instructional practices implemented in smaller classrooms rather that the classroom size itself (OECD 2012). The school-based measures on how the students can be grouped differently within schools itself have not been explored sufficiently. The system of reducing class size based on number of children with IEP is an effective measure, if supported by appropriate instructional methodologies and school-based arrangements.	In Serbia the class size is 30, and it can be reduced in case 1-2 children from vulnerable groups are included to 26 or 28 children. This number is still high for effective differentiation and individualization to happen. A new policy reducing the maximum class size to 25 would be needed. **New class-size policy needed**

Policies supporting disadvantaged schools (or schools with many disadvantaged students) are not developed yet in Serbia. However, based on large-scale school grant projects the schools gained competencies and could easily absorb a new school grant or school support policy. By mobilizing the schools through a variety of mechanisms, their accountability towards educating children from vulnerable groups and from low SES families could be significantly increased. Additionally, class size needs to be reduced in order to provide for more differentiated and individualized learning.

4.4. SUPPORT POLICIES FOR DISADVANTAGE STUDENTS AND STUDENT WELFARE MEASURES.

The fourth set of policies refers to **support policies for disadvantage students and student welfare measures.**

Table 15: *Support for disadvantaged students*

Support to Disadvantaged Students			
Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Status of the policy in Serbian Context
Transportation costs **School Transport**	PPE; PE; SE	Provision of school transport is essential for attendance particularly for students living in remote areas. Regulations differ by country and are usually related to the distance rather than socio-economic status of the family. It is common that the school transport is financed by the education authorities at the pre- and primary school level and during the lower secondary school, but the regulations change as the student moves to upper secondary level or is of age 18 years and transport is subsidized by Social Welfare.	Provision of school transport is on the one hand a universal measure of covering public transportation costs tied to distance from school in the LSGs responsibility, but with potential implementation problems. However, in case public transportation is not available (no school busing services exist) and for attending pre-school the measure does not exist. **Measure partially developed, needs upgrading in terms of scaling up and better implementation arrangements** (e.g. transportation costs paid through the school)
School Feeding	PPE; PE; SE	There is evidence that school feeding programs increase school attendance, cognition, and educational achievement, particularly when used to benefit specifically the poorest and most vulnerable children. The school meal policies differ by country. Whereas free school meal is provided in **Finland** to all students for instance, in the **UK**, for a child to qualify for a Free School Meal, their parent or carer must be receiving particular benefits as stated by Government. In **Ireland**, the School Food Program is to assist children who are "unable by reason of lack of food to take full advantage of the education provided for them" and no consistent eligibility criteria exist. The effectiveness of school feeding programs is dependent upon several factors, including the	School feeding is covered through a variety of sources, including the Red Cross, LSGs, NGOs, however a coherent school feeding policy targeted to all children or to children from low SEs families does not exist in Serbia. **Measure not systematic, predictable and well-targeted, need for new policy**

Support to Disadvantaged Students			
Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Status of the policy in Serbian Context
		selection of; the effectiveness of targeting; and the associated costs. There is a particular need for better data on the cost-effectiveness of the available approaches and modalities. (Bundy 2012).	
Remedial teaching	PE, SE	Remedial teaching is organized in various ways: In some countries, schools receive a lump sum of hours (based on number of students) and the schools can allocate and distribute the hours rather independently. It is common, for instance in Finland that a teacher has a certain amount of hours (0,5 – 1 hour per week or a lump sum) allocation for remedial teaching which is paid according to the time-reports of teachers. Remedial teaching is one of the measures valued by the disadvantaged families (who may not be able to support the child for instance in homework). However, the quality of this teaching may differs based on teachers' expertise in individuals teaching, and the availability of guidebooks and materials. There are also opportunities to organize "learning clubs" where teachers dedicate their time to teaching certain topics.	Remedial classes are a legal obligation of all teachers (4 hours weekly expected to be devoted to remedial instruction, individual instruction, organizing additional top-up activities for talented children, and preparatory teaching for forthcoming exams), but evidence shows that it is not used or not appropriately used in most schools – further measures are needed to strengthen remedial instruction as a regular and high quality practice, including training, and guidebooks. **Measure needs to be upgraded and re-conceptualized**
After school Support		The results on After-school- support program have been mixed. There are reports that show significant improvement in learning outcome's and social skills and other studies did not find significant impacts. There are several studied in the US showing that quality of after-school supports is of concern. Improving the quality of instruction can make a significant impact on learning outcomes.	After-school-support programs in Serbia are most often provided by NGO. Need to map out existing provision and their strengths and development needs. Criteria should be developed, quality of such programs monitored and financing ensured. **Measure not developed, new policy needed**
Tutoring and Mentoring	PE; SE	Tutoring and mentoring is not commonly supported by government policies. However, some NGO initiative has shown positive impact. The project where teacher faculty students were engaged as tutors (Hungary) was a successful example with multiple benefits. Small grants could be mechanisms to develop mentoring and tutoring for the	Measure piloted in Vojvodina, with successful experience, but from donor funded project. Possibilities for systemic scaling up should be explored. **Measure only piloted but not developed, new policy needed**

Support to Disadvantaged Students			
Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Status of the policy in Serbian Context
		needy ones.	
Supporting Transition	PE/SE SE/USE/ VET	Smoothing the transition into secondary can prevent students from falling behind and potentially dropping out (OECD, 2011c[149]).	A high-stake exam is used for selection. In Serbia, schools are obliged to organize preparatory classes during the last term prior to the examination, but most students resort to pilot tutoring. For Roma students this bottleneck is partially reduced, due to an affirmative action policy for enrolment into secondary and tertiary education. **Measure developed but not duly implemented, needs upgrading**
Counseling	SE (PE)	Pupil/student counseling supports and guides pupils and students to perform as well as possible in their studies. They also provide guidance and support for reflections, plans and choices concerning further studies and careers. At the upper stage, pupil counseling includes personal counseling, tutorials, class lessons and periods of workplace guidance. Students at upper secondary schools receive student counseling from student counselors, group counselors, teachers of different subjects and principals. Student counseling helps students in learning and study techniques, planning their own study plan, monitoring the progress of studies, use of social benefits and issues relating to the matriculation examination. (City of Helsinki 2012) Vocational orientation can be arranged as an extra curricula activity for students who need to expose their experience in employment and labor market. Work on alternative pathways for employment particularly for students with disabilities. Start well in advance on promoting employment of persons with	Career guidance is a new policy increasingly introduced in Serbia during basic education in the last couple of years, replacing the previous tradition of organizing professional orientation for 7th and 8th grade students in schools. Legally, professional orientation and career guidance is one of the many responsibilities of school psychologists and pedagogues – their education in employment-oriented career counseling is needed to ensure that they have a broad vision and understanding about the employment market. Need to explore how Career Counseling can be introduced in the new curricula. **Measure piloted, need scaling up and upgrading**

[149] OECD (2011c), *OECD Education at a Glance 2011,* Paris: OECD Publishing

Support to Disadvantaged Students			
Pro poor policy	Education level	Findings	Status of the policy in Serbian Context
		disabilities (see e.g. EU Social Funds Projects)	
Teacher Assistants and Mediators		A clear distinction appears between countries where support is delivered by a specialist school staff member, and those countries where support is delivered by a specialist professional external to the school. It is argued that classroom assistants need to be sufficiently qualified if they are to improve the education of children with special. With regards to Roma mediators, to date there have been mixed results in the use of mediators. In Denmark, Roma mediators have a high turnover. Also in Finland, few mediators are employed in a small amount of municipalities. Their position in the civil service structure is not defined. Pedagogical Assistants/ School Assistants can provide a valuable support to the children with special educational needs and to the entire class. However, this requires training both for the assistant and for the teachers and principals to make best use of this resource.	Pedagogical assistants are introduced in the education system in Serbia, and their work has proved to be a valuable support for Roma families and students, as well for the school. They receive training, guidance and have regular networking activities as well as communication to the local authorities and civil society. This measure seems to have become a best practice example. However, the number of currently employed pedagogical assistants is not sufficient to cater the needs. **Measure well developed, needs to be sustained and enlarged**
Scholarships		There are different scholarship schemes across EU countries. Many of them are targeted to higher education. There is limited information about the impacts of the scholarships but for instance the REF evaluation (2012) found that financial support combined with mentoring and tutorship it has contributed most to increased numbers of Roma in tertiary education. Measures are needed to ensure that scholarships reach students in rural and very disadvantaged areas also at secondary and high school level. Criteria for selection, the selection process as well as close follow-up strengthen the impacts of this measure. A conclusion can be drawn from PISA results that students from low socio-economic backgrounds (who are more common low achievers that their advantaged peers) have fewer opportunities to merit-based scholarships.	In Serbia, access to scholarships, loans and dormitories for secondary and tertiary education students is predominantly merit and not needs based. **Measure exists but is not well targeted – revision of the measures needed**

The set of policies targeting students from poverty background are in different phases of development in Serbia. Some are well developed and just need further expanding (i.e. Pedagogical assistants), some are piloted, but not yet put in place as a policy measure (i.e. school grants, mentoring, or career guidance), some are not well targeted (i.e. scholarships) or not duly implemented (i.e. preparatory classes for school-leaving examination or school transportation), and again some are not yet even touched upon in any other ways but through civil society actions (i.e. afterschool programs). It seems that putting in place these policies and ensuring their quality implementation will be a big challenge in the Serbian education and social welfare system, but they could bring about tangible changes in the education outcomes of children from families who cannot afford to provide themselves all the support needed.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the analysis of the institutional, legal and policy frameworks, through insight into the areas where civil society and donor support are needed and welcomed, through the analysis of pro-poor measures and their implementation affecting the educational trajectory of children from low-SES families and other vulnerable children, and finally through matching the measures identified in Serbia with policies recommended in other countries, the current analysis provided insights into a variety of gaps in the evolving equity policy of the Serbian education system.

In the final chapter recommendations for overcoming the identified gaps will be offered. They will be structured as wider policy recommendations, recommendations for further research, recommendations for introducing new or upgrading existing measures, and recommendations for legislative changes.

5.1. WIDER POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policies that are outside of the mandate of the two systems could be helpful in providing support to the education of children and youth from vulnerable groups. We are mentioning a couple of such possibilities.

As important potential supporters of higher access, attainment and progression of children from vulnerable and low SES families the role of general and specialized media should be carefully scrutinized. On one hand this applies to its function in advocacy for pro poor measures, framing and changing public attitudes toward the vulnerable groups, for clear information on all provisions reaching the relevant target groups, and forums for exchanging experiences and best practices. On the other hand this applies also to their programming concept and scheme in the sphere of straightforward education programs targeting children and parents, which have proved highly effective in international practice (e.g. the role of Sesame Street in the Head Start program). The education and social welfare related policy, legal and research documents surveyed for this analysis have seemed to miss highlighting this point.

The LSGs role in implementing national policies, designing and implementing local policies, taking a proactive role in reaching out to the poor and vulnerable – the categories of population which are hardest to reach, offering community services to respond to unfolding needs of vulnerable groups is of critical importance for the social inclusion agenda in Serbia. Although documents indicate that much has been done in raising the capacity of LSGs for assuming all these responsibilities, the outcomes of the analysis show a very unequal picture, and call for seriously scrutinizing the effectiveness of the services provided or implemented locally. In addition, it has to be noted that LSGs are structurally organized so that education and social welfare are in the very same administration unit, hence LSGs could be naturally suited to overcome fragmentation of national policies stemming from different line ministries, and even act as

initiators of closer cooperation. A more proactive role of the ministry in charge of local self-governments could be particularly helpful.

Accountability and quality assurance in the public sector seems to be a must in order to reach social cohesion and poverty reduction, but the reforms in this area although many times called for and started have been stalled. Especially impact assessment, policy dialogue, unified data systems and performance monitoring seems to be very weak.

Anti-corruption measures in both systems should be employed in order to ensure higher effectiveness of both the education and the social welfare systems, and a just access to all provisions by those in need. In the education system the first preparatory measure has been taken in 2012 by completing an OECD pilot survey on Integrity in Education in Serbia (INTES)[150]. The survey highlighted several areas where corruption could occur, the most prominent being enrolment procedures to higher education levels, exams at university level and hiring/firing of education staff in schools, resulting in a neglect to the quality of potential teacher candidates. However, up to now follow up actions have not been undertaken.

Research, although targeting pro-poor policies and inclusive education, is not providing sufficient policy related results, and is not sufficiently vocal to address policy upgrading. The national research policy is not addressing the area of social integration as a priority area, hence only individual commitment of a limited number of researchers being able to access independent funds are addressing these issues.

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO FURTHER RESEARCH

In order to move the equity agenda and ensure sustained development of pro-poor policies in education, research needs to focus more thoroughly on this topic. Ways for reaching this goal are the following:

1. Establish a detailed database of the education system fully developed and linked with the social welfare system database. Such a database would allow large scale secondary analysis, calculation of indicators set by the NEC and disaggregated by SES and vulnerable groups, and empirical identification of bottlenecks.
2. Conduct regular periodic briefings on the growing research body with the aim of monitoring implementation of pro-poor policies, assessing their effects and impact, or identifying critical points not addressed yet. Such a forum could convene researchers from both governmental and nongovernmental organizations, policy makers and policy implementers, and could capitalize upon the interest of researchers already committed to explore education, especially inclusive education.
3. Use action research methodology to address issues pertinent to pro-poor measures, as a powerful tool to engage stakeholders (including vulnerable groups, Roma, and students from low-SES families), bring about change and learn from it in ways that can inform policymakers and other interested parties.
4. Based on the current analysis several research topics are already identified as missing, but of high importance for further policy making or policy fine-tuning. These are:
    a. Analysis of remedial teaching with the purpose to gain insight into the actual practices in remedial teaching in Serbia

[150] OECD (2012), *Strengthening Integrity and Fighting Corruption in Education: Serbia*, OECD Publishing.

b. Analysis of pro-poor measures in education and social assistance from the beneficiaries' point of view.
c. Analysis of school libraries with the purpose of assessing their accessibility, way of functioning, resources, and provide recommendations for their upgrading and tuning to the needs of students from low SES families.
d. Analysis of the children (families) beneficiaries of CSW/municipal offices who receive financial support (child allowance or financial social support) and their referral to the services in the community with the purpose to identify whether active inclusion polices are in place for poor/Roma children and families - individual activation plan in CSW.
e. Financial projection of costs of providing the additional educational, social and medical assistance deriving from the needs assessed by the ISCs up to now, as well as other proposed measures, coupled with cost benefit analysis

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO NEW MEASURES TO BE INTRODUCED OR SUBSTANTIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF EXISTING ONES

The analysis as well as consultations conducted in June 2013 with key stakeholders articulates the recommendations for upgrading education equity and measures addressing the education of poverty struck and vulnerable children and youth into three comprehensive packages. The first package is support to meeting basic needs package, the second one an education improvement package, while the third is a social welfare improvement package. The detailed costing calculation per each measure is provided in the **Annex 6** – Financial analysis of the measures proposed in this study.

5.3.1. Recommended basic measures to support education of vulnerable children

This package consists of three sets of measures, which are seen as basic ones. All three of them are essential for eliminating the current major access and attendance barriers children and youth face in their education trajectory.

5.3.1.1. Modernization and improvement of child allowance program in targeting, coverage and administration is necessary for more effectiveness and efficiency.

A. Description of the measure

The child allowance program is the main state program against social exclusion of children in Serbia and it is the largest financial support program designed for poor children and their families. Considering its importance the child allowance should reach and be easily accessible to all children at risk of social exclusion, therefore targeting weaknesses must be minimalized to a reasonable level. For the potential clients that are not covered by the program, more proactivity is expected from the local self-governments who administer the program and who are accountable for the persons in need. This can be organized by providing outreach services to the most socially excluded groups in their community, through the Red

Cross, NGOs and other organizations. Disproportion of the share of child allowance beneficiaries and the level of economic development of the local self-governments should be carefully monitored, while reasons for such inconsistencies should be analyzed and promptly addressed. This would require more efforts of the management and supervisory authority of the program being the Ministry of Labor, Social Policy and Employment towards local offices administering the child allowance. Management and supervisory role at least require more guidelines to the municipal/city offices administering the program, close monitoring and supervisory visits which could be random or targeted to underdeveloped local self-governments with the share of child allowance beneficiaries below republic average, and if necessary provision of targeted capacity building activities. Since the Ministry of Labor, Social Policy and Employment is managing authority for two main poverty instruments – child allowance and financial social assistance, protocols should be made between two local offices – CSW and local office for child care clearly setting procedures to enable sharing of the data on beneficiaries between the two institutions and enabling entrance of the children beneficiaries of financial social assistance into child allowance program.

The child allowance program in Serbia is conceptualized as conditional cash transfer since its acquisition is directly linked to child or young person school attendance. Schooling conditionality calls for a proactive approach to the child/young person and its family by the institutions involved, i.e. the school and the local office for child allowance, but also the CSW. Communication and reporting channels of the institutions concerned with the child's schooling progress could start with an early reporting of child's unjustified absenteeism by the school to the local office for child allowance, which should issue a warning but ideally make contact to CSW in order to help the child and family with available social support to overcome the difficulties leading to absenteeism (be it meals, clothes, scholarships, services, etc.). Should this system not function properly, the purpose of the schooling conditionality is lost, therefore re-thinking the schooling conditionality feature of the program in terms of cost-benefit analysis should be considered.

Information on the program needs to be accessible easily and most importantly tailored to the capacity of the potential beneficiaries. It should be available at internet written in user-friendly way, at the CSW, at the school and local self-government websites, brochures, leaflets and posters have to be available in all these institutions including also healthcare institutions, and the most socially excluded groups need to be supported by the professional NGOs and/or Red Cross providing outreach support in understanding the information and collecting documents. The information also needs to respect accessibility principles for persons with disabilities.

Along with these types of improvements, there is space for modernizing the design of the program of child allowance as elaborated and widely consulted in a recent study[151]. Legal administrative procedures and criteria instead of presenting barriers should be updated and revisited to enable entering **more children** into this important government program against social inclusion. Recommendations for improvement include automatic granting of child allowances to children receiving financial social assistance who attend school; allowing child allowance for total of 4 children per family, instead of limitations set by birth order; reducing the currently voluminous set of required documents i.e. exclude requirement on health insurance; revisiting cadaster and land revenue criteria, and eliminating cadaster revenue for households with no agricultural income. The comparative analysis shows that allocation to child allowance in Serbia are below EU level, therefore further redesign may be directed to increasing the income threshold by introducing the OECD equivalence scale for incomes which would bring more children included in the program; to

[151]Matković, G and Mijatović, B (2012) *Child Allowance Program in Serbia: Analysis and Recommendations for Its Improvement*, Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, UNICEF

increasing child allowance rate by introducing child age-based amount differentiation and setting a one-off double amount of the child allowance at the start of each school year.

B. Interventions needed within the measure

The presented management of the child allowance program shall be achievable with the following interventions:

Implementation instruments –

- *Develop Guidelines and improve supervisory visits* by the MoLESP would strengthen monitoring and supervision of the local offices for child care and improve administering of the program at local level, which would improve targeting of the program. The Ministry as the key authority for main poverty related financial programs should initiate Protocols between local office for child allowance and CSW which would clearly set procedures on data sharing of the beneficiaries and facilitate their inclusion into child allowance program.
- *Setting an integrated database between* local offices for child care and CSW on the beneficiaries of the state financial support programs for the poor population at local level (financial social assistance and child allowance) would significantly save time and decrease administrative burden for the potential users in accessing financial support programs along with other social supports available in the community and improve targeting. This would require an analysis of the IT system requirements, design of technical specification and assessment of the costs for the IT system improvement.
- *Cross-sectoral and institutional cooperation* – Functional schooling conditionality requires a leading initiative by the MoLESP and the MoESTD towards local self-governments. It would include signing a Protocols or Memorandum of understandings on supporting vulnerable children in their schooling prospects which would clearly set the procedural steps and responsibilities of each institution involved, school, municipal office for child support and CSW. Also guidelines and if needed minor capacity building activities would be required.
- *Assessment of the schooling conditionality feature of the program* should be considered as an optional intervention that would contribute to re-thinking and further improvement of the program. Schooling conditionality is a controversial but very widespread concept. The current recommendations are based on its original concept as applied until now. However, at some point, the conditionality aspect of the Child allowance program in Serbia may be subject of review, including the analysis of pros and cons and its cost effectiveness and recommendations for its continuation and improvement or termination.
- *Preparation of the promotional material* – brochures, leaflets, posters, internet information which could be printed at local level, and designed by national level.

Legal instruments – Modernization and redesign of the child allowance requires immediate changes to the Law on the Financial Support to Family with Children. Additional budgetary funding depends on the governmental decision of the increase of budget allocation for the child allowance program following EU practices. Still, it is highly recommendable to have legal changes along with the implementation improvements in order to bring more effectiveness and efficiency in delivery of the program.

B. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsible institution for the measure is the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy. The partner support is required also from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and local self-governments.

C. Costing of the proposed interventions

The implementation improvements do not all require major additional funding from central or local level.

Guidelines and supervisory visits by the MoLESP for the local offices for child care, along with interventions to support cross-sectoral and institutional cooperation should be part of the regular ministry annual work and regular budget planning, with minor additional funding related to travel expenses or possibly no additional funding. As a consequence targeting of the program would be improved, which does not necessarily mean an increase of budget allocation for the child allowance since the better targeting would clear out also targeting weaknesses i.e. users who are not eligible receiving the entitlement.

Improving of the identification and targeting of the child allowance beneficiaries would require analysis of the IT system requirements and the existing system, design of technical specification and assessment of the costs for the IT system improvement. The estimated cost of IT system analysis is 23,523 euros. Based on the analysis further costing of the IT specification and system installment, as well as additional software and hardware investments would be than clear. Depending on the technical specification, whether it is a design of new function to the existing central IT system or major IT system change, or even a new system, investment into the system could be covered by matching funds – software being covered from the national level and/or donor or IFIs funds and hardware requirements financed by the local budget and or earmarked transfers.

Preparation of the information package would raise awareness of the potential beneficiaries about entitlements and how to access them. The cost of promotional activities is calculated having in mind the unit cost of the promotional material (RSD 300), under the assumption that leaflets will be distributed to all families with at least one child under 15 years of age, and as such an estimated average cost per local self-government is 8,523 euros.

The study work on the assessment of the schooling conditionality would require TA, however it is not an immediate intervention proposed. The estimated cost of this analysis is at 20.455 euros.

Financial effects of the eventual legal changes depend highly of the scope and ranges of legal changes to be agreed and adopted. It is also possible to have legal changes without additional financial allocation to the program. However, considering that the budget allocation for child allowance program is very low comparing to EU level, there is a space for considering an increase of the funding for child allowance. Based on the financial simulation done within the Child Allowance program study, the increase in the income threshold by 20% with other unchanged factors would bring 22% more children into the program, the number of children would be 464,000 and the budget allocation would increase to 0.38% BDP (now it is 0.3%). Should the increase of the threshold by 20% be followed with an increase in child allowance rate to 3,000 RSD the budget would make 0.5% of BDP, what is still half of the average allocation in the EU[152].

Total cost of this measure is €1,475,795. It includes the costs of analyzing the requirements of the social welfare's IT system, in the amount of €23,523, the cost-benefit analysis of the validity of the "schooling as a requirement" concept, worth €20,455, and the promotional activities aimed at improved the targeting of children's allowances (ChA), worth €1,431,818. Further, it has been assessed that legislative amendments relevant for defining public budget allocations for children's allowances can be introduced without additional expenditures.

[152] Ibid

5.3.1.2. Meals and clothing have to be systematically provided to meet basic needs of the poor children

A. Description of the measure

Meals and clothing represent basic needs for the children from poor families and their system provision is important prerequisite for social inclusion. The recently adopted new Law on Basic Education states responsibility of the school to seek ways to provide free meals for poor children at school in cooperation with the local self-government or donors. Currently there is a variety of ways these basic needs are being addressed in Serbia: through soup kitchen programs, one-off social assistance, Red Cross and NGO activities, but also school solidarity activities. The free provision of snacks/meals in the schools for poor children is currently provided in almost half of all municipalities in Serbia funded by LSGs, but there are also school schemes developed where each 10th or 15th meal is free for those in need. However, the implementation of these measures is not systemic and there is no accountability in case the provision is missing. A new system-wide measure would mean regular, timely provision of clothing at least once a year and ideally two times a year, and free snacks/meals in school (soup kitchens are found to be incentives for absenteeism, since they are providing food during instruction time, out of school). The measure should also clearly define the screening and monitoring responsibility of the provision of food and clothing to each child in need and a clear accountability system should some children be left out of this support. Only with clear definition of the final accountability and clear budget allocations will the social safety net for basic needs be in place. Furthermore, user-friendly information on the availability of this type of support should be available in all institutions concerned with child, school, CSW, health care institutions or local offices for child support.

B. Interventions needed within the measure

The following interventions are needed for the basic social safety net:

Implementation instruments –

- *Develop clear financing mechanism for systematic and regular provision of free meals and clothing to each child in need.* Currently, funding is provided mainly from the local budgets, and donor support.
- A well designed *consultative process* on the basic needs provision should be considered, with the aim of developing access criteria but also respectful implementation mechanisms.
- *Guidelines and TA to local self-governments* on the system provision of meals and clothing including screening and monitoring of the provision of basic social safety net for poor children. Guidelines should include also development of inter-school mechanisms for planning and follow up of meals provisions, which should be aligned with municipal and social support provision.
- *Targeting of children* will be improved with the implementation of protocols for cross-sectorial and institutional cooperation, and integrated databases at local level (all proposed in the previous measure).

Legal instruments - Legislative changes should be considered in the social welfare acts[153] to clearly stipulate the provision of support in the form of meals and clothing for children from financially deprived families. The proposal for doubling amount of child allowance once a year for clothing and school equipment should be considered in deciding on sustainable financing mechanism with changes of the Law on Financial support to families with children.

[153] The new LBE provides a good enough basis for the proposed measure, hence no further changes of the education legislation are recommended for the time being.

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

Leading institutions for this support are the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. The partnership and support from the ministry in charge of local self-governments could be particularly helpful, and the Ministry of Finance.

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

The measure envisages systemic changes and capacity building of all local self-governments, as well as cost that can be allocated to an individual beneficiary (i.e. a child, in the case of costs for food, footwear/clothes and school trips).

The cost of systemic changes ranges between €18,064 and €19,278 and refers to systemic definition of clear financing mechanism, along with accessibility criteria and implementation mechanism (including engagement of experts and municipal representatives in the consultative process) and capacity raising of local self-governments and the creation of guidelines with a view to more efficient implementation of measures (includes the cost of creating a manual and the training costs for local self-governments' staff). Since municipalities participate in these processes on an equal basis regardless of their size (each municipality has the same number of representatives in the consultative process and three representatives of each municipality are included in the training), the cost is the same for every involved municipality and ranges between €315 and €306 (depending on whether the number of municipalities included in the measure is 20 or 30. Costs per municipality decrease as the number of included municipalities increases, by reason of partially fixed costs, such as the costs of hiring experts).

It would be also advisable to consider an option of proposing large scale program for local self-governments in designing and providing system social safety-net, which could include all of the listed activates, including TA and grant scheme, to be funded through donor funds, EU –IPA, which could go up to 2 million euros.

The systematically defined financial mechanism would not necessarily mean that it would bring additional financial burden to the local budgets, but can be accomplished at the expense of downsizing other local benefits, e.g. local population policy measures which greatly overlap with nationally provided population policy measures. Corporate funding should also be considered.

The elements used to calculate the costs of **food provision** are the unit prices of meals, in the amount of RSD 50 per day per child in the half-day childcare program and RSD 100 per child in the full-day program. The children receiving this type of support are ChA beneficiaries. The overall additional cost of this measure is €14.2m per year (according to data from various sources, it can be assumed that around 40% of municipalities are already financing school meals for children, so the overall required amount is accordingly decreased by this percentage). An approximate amount of additional costs by municipalities has been calculated in accordance with the number of children receiving ChA in a given municipality (assuming that the said municipalities are already covering a part of the cost for children's food from their existing budgets).

The cost of the **provision of the clothing** for the most vulnerable children is estimated in the two possible scenarios. First scenario is minimum scenario calculated based on the number of children beneficiaries of financial social assistance. The elements used for calculating the clothes/footwear costs are as follows: the average price of clothes/footwear sets is RSD 15,000 and it would be paid as a lump sum to children who receive financial social assistance (FSA). The costs by municipalities are calculated on a proportional basis, by using the share of FSA beneficiaries in a given municipality in the total number of PSA beneficiaries in Serbia. Estimated funding required for the entire Serbia is 0.9 million euros yearly, which would mean that the required average financial allocation by the municipality is 5,243 euros yearly.

Table 16: *Cost of the provision of food and clothing yearly*

Cost of the provision of food and clothing yearly (€ million)				
	Food	Footwear/Clothes	Cost of food and footwear/ clothes	Cost of food and footwear/clothes
Serbia	14,230,041	880,800	15,110,841	15.1
Trgovište[154]	11,456	606	12,062	0.01
Kučevo	64,630	3,088	67,718	0.07
Knić	20,075	919	20,994	0.02
Bajina Bašta	53,958	587	54,545	0.05
Čajetina	24,591	474	25,065	0.03
Temerin	70,712	1,431	72,143	0.07
Lajkovac	14,739	1,345	16,084	0.02
Sremski Karlovci	13,956	1,194	15,150	0.02
Average hypothetical municipality	84,703	5,243	89,946	0.09

The second scenario is provided based on the recommendation that the child allowance is increased for one additional child allowance rate yearly linked to beginning of the school year for a child. Therefore the additional funding would be provided by the national level through child allowance scheme and would estimate 6.6 million euros yearly or it equals to around 70% of monthly allocation for child allowance at national level.

5.3.1.3. Modernize instruments targeting individual children/youth from vulnerable groups for subsidizing their education costs

A. Description of the measure

Families with low socio-economic status need a better support system to cover the indirect costs of education in foreseeable and respectful manner, to abolish the barriers which lacking textbooks, school materials, dormitories etc. pose. They also need support for and incentives to educate their children at non-compulsory levels that might be otherwise out of their reach. This complex measure covers the provision of textbooks and teaching materials, as well as access to student loans, scholarships, dormitories and mentoring, and is aiming at preventing early dropping out from education and not pursuing those levels of education which can lead to prosperous employment.

Free textbooks and school supplies for poor and vulnerable children in all grades are related to the provision of the basic tools for studying, attainment and progression, without which dropout among poor children cannot be prevented. Currently, poor children do not receive free textbooks from grade 5 onward, and receive no school materials throughout their entire education. It is necessary to draw up a central scheme for the provision of school textbooks as well for school supplies for all children from the lowest socioeconomic quintile throughout their entire pre-university education, and secure links with databases on child allowance and financial social assistance beneficiaries for adequate targeting. The best mechanisms used in many countries is a textbook rental scheme, whereby the textbooks are purchased by the school, stacks renewed

[154] Rationale for selection of municipalities available in subchapter: *„Calculation elements used for determining the costs for a hypothetical average municipality and illustrative examples for selected municipalities“*

every 3-4 years, and students are renting them for a small compensation. Students from the lowest SES quintile could be exempt from the compensation fee, thus allowing a respectful way of accessing the textbooks free of charge, to which periodic school supplies replenishment could be added.

Scholarships, loans, dormitory services and mentorship are necessary forms of support to prevent dropout on the secondary school level. The existing scholarship award measures are not targeted well (the SES share in award criteria is insignificant, 10% of the vacancies reserved for vulnerable students do not have clear criteria), there is no mentorship which could significantly increase scholarship effectiveness.

It is necessary to introduce a system of mentorship and a dynamic scholarship model (based on experiences gained in the scholarship and mentorship project for Roma secondary school students in Vojvodina), develop and pilot a new student loan system, monitor availability of student dorms for students from the lower SES quintile (when needed, introduce affirmative action), and amend the Law and sublegal acts on the Student Standard in accordance with the new solutions.

B. Interventions needed within the measure

Implementation instruments:

- *TA for developing the set of improved measures* including a textbook rental scheme, a better targeted scholarship and loan system, a smart mentorship system and affirmative action for accessing dormitories for secondary education students from vulnerable groups and from low SES families.
- *Conduct an impact assessment of the project expanding access to dormitories for vulnerable students,* financed by a credit from the Council of Europe Development Bank, and recommend further actions based on the assessment if needed
- *Expand the system of dynamic scholarships and mentoring for secondary school students* from particularly vulnerable groups such as Roma. Scaling up for the entire territory of Serbia is recommended based on excellent results of the measure experienced in Vojvodina and in other countries, where dropping out of Roma girls from secondary education has been minimized. The IPA 2012 project will cover 2 years of this scaling up, and for the subsequent years new financial arrangements will need to be developed in cooperation with donors, IFIs and local businesses.
- *Ensure initial textbook stacks in schools for cca 10 percent of students from G5 to the last grade of secondary education.* It is necessary to prepare a cost-benefit analysis for this measure and examine whether financing should be ensured through expanding or revising the existing free textbook provision program, or from other sources (LSG, NGO, donors, etc. that have been active in supporting free textbook provision for students from vulnerable groups)
- *Revise and pilot the revised student scholarship and loan system* based on the recommendations from the TA.

Legal instruments:

Amendments of the sublegal acts on the Student and Pupils Standard (and if needed also the Law on Student and Pupils Standard) and the Law on Textbooks and Teaching Materials in accordance with the new solutions.

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Self-government.

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

This is an exceptionally costly measure, hence it is recommended to conduct a cost benefit analysis in order to assess the effectiveness and, eventually, ensure the acceptance of the measure.

From this amount the Budget of RS is already covering € 30.2 m, hence the new measures would cost 44% more than the current ones. However, the calculation is without taking into account a potential new and expanded student loan scheme, which would create revolving funds in a cca 10-15 years basis.

The cost of legally defining new obligations arising from the measures, are in the amount of RSD 600,000. These could be passed on to local self-governments, meaning that each of them would pay RSD 3,571, i.e. €32 for completion of this process (assuming equal participation of all local self-governments in the Republic of Serbia).

The cost of providing free of charge textbooks and school supplies to disadvantaged children is €18.8m. Cost calculation elements include the unit cost of textbook sets, estimated at RSD 10,000 for primary and secondary school children and at RSD 2,500 for pre-school children, whereas the cost of school supply sets per child amount to RSD 1,500 in schools and to RSD 200 for children in the Preparatory Pre-school Program (PPP). The children receiving this type of support are ChA beneficiaries. The cost of textbooks has been decreased by the amount of costs already borne by the state for these purposes. The total cost of providing textbooks in the year when the measure is introduced amounts to €15.3m and, once in every four years, an additional amount of around €3.85m would be required to replenish the stock of textbooks (i.e. a quarter of the entire stock's value). For the above reason, the possibility of using textbooks for several years has to be taken into account when a cost appraisal is undertaken.

Table 17: *Cost of the textbooks and school supplies*

Cost of the textbooks and school supplies (amount in €)			
	Textbooks	School supplies	Textbooks + school supplies
Serbia	15,272,182	3,484,745	18,756,927
Trgovište	12,295	2,805	15,100
Kučevo	69,363	15,827	85,190
Knić	21,546	4,916	26,462
Bajina Bašta	57,909	13,213	71,122
Čajetina	26,391	6,022	32,413
Temerin	75,891	17,316	93,207
Lajkovac	15,819	3,609	19,428
Sremski Karlovci	14,978	3,418	18,396
Average hypothetical municipality	90,906	20,743	111,649

For calculating the costs of scholarships, dormitories and mentoring the elements used are as follows:

The amount of the loan/scholarship per student is RSD 5,000 monthly and it is available for 20% of financially disadvantaged secondary school students, for 10 months per year.

The cost of accommodation in students' residence halls is covered in the amount of RSD 15,000 per month and it would be available for 30% of secondary school students from the lowest socio-economic quintile (the most disadvantaged 20% of the population), for 10 months per year.

Mentoring would be available to 10% of secondary school students, where one mentor would counsel 10 students and for this service they would be paid RSD 10,000 monthly, for 10 months per year.

The total costs of the measure, additional costs of the measure (considering the existing expenditures on the pupils' standard) and the costs per average hypothetical municipality and for the selected local self-governments are given in the table below.

The number of secondary school students – beneficiaries of scholarship/loan or accommodation in a residence hall, or the number of mentors in individual municipalities, has been calculated as follows: by comparing their total number in the overall population against the total number of children up to 18 years of age, we can determine the average incidence of disadvantaged children. Take scholarships/loans for example, where the total number of 59,157 scholarships granted in Serbia is compared against the total number of children aged 0–18 in Serbia, and then the result is multiplied by the number of children in the appropriate age bracket in each individual municipality. In other words, the average incidence rate of beneficiaries in the overall population is multiplied by the number of children in the appropriate age bracket. The same formula has also been used for identifying the need for mentors. Following this procedure, we have calculated the columns d, e and f, which are then multiplied by the unit costs per child/mentor to determine the total cost by municipality.

5.3.2. Recommended education improvement measures to meet the needs of vulnerable and poor children/youth for high quality education at school/preschool level

The recommended package for education improvement consists of a range of measures to be implemented at the level of the education institutions. The measures in the package are designed to increase the institutions' sensitivity for the needs of children and youth from vulnerable and poverty groups and to tune the provision so that these children benefit from their education significantly more than is the case currently. All these measures are targeting mostly the attainment and progression bottlenecks described in the current study.

5.3.2.1. Modernize instruments for early childhood pre-school inclusion of vulnerable children

Increasing pre-school education availability is exceptionally important, since early childhood development and education represents a significant factor in resolving the issue of poverty and social exclusion while the greatest disparity with regard to EU objectives lies in pre-school coverage in Serbia. Investments into early education of children according to many studies provide greater return compared to the investments at higher level of education. At the same time the return is even greater from investments into early education of children from vulnerable families than to mainstream children.

A. Description of the measure

The education system should be more proactive in raising awareness of the general public, and specifically of the different sectors, primarily health and social sectors, on the importance of early education and care. The education system jointly with the social welfare system should redesign and modernize the use of pre-school attendance costs for vulnerable children (children without parental care and children with disabilities, Roma children) and poor children aiming to promote their better use and greater coverage. Of utmost importance is to align the use of these instruments to support the aims of inclusive education and enrollment into regular groups. The pre-school attendance cost benefits should be made available to all socially vulnerable groups without the requirement for child allowance. In order to enable greater coverage of the poor children with pre-school education, the local subsidies for pre-school education cost should be supported with national funds aiming at providing each child beneficiary of child allowance with free pre-school education. Efforts

should be continued to further support local self-governments in planning and provision of quality pre-school education. Actions should be focused on the work with pre-school institutions on using the nationally and locally provided contributions for enrolment of children form vulnerable groups into pre-school education, which can include guidelines, capacity building activities, grant schemes. The use of these instruments should be promoted also within the network of licensed private providers of the pre-school education which present a significant resource in provision of pre-school education. Information on the benefits to support early inclusion of children from vulnerable groups in an easily readable form should be made available in all relevant local institutions dealing with children of pre-school ages, such as pre-school institutions, state and private, NGOs, Red Cross, local office for child care, CSW, health care centers, etc.

B. Interventions needed within the measure

The following actions are needed to enable expanded preschool coverage:

Implementation instruments

- *Support to local self-governments and pre-school institutions* in planning and provision of pre-school education, as a rollout of the IMPRESS program
- *Targeting improved* based on linking databases and protocols of cooperation among CSW, local office for child care, pre-school institution and *use of the benefits for pre-school attendance* costs promoted through guidelines and capacity building
- *Including capacities of licensed private providers* of pre-school education by facilitating them to use the benefits for enrollment of children from vulnerable groups for vulnerable children – the admission of vulnerable children into pre-school should be part of licensing for private providers of pre-school education
- *Information package* – leaflets, brochure design and printing, locally covered

Legal instruments – changes of the act regulating pre-school attendance cost benefits, the Law on the Financial Support to Family with Children should be made coupled with a consultation process. These changes should redesign instruments so to be up to date, realistic, and implementable and to respond to inclusive education objectives. Regarding pre-school attendance cost for children without parental care and children with disabilities these changes will bring greater coverage. Concerning funding of the pre-school cost for poor children which is by the current legal provision provided in total by the local self-governments recommendation is to be based on matching funds, from national and local levels in order to promote its expanded use. National level would cover the 20% legally set parent's contribution, and local level would cover 80%. Consultative process with local self-governments should be considered. Additional funding is needed since the changes should bring greater coverage of children with this support.

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsible institution is the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy. The partner institution is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

The measure proposes the continuation of the support in TA and grant scheme to local self-governments in planning and improvement of the provision of pre-school education, focusing on children from poverty background.

Funds for TA and grant schemes to LSGs could be planned within programming for Human Resource Development IPA 2014-2021 whose main platform are achievements of the EU 2020 strategy goals related to fight against poverty and social inclusion and drop-out prevention, as grant schemes towards LSGs.

Alternatively, in a longer – term, earmarked funds could be also considered, although this option has not been widely consulted and would also require Legislative changes.

The total cost of implementation instruments, in the total amount of €263,000, has been broken down to the cost of the consultative process and training measures, as the measures that can be evenly apportioned to all municipalities, since they assume an equal treatment of all local self-governments in this process. On the other hand, the measure of promoting the enhanced instrument of early inclusion of children has been apportioned to municipalities in accordance with the share of children in a particular municipality in the total number of children in the overall population, with the assumption that the unit cost of promotional material is RSD 300, that an average family has 2 children and that every two children from the age group between 3-5,5 years receive one copy of the promotional material.

Table 18: *Cost of the implementation instruments*

	The cost of consultation and training measures in local self-governments	The cost of promotional material	Total
			Amount in RSD
Serbia	2,642,400	26,250,000	28,892,400
			Amount in €
Serbia	24,022	238,636	262,658
Trgovište	143	172	315
Kučevo	143	445	588
Knić	143	405	548
Bajina Bašta	143	830	973
Čajetina	143	435	578
Temerin	143	1,011	1,154
Lajkovac	143	531	674
Sremski Karlovci	143	284	427
Average hypothetical municipality	143	1,420	1,563

It is expected that legal changes would bring greater coverage of the vulnerable children with pre-school education. The costing of the additional financial allocation for pre-school education of vulnerable children expected by the measures is done for the vulnerable children aged 3 to 5.5. which include poor children, children with disabilities and children deprived of parental care in two costing scenarios each with two modalities: a) full-day pre-school education program and b) half-day pre-school education program.

For allocation of costs in the selected municipalities, the following logic is applied: the share of children with disabilities in all municipalities is equal to the national average, which also goes for children without parental care. When calculating the costs for financially disadvantaged children, for the first scenario the share is equal to the share of children receiving ChA in each of the municipalities, whereas for the second scenario it is equal to the children receiving FSA in each municipality. Actual expenditures in the selected municipalities are given in the table below.

In the first scenario (Table 19), the cost of provision of half-day pre-school education is 51.6 million euros (10.3 national level and 41.2 local level) with an average cost at municipal level being at 261,707 euros. In the same scenario, the provision of full-day pre-school education, the cost is 96.3 million euros (19.3 national level and 77.1 local level) with an average cost at municipal level being at 489,043 euros.

The second scenario (Table 20) which takes children of financial social assistance, the cost for provision of half-day pre-school education is at 24.1 million (national 4.8 and local 19.3) with the average by

municipality 122,507 euros annually. In the same scenario, provision of the full-day pre-school education would cost 44.2 million euros (national 8.8 and local 35.4) with the average municipal allocation at 224,565.

The costs for the municipalities for the second scenario have been calculated in the same way as for the first scenario with the said reduction of costs in the category of financially disadvantaged children, given the different way they are defined. On average, expenditures per municipality range between €114,856 and €210,535 annually. Nevertheless, it is important to underline big differences among the cost ranges of municipalities of various sizes.

Table 19: *Expenditures for pre-school provision, full and half –day program, based on the number of children beneficiaries of ChA (Scenario 1)*

	RSD										EUR	
	Financially deprived – child allowance		Children with disabilities		Children without parental care		Total central and local level		Total LS		Total LS	
	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2
Serbia	7,389,445,305	3,889,200,230	3,105,493,140	1,727,967,420	102,629,355	54,015,450	10,597,567,800	5,671,183,100	8,478,054,240	4,536,946,480	77,073,220	41,244,968
Trgovište	5,948,776	3,130,950	2,232,079	1,241,980	73,765	38,824	8,254,620	4,411,753	6,603,696	3,529,402	60,034	32,085
Kučevo	33,561,172	17,663,859	5,786,785	3,219,900	191,240	100,653	39,539,197	20,984,411	31,631,357	16,787,529	287,558	152,614
Knić	10,424,891	5,486,811	5,276,662	2,936,055	174,381	91,780	15,875,934	8,514,646	12,700,747	6,811,716	115,461	61,925
Bajina Bašta	28,019,315	14,747,078	10,802,614	6,010,822	357,001	187,895	39,178,931	20,945,795	31,343,145	16,756,636	284,938	152,333
Čajetina	12,769,522	6,720,833	5,666,756	3,153,113	187,273	98,565	18,623,551	9,972,511	14,898,841	7,978,008	135,444	72,527
Temerin	36,719,642	19,326,219	13,152,414	7,318,304	434,657	228,767	50,306,713	26,873,290	40,245,370	21,498,632	365,867	195,442
Lajkovac	7,653,962	4,028,420	6,910,903	3,845,385	228,389	120,205	14,793,255	7,994,010	11,834,604	6,395,208	107,587	58,138
Sremski Karlovci	7,247,043	3,814,251	3,700,126	2,058,835	122,281	64,358	11,069,450	5,937,444	8,855,560	4,749,955	80,505	43,181
Average hypothetical municipality	43,984,793	23,150,001	18,485,078	10,285,520	610,889	321,521	63,080,761	33,757,042	50,464,609	27,005,634	458,769	245,506

Table 20: *Expenditures for pre-school provision, full and half –day program, based on the number of children beneficiaries of FA (Scenario 2)*

	RSD										EUR	
	Financially deprived – financial assistance		Children with disabilities		Children without parental care		Financially deprived – child allowance		Persons with disabilities		Total LS	
	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 1	Variant 2
Serbia	1,655,235,748	871,180,852	3,105,493,140	1,727,967,420	102,629,355	54,015,450	4,863,358,243	2,653,163,722	3,890,686,595	2,122,530,977	35,369,878	19,295,736
Trgovište	1,332,526	701,333	2,232,079	1,241,980	73,765	38,824	3,638,370	1,982,137	2,910,696	1,585,709	26,461	14,416
Kučevo	7,517,702	3,956,704	5,786,785	3,219,900	191,240	100,653	13,495,727	7,277,257	10,796,582	5,821,806	98,151	52,926
Knić	2,335,175	1,229,046	5,276,662	2,936,055	174,381	91,780	7,786,218	4,256,881	6,228,975	3,405,504	56,627	30,959
Bajina Bašta	6,276,327	3,303,346	10,802,614	6,010,822	357,001	187,895	17,435,942	9,502,063	13,948,753	7,601,650	126,807	69,106
Čajetina	2,860,373	1,505,467	5,666,756	3,153,113	187,273	98,565	8,714,402	4,757,145	6,971,522	3,805,716	63,377	34,597
Temerin	8,225,200	4,329,073	13,152,414	7,318,304	434,657	228,767	21,812,271	11,876,144	17,449,817	9,500,915	158,635	86,372
Lajkovac	1,714,488	902,366	6,910,903	3,845,385	228,389	120,205	8,853,780	4,867,956	7,083,024	3,894,365	64,391	35,403
Sremski Karlovci	1,623,338	854,392	3,700,126	2,058,835	122,281	64,358	5,445,745	2,977,585	4,356,596	2,382,068	39,605	21,655
Average hypothetical municipality	9,852,594	5,185,600	18,485,078	10,285,520	610,889	321,521	28,948,561	15,792,641	23,158,849	12,634,113	210,535	114,856

5.3.2.2. Revitalize and modernize remedial teaching

Remedial teaching is a measure that efficiently helps eliminate major barriers to attainment and progression, and prevents class repetition and dropout. It is already regulated both legally and financially, but is not implemented adequately.

A. Description of the measure

Remedial teaching should become a preventive and flexible mechanism which creates opportunities for all children to deepen their understanding of the curriculum at its particularly demanding points, or in areas where the child's prior knowledge is not sufficient and thus ensure success in their education. Remedial teaching should by and large replace the widespread practice of private tutoring and ensure that all children can access additional support throughout the education system and not outside of it. Such a reconceptualization of the current eroded practice calls for several serious changes. Firstly, it needs to get a pro-active and preventive feature instead of being a re-active and remedial activity, which means that teachers should foresee the expected risks in mastering the curriculum and address them before they produce failure, instead of acting only when failure is already at place. Secondly, remedial instruction should use the most up to date teaching methodology which ensures highest effectiveness. The motivational value of remedial teaching should be outstanding and such teaching should use cutting-edge pedagogical solutions to capture the attention of children at risk of failure in the most effective ways. Thirdly, the organizational aspects of remedial teaching need to be set in ways most suitable for children – the appropriate time in the timetable should be found which is not jeopardized by transportation constraints or any other organizational problem. Remedial teaching will become also time-bound preparatory teaching in case of school leaving examinations or preparations for class examinations in case of failing grades. Hence, information about the timing should be available ahead of time and in the most appropriate format that both students and parents could easily access it. Fourthly, remedial teaching should be quality assured, i.e. monitored, feedback sought, results regularly evaluated and the program upgraded based on these quality assurance aspects. The quality of remedial teaching should become an indicator in both external evaluation and self-evaluation. Also, remedial teaching should become an area where excellence can be meaningfully developed – peer exchanges, publications, model presentations, awards, etc. should be deployed to support remedial teaching. Finally, the internal organization of school staff should not be overlooked and neglected, since remedial teaching will not happen in all subject areas, and will not necessarily have the same dynamics over the entire academic year, which can create complex administrative bottlenecks that need to be creatively solved.

B. Instruments to implement the measure

Several support instruments will need to be put in place in order to improve the quality of remedial teaching:

- It is necessary to *conduct a feasibility study* in order to assess the current practice, and the potential demand, since remedial teaching is an area of the schools' work which has remained until now not transparent enough
- *TA will be needed* to develop a framework of action based on best practice from other countries, including both conceptual and logistical innovations.
- *Piloting of the new concept of remedial teaching in 10% of schools for 2 years, supported by school grants* is recommended as the best practice to develop a new pedagogical measure of such scale. During piloting the developments should be monitored and fine-tuned as appropriate.
- *Production of manuals* containing also practical suggestions, essential teaching tips, self-evaluation check lists etc. is necessary - for the first 2 years in pilot format, afterwards scaled up

- *Development of Training modules and training dissemination* to at least part of the staff of each school (recommended 30 % of teachers, plus school counselors) to be implemented in the next 5 year period – first in schools that are included in the pilot phase
- *Upgrading of the external evaluation framework* to include monitoring of remedial teaching, and adding other mechanisms of quality assurance (development of questionnaires for school self-evaluation, feedback from parents and teachers etc.)
- *Set up and implement a reward and a peer learning system* targeting remedial teaching
- *Periodical sample based evaluation of the provision* will be needed at least every second year for the next 6-8 years. The first evaluation includes the evaluation of the pilot phase.

Legal instruments: It is necessary to amend the framework of laws and by-laws, include the quality of remedial teaching as an indicator in both external evaluation and self-evaluation, and better regulate its implementation through a sublegal act. However, prior to these legislative changes a thorough piloting of the new system will be needed, which also requires a sublegal act on piloting.

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

Since this measure is already funded through the teachers' work load which encompasses remedial teaching as well, only investments in training and manuals are needed and minor investments in TA and research.

The costs for the instruments for revitalizing remedial teaching include:

A feasibility study, the costs of which are estimated at €20,455.

Technical assistance for preparing an analysis of best practices, the costs of which are estimated at € 20,455.

Piloting of the new concept of remedial teaching in 10% of schools for a period of two years, which would include 30% of teachers in the pilot schools. The cost of a three-day training of teachers, delivered by two experts, would amount to €93,995 per year (additionally, if necessary to rent premises for training purposes, the cost would increase by €3,818).

Preparation and printing of manuals for the teaching staff included in the measure throughout the period of its implementation, worth €108,612.

Design and delivery of the training program in the second phase of the measure's implementation, aimed at including 30% of teachers in the remaining schools in the training (for a period of three years). The cost of the second phase is €359,567 per year (additionally, if necessary to rent premises for training purposes, the cost would increase by €23,318).

The remaining two elements in the implementation of the measure, namely the enhancement of the system for external assessment of the quality of remedial teaching and the establishment and implementation of the system for rewarding and promoting good practices in remedial teaching, would not require additional funds.

Table 21: *Expenditures for the total costs of the measure:*

		Annual cost	Total cost (for five years)
	Feasibility study, RSD		2,250,000
	TA – study on best practices, RSD		2,250,000
	Piloting, RSD *rent of premises	10,339,400 420,000	20,678,800 840,000
	Production of the manual, RSD		11,947,280
	Second phase of the project, RSD *rent of premises	39,442,400 2,565,000	78,884,800 5,130,000
Alternative 1 (without the rent of premises)	Total cost of the measure, RSD		116,010,880
	Total cost of the measure, €		1,054,644
	Total cost of the measure, € million		1.1
Alternative2 (with the rent of premises)	Total cost of the measure, RSD		121,980,880
	Total cost of the measure, €		1,108,917
	Total cost of the measure, € million		1.1

Since the measure is a national program, breakdown per municipality is not relevant.

5.3.2.3. Put school libraries and IT in use for pro poor school policies

School libraries and school IT can provide significant support to help improve educational attainment among poor children. Although many schools have a library and IT equipment, they are usually not available to students for everyday use. Action is needed only on the school and municipal level.

A. Description of the measure

It is necessary to enable everyday use of libraries and IT equipment for students: open access to books, provide a comfortable space to spend time in the library, set up IT equipment for free use by students, extend library opening hours to cover the entire day, from morning till evening, organize school campaigns for equipment and adaptation of the library, conduct promotion of the library in school (develop projects on different subjects, exhibitions, meetings, classes), train librarians for a new proactive role and enable the involvement of parents as assistant librarians.

B. Interventions within the measure

Implementation instruments

- *Conduct assessment of school libraries*, their physical condition, stacks, connected IT equipment
- *Conduct fundraising actions* at school and municipal level to enrich and modernize the school library
- *Train librarians* and organize parental assistance for expanding library hours
- *Develop the school library program* as part of the schools' cultural program

Legal instruments are not required, given the recognition of the school libraries by the current legislation

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, with engagement of LSGs.

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

Funding could be obtained from donations (publishing houses, local business, and individuals).

Considering the concept of the measure, which entails library and IT center modernization, worth €10,000 per school, procurement of books for libraries, worth €5,000 per school, and the training of librarians, with estimated daily costs of around €50 per librarian, the total upgrading cost for all schools in Serbia amounts roughly to €31.7m. In a municipality with an average number of schools, the cost of complete modernization of IT centers and libraries would be around €188,664. However, considering the size of required expenditures, as well as the priorities of the municipalities, it is realistic to expect that each municipality will propose its own sequence in which libraries will be modernized, with the general idea that each municipality should renovate one school library every year. In that case, annual expenditure per municipality would amount to about €15,000, while the municipalities with more available funds (donations) would be able to opt for a quicker pace of modernization.

5.3.2.4. Put school development plan in use for pro poor school policies

Schools have policy instruments which could be made highly functional for the development and implementation of pro poor policy instruments. The school development plan is ideally suited for assuming this function.

A. Description of the measure

A major portion of the most significant dropout prevention activities in other countries takes part at the school level. The new LFES, LBE and LSE requires the school's pro-active role in developing dropout prevention measures. However, the actual school based measures are yet to be developed. For this purpose it is necessary to introduce a scheme of small school grants to pilot innovative school campaigns for dropout prevention (including a wide range of activities, e.g. creating an alumni organization, organizing visits by alumni who have achieved success and come from poor/marginalized families, providing mentorship, peer learning, parental involvement, networking, etc.), conduct evaluation, reward those who are successful and disseminate good practices.

The school development plan should be utilized also for the smooth management of the transition through different education cycles. Research shows that all transition points (Grades 1 and 5 of primary school and grade 1 of secondary school) trigger the risk of higher dropout. This part of the measure does not demand additional financial funds, but only smart organizational arrangements. It is necessary to introduce a system by which post-transition teachers act as guest teachers during the pre-transition year (1-2 months, focusing special attention on children from marginalized groups), while pre-transition teaching staff visits post-transition grades twice a month in the first 6 months (focusing special attention on children at risk of dropping out); organize transition conferences rallying all school/pre-school teachers during the handover of a generation to the next level of education, aimed at getting acquainted with the needs of poor children and children from marginalized groups; produce professional instructions for schools and kindergartens on how to incorporate these activities in their work program; include transition management in the assessment during external evaluation and regular supervision.

Schools should also utilize the concept of Pedagogical added value (PAV), which is a measure of the school's contribution to children's education and is particularly suitable for identification of a school's contribution to the education of poor children. The final exam system enables regular PAV calculation and monitoring, but scrutinizing PAV related questions during self-evaluation (e.g. "Do our low-SES students perform equally well as our high-SES students?", "Do they feel equally well in our school?", " Do our teachers have high expectations from ALL students?", "How can we know this?" etc.) should be equally stimulating and conducive for further developing the schools' pro poor and dropout prevention policies.

Seeking regular parental feedback is required by the new LBE and LSE – ensuring thorough analysis of the feedback, comparison of the feedback between mainstream parents and parents of children from vulnerable groups should lead the upgrading of school development plans and the school policies addressing vulnerable children.

B. Interventions within the measure

Implementation instruments

The main implementation instrument should be small school grants for school projects targeting the development of new pro poor school policies, their monitoring, evaluation, dissemination of good practice and creating peer learning opportunities.

Setting up of the *grant scheme*, its *monitoring and evaluation*, as well as setting up the *peer learning* opportunities requires a small *central unit* devoted to support these activities, and the development and dissemination of *manuals and guidebooks* for schools, and an *IT platform* supporting the dissemination of the results of the school projects.

School grants should cover at least 10% of schools to allow development of new policies in a wide variety of contexts throughout Serbia. The school projects should last at least two years to allow the full-fledged development and implementation of the ideas.

The measure is suitable for being supported by IPA funds under programming of the Human Resource Development IPA 2014-2021 whose main platform are achievements of the EU 2020 strategy goals related to fight against poverty and social inclusion and drop-out.

Legal instruments are not required, given the recognition of the school development planning and other school policies by the current legislation.

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

Depending on availability the funding for the small school grants can come from national or local budgets, donations from international agencies or local businesses. A fundraising mechanism of finding sponsors for each particular school could also be utilized, or instrumentalization of school alumni organizations once they are established.

The cost of revitalizing development planning in schools includes the award of grants in the amount of €2,000 per school in the pilot phase (the first two years) and €1,000 in the third and fourth year of implementation. The total sum of costs additionally includes the costs of training and the management and monitoring of the process, estimated at around €100,000, as well as the costs of developing, printing, distributing and promoting the manual, also worth €100,000. The total cost of the measure that incorporates the above elements amounts roughly €2.5m for a period of four years. The municipalities given in the illustrative example may be included in the measure in either the first or the second phase, which would determine the actual amount of costs for a particular municipality. Additionally it is necessary to calculate teachers increased workload for these activities and to include them in the teachers' workload norm.

5.3.3. Recommended measures for providing active inclusion and outreach services

5.3.3.1. Boost system provision of outreach services for poor across Serbia

A. Description of the measure

Outreach services are particularly important for the social inclusion of the poor and the most excluded population. At the local level, there are no social offices with possibility to conduct more intensive field work for (potential) social welfare beneficiaries. In this sense, CSW capacities are limited, Red Cross is active but the needs are greater, NGOs are not licensed as professional service providers and no sustainable funding from local level is provided, and majority of outreach initiatives are donor led and funded. It is necessary to promote more system provision of the outreach services for poor. Final accountability for only one person out of the reach of social support programs available in the community lies with the local self-government. Regulatory framework in the Law on Social Welfare (minimum standards for services, licensing of providers and professionals, commissioning through public procurement procedure by the local self-government) should be deployed in greater extent for this type of services, along with other community-based social services in demand. It is necessary to initiate promptly a consultation process for defining minimum standards for outreach services, with identified service providers (which could be part of counseling-therapeutic and socio-educational group of services for which standards are yet to be adopted). Minimum standards are a prerequisite which will enable licensing of social providers and subsequently their recognition in the social planning at local level. Commissioning of the social service providers regardless of local self-government which is opening a call for social services should be available on an on-line portal, to enable mobility of the social providers, which is important for the LSGs which do not have licensed civil society capacities. Local social planning process which is led by the CSW should involve all relevant social stakeholders at local level while the Inter-sectoral committees and their opinion and recommended measures should be inevitable/mandatory part of that process. The process should identify needs for outreach and other services for the poor, which then would become part of the local acts on extended rights and local budgetary planning.

B. Interventions needed within the measure

Interventions needed to boost systematic provision of outreach services for the poor children are related only to implementation instruments, no legal changes are needed:

Implementation instruments

- *Run licensing procedures* of social service providers and professionals; promote applications of providers for outreach services. This should be within regular planning of the Ministry.
- *Develop and make available different guidelines* for the local self-governments on the commissioning procedures for community-based social services, guidelines for service providers for meeting the standards of services, licensing procedures, etc. All the relevant guidelines should be available in the resource center at the web site of Institutes, CSWs, and Ministry. This is within regular mandate of the Institutes for Social Protection, and the budget needed should be approved under annual budgetary planning process.
- Develop web page with regular update of open calls for community based social services and on-line registry of licensed social service providers and professionals.
- Plan IPA funds under programming of the Human Resource Development IPA 2014-2021 whose main platform are achievements of the EU 2020 strategy goals related to fight against poverty

and social inclusion and drop-out. Funds should be made available for TA which should support all development processes related to decentralized provision of community-based social services and plurality of service providers, and for grant schemes for local self-governments which would enable further development and system provision of social services with the regulatory framework and its instruments.

Legal instruments –

- *Prioritize definition of the minimum standards for outreach services* is a regular activity of the Institutes for Social Protection, and planning should be made within annual budgetary planning;
- Adopt by-law on earmarked transfers and ensure that these types of services are prioritized through use of earmarked transfers.

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsibility lies with the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

The presented interventions should be financially covered through regular activities of the line ministry, ISP and other relevant bodies.

The need for a systemic provision of outreach services, aimed at identifying disadvantaged children outside the support system, has been defined in accordance with the estimated number of children that are currently outside the schooling system (this number is roughly estimated at 100,000 children in Serbia). Taking into account the planned annual number of days of fieldwork, aimed at identifying neglected children, and the "identification rate" of disadvantaged children, the cost of services of an expert team in a three-year period would amount to around €1.6m, or €525,879 per year, i.e. the cost per average municipality would be €3,130.

For illustration purposes, the annual level of costs for the municipalities included in the example is given in the table below. The share of individual municipality's cost in the total cost at the national level is proportional to the share of individual municipality's children in the total number of children.

Table 22: *Costs for the provision of outreach services*

Serbia	**€ 525,879**
Trgovište	378
Kučevo	980
Knić	894
BajinaBašta	1,829
Čajetina	960
Temerin	2,227
Lajkovac	1,170
Sremski Karlovci	627
Average hypothetical municipality	**€ 3,130**

However, it is proposed that the development and provision of outreach services is programmed under IPA funding, which would require TA and grant scheme to local self-governments in the amount of 1.5 million euros.

Maintenance of the web application for the follow up of the calls for applications for the provision of the outreach and other community-based social services is estimated at € 1,000 annually.

5.3.3.2. Prioritize education needs of vulnerable children in the interventions by CSWs

A. Description of the measure

Center for Social Work is the key partner of the school in addressing absenteeism and drop out of children. Within the mandate of the Family Law, CSW is in a position to address and support parents in their duty related to the right of child education. CSW within public functions is able to intervene through corrective actions, and provide counseling, but also support and referral to adequate services and social support packages available in the respective local community. Should the support services, and benefits not be available, CSW is a leader of the social planning process, where these needs have to be planned within the next budgetary planning cycle. Once the pre-school or school reports absence of children to CSW, the procedure for opening a case should start as an urgent one, as every additional day out of school has highly negative consequences for the child and the wider community. Furthermore, CSW should regularly have all updates on schooling prospects of each child client of the CSW, including children recipients of financial social assistance. Clear information on the reasons why a child does not attend school, evidence of interventions of CSW undertaken to help the family and child overcome circumstance leading to school drop-out should be available. Active inclusion plans for school aged children client of financial support should be based on returning the child into school, but also involving the child into all available support in and out of the school in his/her education path. Ministry of Labor, Social Policy and Employment should make clear instructions on prioritizing education prospects of each child client of the CSW but also of children reported by the school in the community.

B. Interventions needed within the measure

Interventions needed to prioritize education needs for the poor children in the interventions of CSW are related to implementation instruments, no legal changes are needed:

Implementation instruments

- *Promote cross-sectoral cooperation between institutions concerned with a child is necessary*. This is linked to the implementation instrument planned under measure 1.
- *Ministry of Social policy should issue further instructions* on the *prioritizing education* as a tool for social inclusion, but also follow up the education status of children clients of CSW during supervisory visits to CSWs. This is a regular activity and should not require additional funding.

Legal instruments

- Ministry should develop by-law on Active inclusion where due attention should be given to school aged children. This can be followed with the training provided to CSW professionals.

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsibility lies with the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy.

D. Costing of the proposed interventions

All the listed interventions are funded to a substantial degree through the regular activities of CSWs and schools. However should this be additional burden to quality of work and inability to prioritize education needs of children it is enough justified to enable new recruitments for which additional national budget is needed.

Implementation of active inclusion methods in the operation of centers for social work (CSW) and more efficient monitoring of children – CSW beneficiaries would require additional CSW staff to be hired and training in active case management for CSW staff, as well as the development of a manual to facilitate the application of rules and procedures for the CSW staff. Процена трошкова за неопходна нова запошљавања би требало да буде предмет прецизне анализе оптималне оптерећености водитеља случаја а на основу тренутног броја водитеља случаја ангажованих у непосредном раду са децом и младима.

5.3.3.3. Ensure parental participation and training

A. Description of the measure

Parental participation and training is necessary, as parents are the most important pillars of support for their children's education. Currently, however, there is no support system for parents and their involvement in school life, although the education legislation supports parental engagement and involvement. In Serbia, there are certain providers of these services, NGOs and good practices, but they are implemented on an *ad hoc* basis and initiated by donors. Hence, they are not part of the financing program of local structures. The Law on Social Welfare provides mechanisms and a regulatory framework for the systemic provision of these services at the local level, while laws in the field of education recognize the importance of parents.

It is necessary to provide training in parenting for all families receiving child allowances and financial social assistance, as a social service furnished by the municipality; it is necessary to initiate the identification of these services/service providers and the definition of minimal service standards, based on which service provider licensing will be conducted and subsequently the significance of financial decisions made by the local authorities will be recognized in accordance with mechanisms provided by the Law on Social Welfare. It is necessary to provide regular training in ways of supporting the education of one's own children, for all parents who have not completed secondary education – possibly as an obligation of the school, and it is also necessary to prepare training program, manuals and fact sheets for parents.

B. Interventions within the measure

Implementation mechanisms:

- *Identify possible training providers, license and support them to develop the tailor made trainings for divers parent groups*
- *Prepare information packages to be distributed to parents through all available channels*
- *Set up the training provision as long term sustained activity of the school or other organization*
- *Organize regular monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the provision*

C. Responsible institutions for the proposed measure

The leading responsibility lies with the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy. Cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development is required.

D. Costing

This measure should be financed from the local budget. The calculation is for about 200,000 parents included in a 2 days training. The total costs are € 58.3 m, or around € 300,000 per municipality. The assumption is that this amount of training could be implemented in a 4 years period.

The idea is that the parents of all children – ChA and FSA beneficiaries should receive **training in healthy parenting**, so as to raise their awareness of the importance of the support they can give to their children. This requires an adequate number of trainers to be hired, to deliver 7-day training to parents in local communities. The total cost of the measure would be about €16.6m, i.e. the cost for an average municipality would amount to approx. €98,618. Since this measure can be stretched to four years, the annual expenditure of an average municipality in Serbia is estimated at about € 24,655. As an illustration, in the selected municipalities, the cost weighted by the share of ChA and FSA recipients in each individual municipality would range between €3,240in Trgovište and €17,971 in Kučevo.

Table 23: *Table of costing of the measure annual cost if implemented over a period of four years*

	Cost of the measure, €	Annual cost of the measure, if implemented over a period of four years, €
Serbia	16,567,901	4,141,975
Trgovište	12,959	3,240
Kučevo	71,885	17,971
Knić	22,180	5,545
BajinaBašta	52,674	13,168
Čajetina	24,765	6,191
Temerin	71,466	17,866
Lajkovac	18,757	4,689
Sremski Karlovci	17,465	4,366
Average hypothetical municipality	98,618	24,655

The idea of the measure that **envisages training of parents in providing learning support** to their children is that the parents of all children – ChA and FSA beneficiaries should receive training a 2-day training in providing learning support to their children. The number of training sessions is equal to the number of children – ChA and FSA beneficiaries, where parents would be entitled to the training for each of their children. The total cost of trainers' salaries and trainees' costs amount to €9.3m.

Table 24: *Table of costing of the measure annual cost if implemented over a period of four years*

	Cost of the measure, €	Annual cost of the measure, if implemented over a period of four years, €
Serbia	9,260,154	2,315,039
Trgovište	7,243	1,811
Kučevo	40,178	10,045
Knić	12,397	3,099
BajinaBašta	29,440	7,360
Čajetina	13,842	3,460
Temerin	39,944	9,986
Lajkovac	10,484	2,621
Sremski Karlovci	9,761	2,440
Average hypothetical municipality	55,120	13,780

The cost of associated promotional material is approx. €586,301 (according to the unit cost of producing the promotional material, in the amount of RSD 300, which would be available for every disadvantaged family with children).

Overall, the provision of support to parents is worth €26.4m, while the cost for an average hypothetical municipality would amount to €157,228.

As an illustration, in the selected municipalities, the cost weighted by the share of ChA and FSA recipients in each individual municipality would range from €20,660 in Trgovište to €114,607 in Kučevo. Since this measure can be stretched to four years, the annual expenditure of an average municipality in Serbia is estimated at about €39,307.

Table 25: *Cost of the provision of the support to parents from disadvantaged families*

	Cost of the measure, €	Annual cost of the measure, if implemented over a period of four years, €
Serbia	26,414,356	6,603,589
Trgovište	20,660	5,165
Kučevo	114,607	28,652
Knić	35,362	8,841
BajinaBašta	83,978	20,995
Čajetina	39,483	9,871
Temerin	113,939	28,485
Lajkovac	29,905	7,476
Sremski Karlovci	27,844	6,961
Average hypothetical municipality	157,228	39,307

5.3.4. Summary overview of the annual costs of the proposed measures

Since the above shows the costs of individual measures, the goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the summary costs and compare them to the basic economic parameters. Considering the markedly varied character of the measures, efforts were made to arrive at a framework annual investment level.

Understanding the derived calculations requires having in mind that the provided costs were derived based on the number of vulnerable children in the education system at any one time. Therefore, measures encompass children in all grades up to the end of secondary education in “one” school year. In other words, the above cost estimates are not for one single generation, but for all children as found in the same calendar year (thus encompassing multiple generations), therefore it represents a transversal, not a longitudinal calculation.

The first two columns of the table below in fact provide an overview of costs per measure as elaborated in the above analysis. The first column represents costs in RSD, the second costs in EUR.

The costs thus presented encompass measures of a different character, with attempted explanations provided in column three. Measures having a systemic character are, in fact, to be adopted once (up until a potential new systemic change in the future), a certain number of measures need to be fully repeated every year – such as the cost of meals, for example, while there are also measures that may be spread over several years both in duration and cost.

Furthermore, logic dictates placing these costs in the temporal framework of the duration of education (the duration of primary and secondary education), in order for the measure to support the education of one generation of vulnerable children through all grades of education. This cost is under column 4.

The average annual cost was derived by analysing the expenditures required to provide additional support to one generation of children through the entire system of education, from the PPE to the end of secondary education, and dividing it with the number of years of education. According to the calculation, the average annual costs of the proposed package of measures lie between 92.2 million EUR and 124.7 million EUR (the average annual costs were derived by dividing the twelve-year costs by 12 years).

Having in mind that the budget of the ministry in charge of education for 2010, as per the amendments to the Budget Law for 2010 was approximately 1,246 million EUR, increasing this budget by between 7.4% and 10% could allow the financing of the implementation of this comprehensive reform.

However, as the changes envisaged by the measures are multisectoral in nature, they would entail financing by at least three competent ministries (the ministry in charge of social affairs, the ministry in charge of local self-government and the ministry in charge of education). Thus, in an ideal case, the increase would be distributed among them.

The average annual expenditure of the proposed measures in the total gross domestic product (GDP) spans between 0.33% and 0.45% of the GDP[155].

[155] According to http://mfin.gov.rs/pages/article.php?id=7161, the GDP in 2010 amounted to EUR 28,006 million.

		1		2		3	4	
		In RSD		In EUR		Timeframe for the measure	Cost of the measure in a 12-year timeframe, in EUR	
A	PACKAGE OF SUPPORT FOR MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	-	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
		10,630,950,487	10,630,816,987	96,645,004	96,643,791	-	**533,227,484**	**533,226,270**
1	Modernisation and enhancement of the children's allowance scheme with respect to targeting, coverage and administration of the support scheme	162,337,500		1,475,795		-	4,339,427	
a.	Analysis of the social welfare system's IT requirements	2,587,000		23,518		Systemic (only during introductory year)	23,518	
b.	Cost-benefit analysis of validity of the "schooling as a requirement" concept	2,250,000		20,455		Systemic (only during introductory year)	20,455	
c.	Promotional activities aimed at improved targeting of children's allowances	157,500,000		1,431,818		Considering the planned scope and intensity of promotional activities, intensive advertising would be sufficient every four years	4,295,454	
2	Systemic provision of food and clothes /footwear to satisfy basic needs of poor children	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	-	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
		5,814,862,987	5,814,729,487	52,862,391	52,861,177	-	181,349,370	181,348,156
a.	Legal/systemic definition of new obligations under the measure	600,000		5,455		Systemic (only during introductory year)	5,455	
b.	Capacity raising of local self-governments and the development of guidelines aimed at more efficient implementation of measures	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 1	Alternative 2		Alternative 1	Alternative 2
		1,520,500	1,387,000	13,823	12,609	Systemic (only during introductory year)	13,823	12,609

			1		2		3	4	
			In RSD		In EUR		Timeframe for the measure	Cost of the measure in a 12-year timeframe, in EUR	
c.	The cost of food		1,565,304,487		14,230,041		Regular annual cost amount	170,760,492	
d.	The cost of clothes and footwear		96,888,000		880,800		Regular annual cost amount	10,569,600	
3	Modernisation of instruments targeting children from disadvantaged categories with a view to subsidising their education costs		4,653,750,000		42,306,818		-	347,538,687	
a.	Legal/systemic definition of new obligations arising from the measures		600,000		5,455		Systemic (only during introductory year)	5,455	
b.	Provision of free textbooks and school supplies for poor and vulnerable children in all school grades		2,063,262,000		18,756,927		The cost of providing textbook during the year of introduction of the measure is 15.3 million EUR and every fourth year would require approx. 3.85 million EUR to renew the textbook fund (i.e. ¼ of the value of the entire fund). The annual cost of providing tools for all vulnerable children is 3.5 million EUR	65,000,000	
c.	Scholarships, loans, residence halls, mentoring at the secondary school level		2,589,888,000		23,544,436		Regular annual cost amount	282,533,232	
B	THE SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL		Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	-	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
		Alternative A – **CA from measure B1**	14,510,391,080	9,584,006,380	131,912,646	87,127,331	-	**1,194,558,670**	**657,134,878**

			1		2		3	4	
			In RSD		In EUR		Timeframe for the measure	Cost of the measure in a 12-year timeframe, in EUR	
	RESULTS	Alternative B - **PSA from measure B1**	8,776,181,523	6,565,987,002	79,783,468	59,690,791	-	**569,008,534**	**327,896,398**
1	Modernisation of instruments for early inclusion of children in preschool education		Alternative 1 – Full daycare	Alternative 2 – Half daycare	Alternative 1 – Full daycare	Alternative 2 – Half daycare	Regular annual cost amount	Alternative 1 – Full daycare	Alternative 2 – Half daycare
	Alternative A - **CA**		10,626,460,200	5,700,075,500	96,604,184	51,818,868	Regular annual cost amount	1,159,250,208	621,826,416
	Alternative B - **PSA**		4,892,250,643	2,682,056,122	44,475,006	24,382,328	Regular annual cost amount	533,700,072	292,587,936
2	Revitalization and modernization of remedial teaching		*the summary overview of the costs of package B used costs with rental under measure B2				Total five-year cost, no costs thereafter		
	Without rental		116,010,880		1,054,644			1,054,644	
	With rental		121,980,880		1,108,917			1,108,917	
3	Modernization of school libraries and IT centres		3,486,510,000		31,695,545		Total cost of the modernization of all schools that could be spread over a number of years	31,695,545	
4	Revitalization of school development planning		275,440,000		2,504,000		Cost of the measure for the full four-year duration	2,504,000	
C	PACKAGE OF SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE		2.963.425.817		26.940.235		-	**80.820.704**	

		1	2	3	4
		In RSD	**In EUR**	**Timeframe for the measure**	**Cost of the measure in a 12-year timeframe, in EUR**
	SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM				
1	Stimulating system provision of services targeting disadvantaged families and children[156]	57,846,667	525,879	Annual cost, the total duration of the measure is three years	1,577,636
2	Parent participation and training	**2,905,579,150**	**26,414,356**	Total cost of the measure that could be spread over four years, thereafter the measure could be provided again.	79,243,068

		Alternative 1	**Alternative 2**
The total twelve-year cost of the proposed measures, in EUR	**Alternative A – CA from measure B1**	**1.808.606.858**	**1.271.181.852**
	Alternative B – PSA from measure B1	**1.183.056.722**	**941.943.372**
Total cost for variants 1 and 2 (calculated as the average cost of the measure with children's allowance and pecuniary social assistance beneficiaries)		**1.495.831.790**	**1.106.562.612**
Average annual cost (total twelve-year cost divided by 12)		**124.652.649**	**92.213.551**

[156] Annual costs

5.3.5. Start-up recommendations

While all of the proposed measures would if implemented in synchronicity bring significant improvement of the social safety net for poor children in Serbia, there are certain interventions which can be implemented in short-term without additional funding or minor funding required. These are the following:

- Initiate and sign Protocols on cross-sectorial and institutional cooperation on procedures on planning, implementation and monitoring of measures to prioritize education needs of the vulnerable/poor children. It would necessarily involve sharing data on the same target group. This would include CSW, local office for childcare and school on better management of the child allowance, and other additional support provided by the local self-government (free meals, clothing, etc.).
- Develop Guidelines and provide TA to local self-governments on the system provision of meals and clothing including screening and monitoring of the provision of basic social safety net for poor children
- Institutionalize the use of PAV in all education reporting, and make results always transparent
- Use available print and IT communication channels (Prosvetni pregled, website of MESTD etc.) to inform schools on best practices in pro poor policies at school and municipal level
- Start setting up school alumni organizations
- Request updating school development plans to include dropout prevention and other new policies based on LFES, LBE and LSE
- Pull together all available data on education of vulnerable and poor students in Serbia
- The Ministry of Labor, Social Policy and Employment should intensify supervisory visits and support to offices administering child allowance in order to improve targeting of the program
- Prepare information packages on the support available to poor children – brochures, leaflets, posters, which would be available at all relevant sites/school, local offices, CSW, web information
- Intensify development of standards for outreach services, Rulebook on earmarked transfers and Rulebook on active inclusion to enable support to children beneficiaries of financial social assistance
- Start consultation process on changes of the social acts regulating financial support to families and pre-school attendance costs
- Participate in multi-year programming of the IPA HRD funds for fighting poverty and preventing drop-out

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UPGRADING EXISTING MEASURES

Apart from the above mentioned predominantly new measures, we give a list of measures that have been legally planned, initiated or are in progress, but need to be upgraded.

They include:

- Institution network optimization at all levels
- Provision of student transport – in legal regulations reduce the minimal distance to 2 km from school and 1 km from a pre-school institution (LFES), secure transparency through information received from the school
- Speed up the establishment of the *Unified Education Information System (JISP)*

- Speed up the reform of education finances, expanding preparations for the introduction of a financing system based on the capitation formula and a school grant mechanism
- Speed up the establishment of the new teacher education system
- Speed up application of the rulebook on the advanced training and professional advancement of teachers and secure continual training for all competencies
- Ensure that active and cooperative learning, formative assessment, self-evaluation and development planning become a reality in every single school, and that they are used to prevent dropout
- Speed up the introduction of the final exam and Matura exam
- Expand the number of pedagogical assistants
- Extend offer of free extracurricular activities and compensatory programs at all levels
- Legally regulate teacher recruitment based on quality certified by their average grade during academic studies, training, Master's degree, completion of module with a minimum of 36 EPBS points for teaching profession
- Annual monitoring of the coverage of all children, better monitoring of inclusive education, stability of legal frameworks and support from the MESTD and regional school administration offices

5.5. RECOMMENDED LEGISLATIVE CHANGES:

A. Minor legislative changes:

LFES:

- Introduce new categories of costs financed by the local community;
  - Support costs in accordance with ISC recommendations
  - Transportation costs if a pre-school institution is at a distance of over 1 km (not only for pre-school program), or if a school is over 2 km away
  - Specify that the pre-school education of children with disabilities and learning difficulties is free of charge even if a child is attending a regular and not only a developmental group
- Introduce the establishment of municipal Parents' Councils and develop appropriate rulebook regulating parental involvement in the life of schools
- Introduce the establishment of school alumni organizations (and prepare appropriate rulebook)
- Introduce the development of protocols on cooperation between schools and CSWs, schools and institutions of higher education, and between mainstream and special schools
- In the article on self-evaluation, emphasize that the school also evaluates its own success in dropout prevention and remedial teaching
- In the article mentioning remedial teaching, add that the Minister shall adopt a rulebook which will regulate remedial and additional teaching in more detail
- In the article on grading, include that poor children do not pay the costs of part-time education in secondary school if they fail to pass the remedial exam
- In the article on the composition of the School Board if classes are conducted in a minority language, add "or over 10% of the students are of Roma nationality", thereby enabling the Roma to become members of the School Board (and Parents' Council)

- In the article on the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, include the obligation of the Institute to report regularly about the pedagogical added value of schools and to prepare regular annual reports on education quality and equity
- In the article on the teacher employment procedure, state explicitly that candidates who have higher levels of education, higher average grades in their academic studies, more training and are from marginalized groups shall be given priority for employment
- In the article on professional staff (school counselors) include their obligation to devote special attention to children whose parents are poor and children from marginalized groups, and to collaborate regularly with centers for social work, and specify that the number of professional staff members shall also be defined by the number of poor and marginalized children in school.

Law on Textbooks and Teaching Aids:

- Introduce the obligation to secure a free set of textbooks for each child and student from the lower SES quintile, regardless of which grade of primary or secondary school he or she attends
- Introduce the publisher's obligation to provide free textbooks adapted to visually impaired and blind children, to every child belong to this group, regardless of whether he/she attends a special or mainstream school

Law on Primary School and Law on Secondary School:

- Introduce regulation of libraries' operation and availability of IT equipment for everyday use by students (also regulate this topic in an appropriate bylaw)
- Introduce students mentorship (provided by older students or teacher)
- Introduce mandatory professional orientation in the final grade

Law on Pre-school Education:

- Provide better regulation of affirmative action in pre-school education (not only for pre-school program attendance)
- Regulate employment of pedagogical assistants

Rulebooks on Student Standard:

- Specify criteria and appropriate number of points for scholarship awarding and accommodation in student dorm based on poverty and one's belonging to a vulnerable group

Rulebook on Curriculum:

- Introduce requirement for all grades and all subjects that at least 30% of the classes are conducted with the application of active and cooperative learning methods

Rulebook on External Evaluation:

- Introduce new indicators for the evaluation of the success of schools in dropout prevention, in the provision of support to children from poor families and in inclusive education

Rulebook on teachers' workload:

- Regulate increased workload due to transition management activities

- Regulate increased workload of professional staff in the provision of support to poor children and children form vulnerable groups

Rulebook on active inclusion and individual action plan

E. Regulate active inclusion policies toward poor population and support to children and adults in their reintegration into education system

Rulebook on earmarked transfers in the social welfare:

F. Regulate support to LSGs, particularly underdeveloped municipalities in providing community-based social services, also to poor population

B. Major legal changes

LFES:

- Regulate all measures for dropout prevention and support to poor children
- Regulate horizontal mobility and the possibility of sitting for a general matriculation examination after secondary vocational school / introduce “bridge year”
- Elaborate the recognition of prior learning through NQF

Law on Student Standard

- Elaborate a new student loan system

Law on Financial Support to Families with Children

- Legal changes on the **child allowance program** are necessary in order to increase coverage, enhance targeting and modernize the program, and make it more effective and efficient. Changes relate to complete revisiting of the program as proposed above, relating to revision of criteria, amounts and administrative procedures.
- Revision of **entitlement to subsidization of pre-school education for children from financially deprived families,** in conformity with the above mentioned recommendations
- **Revision of pre-school attendance cost reimbursement for children without parental care and children with disabilities,** harmonization with inclusive education objectives, in conformity with the above mentioned recommendations
- Clear definition of **possible package of additional support for all child allowance recipients who attend school and financial social support recipients** which would include free meals, clothing and footwear, etc., scholarships , school supplies, as we all an array of possible social welfare services, which could be a part of this Law.

6. SOCIETAL BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED SUPPORT MEASURES

This last chapter in the volume puts the proposed measures in a wider forward-looking perspective and delineates the expected societal benefits of investing in the education of children from vulnerable groups and/or poverty backgrounds.

In order to promote such a comprehensive reform, a clear understanding of societal benefits and expected level of return is required. To that end, a rough estimate of societal benefits is presented below; these are then compared to the required expenditures.

As different measures target different numbers of children, the assessment of societal benefits of the proposed measures is based on the average number of children covered by measures.

The number of children covered by measures is deduced by computing the arithmetic mean of the number of children living in families receiving financial social assistance and the number of children living in families receiving children's allowance.

According to the data presented in the costs section of this analysis, the number of children beneficiaries in the relevant age group in these two categories ranges from 64,592 (children beneficiaries of FSA) to 199,939 (children beneficiaries of ChA). The restrictive assessment of the number of children to be covered by the comprehensive support package, defined in this manner, amounts to 132,266. This number of children in the age group from the preparatory preschool programme to the end of secondary school accounts for only 12% of the total number of children in the relevant age group (which amounts to 1,091,212, according to SORS: Demographic Yearbook in the Republic of Serbia 2010, Belgrade 2011), as shown in the table below.

As stated above, this number pertains to all children found in the education system in the same calendar year and encompasses several generations, rather than only one generation.

As shown below, the societal benefits model assumes that the above mentioned 132,266 children go through the education system until the completion of secondary school and receive additional support from the system throughout their schooling. Yet, since the cost assessment is based on the number of children at one point (one school year), that number of children must go through the system for at least 12 years (thus covering most of the duration of formal education until the completion of secondary school). For this reason, the cost of measures is computed over twelve years and compared to the benefits of education for children covered by additional support measures over the same period.

Table 26: *Number of children by age groups*

Children's age	Number of children[157]
5	74,975
6	78,476
7	78,593
8	77,135
9	73,479
10	70,564
11	71,217
12	73,790
13	76,846
14	80,620
15	82,483
16	83,051
17	84,042
18	85,941
Total	1,091,212

Under the assumption that the proposed package of measures will be capable of correctly covering the most disadvantaged ones first, followed by those less disadvantaged, it may be assumed that the 12% of children covered by support are precisely those most disadvantaged. With respect to educational achievements, this category of children can also be assumed to achieve less compared to their peers with a higher socio-economic status of the family.

The data on the educational structure of the Serbian population show that 13.7% of the population has incomplete primary education or even no education (according to the 2011 Census data).

Table 27: *Educational structure according to the last two censuses*

	Census 2002		Census 2011	
	total	%	total	%
Republic of Serbia	6,321,231	100	6,161,584	100
No education	357,552	5.66	164,884	2.68
Incomplete primary education	1,022,974	16.18	677,499	11.00
Primary education	1,509,462	23.88	1,279,116	20.76
Secondary education	2,596,348	41.07	3,015,092	48.93
Non-university higher education	285,056	4.51	348,335	5.65
University-level higher education	411,944	6.52	652,234	10.59
Unknown	137,895	2.18	24,424	0.40

[157] According to SORS: Demographic Yearbook in the Republic of Serbia 2010, Belgrade 2011. The Table aims to present the demographic status in 2010. The table would avail of the number of children receiving child allowance and financial social assistance, but there are no such data disaggregated by age.

A comparison of the data from the last two censuses shows a decrease in the share of people with the lowest educational attainment, accompanied by an increase in the share of those with secondary, non-university higher and university-level higher education, which is a result not only of the education policy, but, indubitably, also of demographic trends.

Yet, it may be stated that the children from families with the lowest socio-economic status are, without doubt, those who will face the highest risks in realizing their full potentials in education in the future as well.

Although, without carrying out a small-scale social experiment, it is difficult to assess the impacts of the measures within the proposed support package with full precision, for the purposes of the present analysis these impacts can be defined as enabling each covered child to attain one extra level of education.

This moderate assumption appears to be realistic, given the scope and duration of the proposed measures (they would follow a child from the PPP to the end of his/her education).

In view of the shift in the importance of education, we assume that, even without additional support, a part of the most disadvantaged children will still succeed in finishing secondary education (20% of them), while most will stay at the level of completed primary education (70% of them). Yet, the reality is that, without additional support, a part of these children will even drop out of the initial grades of primary school.

With the impact of measures as defined above, we assume that the adoption and efficient implementation of measures will result in most of the disadvantaged children finishing secondary education (80%) and a part of them (20%) even attaining higher education.

Table 28: *Impacts of adopting the support package*

	Estimated impacts of measures to education results		Additional number of individuals with completed secondary education (instead of primary)	Additional number of individuals with completed higher education (instead of primary)	Monthly earnings premium between education levels, RSD	Earnings differential over the hypothetical working life, RSD	Societal benefit manifested in higher earnings
	Status without additional support	Status with additional support					
Total number of children potentially covered by support	132,266	132,266					
Primary and incomplete primary	105,813						
Secondary	26,453	105,813	79,360		15,266	5,495,760	436,141,315,296
Higher		26,453		26,453	11,773	4,238,280	112,116,068,496
Total RSD							548,257,383,792
Total €							4,984,158,034
Total € m							4,984.2

If these changes in education levels are viewed in relation to earnings premiums in today's labor market, these monthly premiums range from approximately RSD 11,773 (the average monthly earnings premium of an individual with secondary education over an individual with primary education) to 15,266 (the average monthly earnings premium of an individual with higher education over an individual with secondary

education)[158]. The total gains for an individual, measured over the hypothetical 30-year working life (with 12 payments of monthly earnings), range from € 40,000 to € 50,000. It is important to note that the calculation is based on the present labor market conditions and that it does not take into account the qualities of other segments of life that accompany better educational attainment.

The societal benefit amounts to almost €5bn and higher earnings will also entail higher GDP, higher tax revenues, higher consumption and the like.

As regards the social welfare system, it would also unquestionably benefit from these measures, since a part of individuals who would certainly become its beneficiaries without additional support, would now rise above the eligibility ceiling. This is the case with various social benefits. In particular, the number of financial social assistance beneficiaries would decrease, as would the number of children's allowance beneficiaries.

More precisely, the benefit to the social welfare system is deduced by comparing the costs to the system in the "status quo" situation – i.e. without introducing a support system – to the costs in a situation where, following participation in additional support measures, a significant proportion of the individuals has reached better educational attainment and thus also the possibility of attaining higher earnings and leaving the category of the socially disadvantaged.

Status quo situation:

Since the population in question consists of pronouncedly socio-economically disadvantaged children (roughly – the first decile), and in view of the severity of intergenerational transmission of poverty, it may be considered that, without additional support, after leaving the educational system, these children will continue to be beneficiaries of financial social assistance in their newly created families and also that their children will be beneficiaries of the children's allowance (given the birth rate and the individualist approach used in the analysis, one individual has one child on average, and a couple – two children).

Given that the financial social assistance amounts vary depending on the number of household members, the average FSA amount used here is RSD 5,000 per month. As the average lifespan in Serbia is 72 years, it may roughly be assumed that, in their lifetime after leaving education, individuals with the lowest socio-economic status will, in most cases, become FSA beneficiaries upon starting their own families and will often retain that status for the rest of their lives. For the purposes of the present analysis, the average number of years during which these individuals would receive FSA is 50.

As regards the other form of social assistance – the children's allowance, it may be assumed that individuals who fail to attain appropriate educational levels and thereby increase their chances of finding higher-paying jobs in the labor market will also be dependent on the social welfare system and that their children will receive not only FSA, but also children's allowance.

In this situation, the costs to the social welfare system are defined as follows:

[158] According to SORS – Communication ZP12: Employees in legal entities in the Republic of Serbia, by salaries and wages size and level of educational attainment, Table 4, September 2012.

Table 29: *Social welfare costs to be incurred in the status quo situation*

Status quo		Lifetime costs per individual, RSD	Number of individuals	By social benefit types, RSD
Individual missing education today	FSA	3,000,000[159]	132,266	396,796,500,000
Child of an individual missing education today	FSA	1,080,000[160]	132,266	142,846,740,000
	ChA	432,000[161]	132,266	57,138,696,000
Total RSD				596,781,936,000
Total €				5,425,290,327
Total € m				5,425

With additional education support measures, it may be expected that, in line with improved educational attainment levels and, therefore, also higher earnings after entry into the labor market, a part of these individuals will not be in need of social benefits. The assumption of decreasing number of beneficiaries has been deduced as follows:

- It is assumed that half of the individuals who attain up to secondary education will still be FSA beneficiaries and that their children will be ChA beneficiaries. As for the other half, it is assumed that they will not be FSA beneficiaries, but that their children will still be ChA beneficiaries.
- With regard to those who finish higher education following education support measures, it is assumed that only 5% of them will be FSA beneficiaries with their children also being ChA beneficiaries, and that the children of 20% of the individuals in this category will be ChA beneficiaries.

The costs to the social welfare system in this situation are defined as follows:

Table 30: *Social welfare costs to be incurred in the event of introducing the package of measures*

	Lifetime costs per individual, RSD	Number of individuals	By social benefit types, RSD
Secondary		105,812	
of which 50% – FSA, ChA	3,000,000[162]	52,906[163]	158,718,600,000
	1,080,000[164]	52,906	57,138,696,000
of which 50% – ChA	1,080,000	52,906	57,138,696,000
Higher		26,453	
of which 20% – ChA	1,080,000	5291[165]	5,713,869,600
of which 5% – FSA, ChA	3,000,000	1,323[166]	3,967,965,000
	1,080,000		1,428,467,400
Total RSD			284,106,294,000
Total €			2,582,784,491
Total € m			2,583

[159] = RSD 5,000 per month * 12 months * 50 years of life
[160] = RSD 5,000 per month * 12 months * 18 years of life
[161] = RSD 2,000 per month * 12 months * 18 years of life
[162] = RSD 5,000 per month * 12 months * 50 years of life
[163] 50% of 105,812
[164] = RSD 5,000 per month * 12 months * 18 years of life
[165] 20% of 26,453
[166] 5% of 26,453

The difference in social welfare expenditures, i.e. the decrease thereof, is shown in the table below.

Table 31: *Decrease of social welfare expenditures that would result from implementation of measures*

	Status quo	Adoption of measures	Difference
Total RSD	596,781,936,000	284,106,294,000	312,675,642,000
Total €	5,425,290,327	2,582,784,491	2,842,505,836
Total € m	5,425	2,583	2,843

The total measurable societal benefit resulting from the adoption of measures amounts to about €7,827 m, i.e. about €7.8 bn (of which €4,984 m as a result of higher earnings and the remaining €2,843 m as a result of lower social benefits).

The non-measurable societal benefits of enhanced educational attainment levels are multiple and may be seen in all spheres of life – from lower health care expenditures, given that, on average, better educated individuals pay more attention to prevention and health preservation, to higher security and lower crime rates, to higher social cohesion and creation of a society pervaded by a sense of care for each individual.

Given that, on average, the costs of implementing this package of measures for one generation covered by measures longitudinally throughout its schooling (for which the social benefits of schooling have been deduced) range between €1,107 m and €1,496 m, the benefits of these measures are unquestionable when compared to €7,827 m “returned" to society. Additional support measures for a generation of vulnerable children require between €1,107 m and €1,496 m to support their schooling from the preparatory pre-school programme to the end of secondary school. Once they leave school, the social return derived from their additional education would amount to about €7,827 m. This striking example clearly demonstrates the cost-efficiency of education and the scale of social return on investment.

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