

KOSOVO/A CIVIL SOCIETY PROJECT

**KOSOVO/A STANDING TECHNICAL
WORKING GROUP: EIGHTH MEETING
EDUCATION**

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Director: Marc Weller

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I. Introduction

The Standing Technical Working Group (STWG) was established in March 2001 to address important issues of public policy in Kosovo/a at a technical level. It is composed of experts from Kosovo/a NGOs, the political parties and other civil society representatives. Its membership is fully interethnic and it prides itself on being able to conduct debate in Kosovo/a in an interethnic way. The Group reviews technical aspects of current policy and formulates proposals and critical questions in relation to them. It then seeks to engage the relevant appointed local and international representatives on these issues. On 18 May 2002, the eighth plenary session of the STWG convened to hold a workshop devoted to ongoing developments in education policy.

II. Preparation for the Workshop: The Work of the Expert Committee on Education and Youth

The Expert Committee (EC) on Education and Youth was formally established in March 2002 when the STWG undertook to institutionalize its activities through the signing of a joint Memorandum on Cooperation (MoC) (see ECMI Report # 27). At this meeting, members of the STWG with particular competence in issues of education and youth policy came together to establish an interethnic working party that was responsible for monitoring public policy development in these areas. The EC also established a preliminary meeting agenda throughout 2002, and agreed to operate according to a designated code of conduct.

At their initial meeting later in March, the newly established EC on Education and Youth elected a Chairperson and Vice Chair so as to provide a better organizational structure and guidance to the EC's activities. Nazmi Halimi, who had served in the parallel education ministry of Kosovo/a in the 1990s, was elected Chair and Mejreme Berisha, a secondary school teacher with over twenty years' experience, was elected Vice Chair. As was set out in the MoC, both positions were elected through a unanimous vote. The EC also undertook to review the provisions of the MoC and to

establish a list of priority issue areas they wished to debate at the STWG workshop on 18 May.

The EC first set out to establish a coherent framework to its work. The members initially considered undertaking a broad examination of Kosovo/a's education system, i.e. from elementary schooling through to university, but finally determined to limit their activities to education policy at primary and secondary school levels. The group split into three sub-working groups, tasked with examining different issue areas in more detail, and fixed a schedule of five further Committee meetings prior to the workshop. The EC Chair then assigned the group the task of establishing a list of key issues in education in order to help outline a preliminary agenda.

As a basis for its work, the EC made use of the *Framework for a New Curriculum for Kosovo* as well as a short policy paper, both of which had been authored by Michael Daxner, Principal International Officer, and his staff at the UNMIK Department of Education. This document had been published as a White Paper in September 2001 in order to generate discussion. It was further intended to provide a guideline for the future work of the incoming Ministry of Education (eventually appointed in March 2002). The timing of the subject matter therefore proved judicious, and the EC realized the potential that the forum of the STWG could have for generating constructive debate on education policy as well as helping shape future implementation. To assist in providing practical input into the EC's deliberations, the group invited Hajrullak Koliqi, Professor in Pedagogy at the University of Pristina. Having also served in the Joint Interim Administration's Department of Education, Professor Koliqi was well placed to advise on ongoing policy debates and decisions. After consultations, it was agreed that the *Framework* did indeed provide an excellent point of departure for transforming the education system of Kosovo/a. The question, however, was not *what* needed to be implemented, but *how* new reforms could be implemented.

At a subsequent meeting, the EC then engaged in a brainstorming session to prioritize a list of issue areas which had been identified by members of the group. An initial list of fifteen issue areas was compiled. These included:

- Unification of the education system: the establishment of a single system for Kosovo/a;
- Provision of adequate teacher training;
- Training in the administration of education;
- Budgetary issues: including the provision of adequate salaries for teachers and adequate infrastructure – both at the provincial and local levels;
- The high burden of private financing needed by the average Kosovar student;
- De-politicization of textbooks;
- Teaching of Albanian as a second language to those whose mother tongue is not Albanian;
- The provision of adequate transportation of students;
- An analysis of urbanization and its effects on both urban and rural schools;
- Establishment of evaluation methods for teachers;
- The role and provision of private schools;
- Fostering competition at all levels in the education system;
- The recognition of diplomas and qualifications in and outside Kosovo/a;
- The setting up of technical schools;
- Issues of disability and access;
- Establishment of transparency at ministerial level;
- De-politicization of the Education Ministry and the entire reform process.

Bearing in mind the objectives of the STWG, the EC examined each of these options in turn to determine their relative importance to Kosovo/a society as a whole. After careful consideration of these issues and the facts ‘on the ground’, the EC concluded that:

- 1) Reform of the Kosovo/a education system was inevitable, timely and necessary.
- 2) The *Framework for a New Curriculum for Kosovo* that had been drafted by the international administration and external experts provided an excellent road map for the process of reform, and could be endorsed by the EC.

- 3) If the reform process was attainable, necessary and inevitable, then the forum provided by the STWG would need to address the ways in which it could best contribute to implementation of the reform process.
- 4) The EC and STWG could play a positive part in implementing reforms in the education system, but recognized that this was a goal that could only be achieved over the medium- to long-term.
- 5) The output of the 18 May workshop would need to generate concrete proposals and recommendations with which both the local and international authorities could actively engage.

To broaden external input into the EC's preparations, two further local experts were engaged: Dukagjin Pupovci and Hali Hyseni from the local NGO Kosova Education Center. This input helped enrich the debate of the EC and resulted in the development of further recommendations which would be put before the plenary in the forthcoming workshop. Before commencing with the final preparations for the STWG plenary session, the EC had sought to review relevant background materials and engage in high-level technical discussions, both amongst themselves and with the inclusion of external experts. The EC was therefore strongly placed to understand the complexities involved in the ongoing policy debate on education in Kosovo/a and generate a debate on implementing reforms.

III. The Eighth Session of the Standing Technical Working Group: Education

The eighth session of the STWG took place at UN Headquarters, Pristina, on 18 May 2002. The facilities and translation equipment for the meeting were generously provided by UNMIK, the translators were provided by ECMI. In preparation for the meeting, the EC on Education and Youth had met over six times and established a set of objectives: These were:

- To highlight key issues raised in the White Paper *Framework for a New Curriculum for Kosovo*;

- To provide a forum for discussing critical issues that pertained to minorities in Kosovo/a's education reform;
- To provide a comparative investigation of developments in the Albanian education system since 1992, looking at mechanisms of accountability and successes and failures of reform;
- To increase information on reforms and effective schools;
- To guide the debate and draft constructive recommendations with the input and assistance of external experts.

The session took the form of a collaborative workshop so as to facilitate interaction and dialogue. The workshop was co-chaired by Mr Nazmi Halimi and Ms Mejreme Berisha, who were elected Co-Chairs of the EC on Education and Youth.

Summary of the Proceedings¹

ECMI Director Marc Weller opened the session and invited the plenary to use the workshop to generate concrete proposals towards creating a fully functioning quality education system in Kosovo/a. Mr Weller drew attention to the fact that the Kosovo/a Civil Society initiative had successfully evolved over its existence, and that this project was supported by the generous funding of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Germany and Sweden. It was further highlighted that the activities of the Standing Technical Working Group and its constituent Expert Committees in Kosovo/a would continue to be possible with the continued commitment of these donors to the peace process in the region and their willingness to invest in long-term solutions. The ECMI Director then turned the proceedings over to the Chair.

The Chair, Nazmi Halimi, welcomed the participants of the STWG and expressed his good wishes for the success of the meeting. He further expressed his hope that the recommendations which flowed from the workshop would have a significant impact on the newly formed Ministry of Education. Ms Samantha Klein, Acting Head of

¹ The account that follows summarizes the discussion and debate of the proceedings. This account has not been reviewed by any of the participants and does not claim to reproduce the views of invited experts or each member of the Group.

Division, Education Outreach and Communities of UNMIK was then invited to outline the salient issues that pertain to minority education in Kosovo/a.

Ms Klein affirmed that the international and local administration had both worked hard over the previous three years to ensure that all citizens of Kosovo/a had equal access to quality education. She stressed UNMIK's desire to preserve or re-establish a multiethnic system, but reminded the participants that all communities needed to be active in this process. Ms Klein then went on to describe the Division organization for communities. This consisted of three groupings, each of which was given the responsibility to examine textbooks, curricula, and issues of access to higher education. The groupings were made up of 1) Turks, Bosniaks and Goranis; 2) Roma and Ashkali; and 3) Serbs. According to Ms Klein, the Serbian community seemed to display hesitation and fear as to their place in a new Kosovo/a education system. She also expressed the continuing need to obtain well-qualified individuals who could represent minority interests in the Division.

Ms Klein's remarks drew an instant reaction from the participants and a discussion ensued. One member of the EC on Education and Youth pointed out that the Serbs should not be treated as a special problem. Indeed, he felt that while the majority of the Albanians were speaking about unification of the Kosovo/a education system, they needed to be aware that whatever the final outcome, this 'new' system had to be a system that was compatible with Europe as a whole. Further discussion centred on the issues of general infrastructure and transparency in the education system. All the members agreed that all ethnicities in Kosovo/a shared similar challenges in reforming the education system.

One member stated that unification of the system did not mean an Albanian majority dominated education system, but rather one system where resources, which can at times be quite abundant, are distributed evenly. Other members stated that as far as language issues were concerned, Serbs should not be required to learn Albanian, especially in the way that Kosovo/a Albanians were 'required' to learn Serbian in the 1990s. However, both the Albanians and other minorities that were present (Turkish, Ashkali, Roma, Bosniak) stressed the importance of children receiving at least some language instruction in Albanian, at the very least to improve communication amongst

the citizens in Kosovo/a. Nevertheless, one member reminded the participants that when examining the Balkans from a regional perspective, the Slavic languages are also useful to people living and working in the Balkans.

The debate concluded with a strong argument against the ‘politicization’ of the education reform process. One member argued persuasively that the issue of language instruction was not at all the point when the majority spoke of unification of the Kosovo/a education system. Rather, unification should imply that the political party ties no longer apply to reform implementation, and indeed to the entire development of the education system. He stated: “As soon as the minorities understand the importance of participating, they themselves should decide if they want or when they want to learn the Albanian language. The right of education in their mother tongue shouldn’t be discussed at all, but this is another issue ... we should not politicise the education issues. Politicization of education is when someone is removed from a position in the education system as a result of his or her political convictions.” For this member, unity of the system meant all citizens of Kosovo/a moving beyond political prejudice. He argued persuasively that a new education bureaucracy must be built upon merit and not party affiliation. It was further suggested that the process of de-politicization could be achieved by the following:

- supporting political and legal processes;
- establishing community organizational capacities;
- careful self-monitoring and self-evaluation by all communities

The debate continued with a reminder to the participants of the problems faced by the handicapped and persons with special needs. It was noted that children with disabilities came from all communities of Kosovo/a. Again the members agreed that reforms in this sector should be aimed at implementing European standards.

A final issue of discussion was the need for the Ministry to recognize the traditionally neglected communities of Ashkali, Roma, and Egyptians. It was observed that attendance (continuity) levels are extremely poor in these communities and the drop-out rate is very high. Moreover, the figures worsen with the number of students who

continue their education to university level. It was proposed that the STWG should pay special attention to this pressing educational problem. Whether through initiating ‘catch-up’ programmes or through targeted investments or both, the Ministry was encouraged to continue in its advocacy efforts for those in dire need.

Developments in the Albanian Education System post 1992

To provide an external view and offer a comparative perspective, Stavri Llambiri then gave a presentation on developments in the education system of Albania over the last ten years. As an expert actively engaged for over ten years with reforming Albania’s education system, Mr Llambiri’s well prepared and stimulating remarks on the successes and failures of implementing education reform prompted many questions by the participants and initiated a productive discussion. Llambiri argued that “a country is democratic not because it has applied democratic legislation, but because it has democratic citizens. The long dictatorships in the East have had residual effects of a long mental illness. We are all still a little sick. An education system can create democratic citizens with only two preconditions: schools should be the place where democracy is taught; schools should be the place where democracy is practised. Many things will change from the previous curricula; still, democracy is not a list to memorize. It is a culture. Democracy should be that which remains after a student forgets the things he/she has learned.” The central theme of Llambiri’s presentation and the discussion that followed was that without a clear vision of where the Kosovo/a education system wanted to be, there could be no real reform. Training workshops, expertise and money will have little effect if the Ministry of Education does not establish a reform plan that included a transparent roadmap and clear benchmarks.

In the area of curriculum reform the participants learned that if a curriculum is too centralized, and there is no space for contemporary methods, then while measurable results might occur they would remain islands of success in the overall picture. Llambiri illustrated his warning on proper reform with this analogy: reform often focuses on the parts, without thinking about the whole body, and more often than not the total of the parts reflects less than the whole.

The Afternoon's Working Session

In the afternoon session, the STWG considered two presentations entitled, “Reforms in Education” and “Effective Schools as a Challenge for Kosovars”. These presentations were delivered by Dukagjin Pupovci and Halim Hyseni, both from the Kosova Education Center. There was general consensus that the White Paper *A Framework for a New Curriculum for Kosovo* contained all the necessary elements for implementing a general reform of the education system in Kosovo/a. There was also general consensus that the current ‘roadblock’ to implementing reform appeared to be the lack of movement from the new Ministry of Science, Technology and Education.

The main points of the presenters were:

- Kosovo/a risks getting caught in a repetitive loop within the ‘reform’ cycle. Within this loop, the evaluators identify problems and propose steps towards solutions; yet, the important implementation process never takes place, so the process loops back to new evaluators arriving and identifying problem areas, etc.
- Kosovo/a’s education system was entering a new phase in which student-centred and not teacher-centred learning would be the priority.
- A collegial spirit of cooperation among teachers, parents and administrators is an important precondition for objective unification of an education system.

IV. Conclusion with Recommendations

At the end of the day’s productive working session, the Chair presented the Recommendations of the Expert Committee on Education and Youth to the entire STWG. These Recommendations had been generated through a process of consultation and discussion among members of the Expert Committee, local and international experts, and members of the STWG plenary. The plenary examined these Recommendations and offered criticism and suggestions that have since been

incorporated. The Recommendations below were accepted with broad consensus by the STWG, and the Education and Youth Expert Committee was charged to incorporate the concrete Recommendations of the experts into their year plan.

The following Recommendations were adopted by the plenary:

General Principles

1. Education is a matter for all citizens of Kosovo/a who recognize the universal right of education. Fundamental reform, rather than incremental advances, must be achieved to fulfil this right. This implies responsibilities for the Kosovo/a's authorities, for the interim international administration, and also for parents and teachers.
2. There must be common standards and practices of education throughout all of Kosovo/a, determined by the citizens of Kosovo/a and the relevant institutions within a uniform legal framework. Concrete steps must be developed towards this end.
3. In order to maintain the richness of the multiethnic community, all communities should be enabled and encouraged to be active participants in the building of Kosovo/a's education system, with a view to reflecting this richness in the design of the curriculum.

School and Curriculum Development

4. The members of the STWG endorse and respect the value of cultural pluralism. They recognize the diverse identities of all citizens of Kosovo/a and their right to receive primary and secondary education in their mother tongue. However, whatever Kosovo/a's final status, there should also be teaching of the Albanian language for all as the majority language of Kosovo/a.
5. Kosovo/a's administration should encourage the healthy development of private education in all municipalities where there is a need and a demand, and assist in maintaining common standards of quality.

6. Understanding and tolerance shall be reflected in the teaching and in the curricula or any other activities involved with education. The heritage of each community shall be fairly represented.
7. The development of curricula should correspond to the requirements and standards of other parts of Europe, with a view to facilitating convergence of educational standards and recognition of qualifications, including qualifications and degrees, over time.
8. Curriculum development should involve consultation with academic experts, officials and parents.
9. There should be a transition from normative, teacher-oriented learning to a child-oriented learning environment. A testing system should be established, providing for standardized tests at regular intervals (grade 3, 5, 8, high school grade 10), including basic competencies such as reading, writing and arithmetic.
10. There should also be an emphasis on life skills, such as economic management in a free market economy, tolerance, citizenship and human rights.

School Development and Teacher Training

11. Present and future teachers at all levels must be well qualified and have their qualification approved according to a common system and common standards. There must also be provision for lifelong learning of teachers. Relevant and recognized national and international agencies are invited to support the process of teacher training.
12. Education must be a high budgetary priority in Kosovo/a. However, given limited resources, innovative and creative ideas will be developed by the Expert Committee to improve the physical facilities for schools in a cost-effective way, and to enhance the availability of teachers and teacher training, also through exchanges, etc. The Expert Committee on Education and Youth will conduct an audit of present school provisions in Kosovo/a and propose priorities for funding according to its findings.

In addition to these recommendations, the plenary identified other areas of critical concern, and charged the Expert Committee on Education and Youth to incorporate these into the remainder of their year plan:

- Gender issues in education
- Increasing access to education facilities for those with disabilities and special needs
- Establishment of a policy of outreach to the disenfranchised, which includes acceleration (or ‘catch up classes’) for those traditionally neglected
- Special attention to lifelong learning; illiteracy; teaching to adults
- Investigation of alternative forms of learning: multi-media opportunities
- Feasibility of establishing vocational training schools
- The transition to secondary schools
- Devolution of power and reform responsibility in education to the municipality level
- The negatives of positive discrimination
- The pros and cons of introducing a private schooling sector

In conclusion to the day’s proceedings, the Chair thanked the participants and experts as well as the members of the STWG. The Chair reaffirmed the general call for urgent action on education reform in Kosovo/a and, on behalf of the Expert Committee on Education and Youth, took on the responsibility to critically and constructively engage the Ministry of Education in its efforts to implement reform of the education system.

V. Annex

A. Programme:

Standing Technical Working Group Meeting on Education, 18 May 2002

TIME	ACTIVITY
9:15-9:30	Introductory Remarks: Marc Weller , Director ECMI Robert Curis, Country Director ECMI
9:30-10:45	First Plenary Session: Nazmi Halimi and Mejreme Berisha Chair and Vice Chair ECMI STWG Education Expert Committee Samantha Klein Acting Head of Division, Education Outreach and Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the Kosovo/a education system • Programme unification, teacher training, de-politicization, finance • Discussion and debate
10:45-11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00-12:15	Second Plenary Session: Stavri Llambiri <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in the Albanian education system post-1992 • Mechanisms of accountability • Successes and failures • Discussion and debate
12:15-13:25	<i>Lunch</i>
13:30-15:45	Working Groups 1 and 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group 1: Reforms in Education: Dukagjin Pupovci, Kosova Education Center • Working Group 2: Effective Schools as a Challenge for Kosovars Halim Hyseni, Kosova Education Center • Discussion and debate
15:45-16:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:15-17:45	Working Session: Drafting of Recommendations
17:45-18:00	Conclusion

B. Experts and Implementation Agency Representatives

Mr Christopher Talbott	UNESCO IIEEP	Attended
Ms Annette Wenderoff	KEDP	Attended
Ms Mehriban Gashi	KEDP	Attended
Mr Brian Moo Sang	KEDP	Attended
Ms Samantha Klein	UNMIK	Attended
Mr Ryan Schroeder	UNMIK	Invited
Mr Rexhep Osmani	Minister of Education	Invited
Ms Anisa Jukovic	UNMIK	Attended
Mr Stavri Llambiri	Albanian Min. of Education	Attended
Mr Dukagjin Pupovci	Kosova Education Center	Attended
Mr Halim Hyseni	Kosova Education Center	Attended