

FIRST DRAFT

FINAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

**“P.E.D.A.K.O.S – PRESCHOOL EDUCATION DEVELOPEMNT
ALLIANCE FOR KOSOVO”**

AID 011860

Funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

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SUMMARY

The Project "Preschool Education Development Alliance for Kosovo" (PEDAKOS) is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. It is implemented through a grant contract with Volontari nel Mondo (RTM) as a coordinator, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MESTI), Kosovo Pedagogical Institute (KPI), University of Prishtina-Faculty of Education (UNIPRISHTINA), Childproof (CIPOF), Socio-Educational Services Agency "Sphresa e Jetes" (SHJ) and Preschool institution (Botanika), as local partners, and Italian partners: Comune di Reggio Emilia-Istituzione Nidi e Scuole d'Infanzia (CRE-ISNI), Fondazione E35 (FE35) and Fondazione Reggio Children-Centro Loris Malaguzzi (FRCH). The aim of PEDAKOS is to increase the quality of educational services offered by public, private and community-based schools for children 3-5 years. It supports the ongoing reform in early childhood education in Kosovo and the recently adopted National Strategy for Development 2022-2030 and the Strategy for Early Childhood Education 2022-2026. The Project has delivered its planned outputs efficiently with good use of available resources, even with the initial delays at the start of the project and changes in implementation modalities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The two non-cost extensions in 2021 and 2022 provided sufficient time for the project to deliver all outputs with sound quality.

Several outputs provide a reliable impact on the reform in the early childhood education sector, including the Syllabus on the Reggio Emilia approach (REA) and the Curriculum for in-service training on REA developed by UNIPRISHTINA, a Work Plan and ToR/Statute for the Collegium adopted by the Ministry of Education, introducing REA in 15 pilot preschools across Kosovo and refurbishing spaces in the preschools and UNIPRISHTINA-Faculty of Education for developing of ateliers. All this was supported by training, study visits, pedagogical exchanges and mentoring by the RTM staff and international project partners. Two scientific researches on REA were drafted, providing analysis and recommendations on how REA is implemented in the pilot preschools.

The project sustainability has good prospects, especially in relation to the officially accredited Syllabus and developed in-service training Curriculum on REA, adopted ToR/Statute and Work Plan for the Collegium, introduced REA and trained staff in the pilot preschools.

The recommendations provide further support in the pilot preschools and introduction of new preschools to REA, monitoring and support to the in-service training, support to the Collegium on implementing the Work Plan and its new ToR/Statute and support to MESTI on policies and strengthening of capacities.

SCORING OVERVIEW

CRITERIA	GOOD/VERY GOOD	PROBLEMS	SERIOUS DEFICIENCIES
RELEVANCE	GOOD/VERY GOOD	/	/
EFFICIENCY	GOOD/VERY GOOD	/	/
EFFECTIVENESS	GOOD/VERY GOOD	/	/
IMPACT	GOOD/VERY GOOD	/	/
SUSTAINABILITY	GOOD/VERY GOOD	/	/
HORIZONTAL ISSUES	GOOD/VERY GOOD	/	/
VISIBILITY	GOOD/VERY GOOD	/	/

INTRODUCTION

Kosovo has made strides in addressing issues to increase the quality of education and to overcome the gaps over the last thirty years, including preschool education (0-5 years), through adopting the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and National Development Strategy 2016-2021. Challenges include: inclusion in preschool education and increase in the participation rate, improvement of infrastructure and increase in awareness on the importance of preschool education, enhancement of the quality of preschool education and management, identifying the needs of professional developments, etc, which is also noted in the European Commission (EC) progress reports 2018-2022. The EC in Kosovo Country Report 2022 recommends that Kosovo should “...systematically apply quality assurance mechanisms at all education levels, improve access to quality education at preschool level and for disadvantaged groups...”¹. The EC notes several gaps: the participation of children in preschool education and care (age 0-5) remains low (36%) and below EU standards (80%), but more needs to be done to increase coverage of preschool and secondary education equitably, the uneven distribution of preschool institutions in Kosovo (49 public kindergartens in 27 out of 38 municipalities), lack of appropriate infrastructure, lack of didactic materials, approval of the Law on Preschool Education and re-developing of the curriculum for this level of education².

The aim of the Project is to increase the quality of educational services offered by public, private and community-based schools for children 3-5 years. The Project "Preschool Education Development Alliance for Kosovo" (PEDAKOS) is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). It is implemented by one leading international partner –RTM, six local Kosovo partners: MESTI – public body, CIPOF–non-profit association, SHJ–non-profit association, “Botanika”–Non-profit association, NIPRISTINA–public university, and KPI– public body, and three Italian partners: CRE ISNI, FE35, and FRCH.

Project Description

The General Objective (GO) of the intervention is to: support public institutions and private actors in the implementation of the KESP – Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 relating to the preschool component (0-5 years). The specific Objective (SO) is: to increase the quality of educational services offered by public, private and community-based preschools (3-5 years) through professional development (study visits, training, workshops, supply of pedagogical material), good practices (design of educational spaces, family participation, reuse of material and food education, pedagogical exchange between pilot schools, and dissemination seminars) and public-private partnerships (workshops for the definition of the Statute of the Collegium, national campaign on Collegium and technical assistance for the Collegium to implement two pilot activities).

¹ European Commission (EC) in Kosovo Country Report 2022, pg. 104, available at: [chrome-https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Kosovo%20Report%202022.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Kosovo%20Report%202022.pdf)

² Ibid.

Methodology

The evaluation was performed through quantitative and qualitative data gathering during the desk research and field phase with the involvement of project partners, beneficiaries, and other relevant stakeholders. The evaluation focused on:

- Relevance: are the project objectives consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, and country needs, and are they still relevant?
- Efficiency: how economically the project's resources contribute to the delivery of the outputs.
- Effectiveness: to which extent the project objectives are achieved and the quality of outputs.
- Impact: did the project bring a real change?
- Sustainability: the probability of continued benefits after the project ends.
- Cross-cutting issue: environmental and gender
- Visibility.

During the desk research, the focus was on: qualitative analysis of the project documents and relevant reports; quantitative analysis of the project deliverables and results; interviews with the project team; interviews with the project partners from Italy and Kosovo, pilot preschools, other donors and direct observation by attending the pedagogical exchange with organized in the preschool "Botanika", Prishtina on 14 January 2023 and the final event project event on 3 February 2023. The findings from the Interim Evaluation Report, February 2022, which includes findings from the interviews and observations from the training with Reggio Children pedagogist on the practical aspect of REA held on 14 December 2021 and a workshop about Collegium held on 09 December 2021, are considered in the drafting of the Final Report.

The field phase took place after 13 January and focused on: interviews and de-briefing with the project team; 15 interviews with the project partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders for collecting and verifying the data (participatory method); three interviews with other donors (UNICEF, World Bank and EU Office in Prishtina), and interviews with the RTM Programme Manager and the donor – AICS. The field phase was also performed through direct observation with site visits of the pilot preschools across Kosovo; qualitative and comparative analysis of the project documents and relevant reports vis-à-vis data collected with the interviews; and quantitative and comparative analysis of the project deliverables and result from the data collected with the interviews.

The evaluation report writing phase was performed through a comparative method of collecting data and deduction.

RELEVANCE

PEDAKOS (the Project) is relevant and responds to the needs of its target groups i.e. preschool children 3-5 years in Kosovo. It addresses the need to increase the quality of preschool education in Kosovo and to increase the number of children attending preschool education through a children-centred approach which is the essence of the REA. The Project aligns with the Education 2030 Framework for Action, SDG 4 –

Quality education and its targets: 4.2³, 4.a⁴ and 4.c⁵. This current action links with previous RTM and other donor assistance implemented with local preschools and Kosovo institutions. It builds on the three main findings of the Pre-Feasibility Study for an intervention in the Early Childhood Education Sector in Kosovo conducted by RTM launched in January 2018: 1) Weak professional skills of preschool staff and the need to develop one new professional training programme for preschool teachers for children 3-5 years; 2) General use of top-down educational methods, lack of adequate spaces, materials, weak participation of families and their poor awareness of the importance of preschool education through the promotion of the rights of the child; and 3) Antagonism between public and private preschool actors and need to reform the National Council of Preschool Institutions (Collegium). More generally, this project also aligns with national priorities for education, the National Strategy for Development 2022-2030 and the Education Strategy 2022-2026, where early childhood education is among the priorities. The stakeholders have shown good commitment towards the Project and have been involved in its design and preparation. Currently, there are 191 private, 49 public and 32 community-based preschools in Kosovo.

The Project is complementary to the interventions and efforts of other international organizations and there is no overlapping in activities. CARITAS supports educators from the preschools with different trainings, equipped 160 classrooms and supports municipal directorates of education. UNICEF cooperates with the Association of Private Preschools (Association) to increase the number of private preschools that are members of the Association, develop the regulatory framework, and establish a standard fee for membership. UNICEF also cooperates with the UNIPRISHTINA to develop training modules for the members of the Association; increase public awareness, especially in rural areas, on the importance of preschool education, etc., as well as with the MESTI on preparing the Curriculum for preschool education. At the moment, the World Bank is preparing a project in support of early childhood education in several aspects: infrastructure, quality of education and quality assurance, worth around EUR 30 Million. However, this is still in the planning phase, and if approved, the implementation would start in spring 2024. The action document for the EU-funded IPA Project is developed with a focus on infrastructure, training and learning. The project is estimated at EUR 6,5 Million.

The lead implementing partner, RTM, signed a memorandum for understanding with 6 Kosovo local partners, public bodies and non-profit associations: MESTI, KPI, UNIPRISHTINA, CIPOF, SHJ, and Botanika. The signed MoU between RTM and MESTI is highly relevant and of added value, considering that the MoU is signed between a civil society organization (CSO) and a public institution – MESTI.

The MESTI is responsible for developing and implementing policies and laws which concern education, including preschool education, while the directorates for education in municipalities have competence in implementing the MESTI guidelines. Besides the changes in the management of MESTI because of the parliamentary elections in 2020 and 2021, the ongoing reform in preschool education, as well as cooperation with the Project, continued. Though MESTI did not provide any financial support in the Project implementation, the relevant staff is actively involved in cooperation and communication with the PEDAKOS team in implementing activities and steering the outcomes of the project activities in line with the current reform in the education sector. The municipalities' directorates for education are not directly

³ 4.2 “By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.”

⁴ 4.a “Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.”

⁵ 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small islands developing States.”

involved in the project, but they were consulted in the preparations of the project. In the future reform, MESTI is looking at a holistic approach in several sectors: health, social welfare and education.

The Project's intervention logic is well-developed. The SO has three indicators, which will capture the change made by the Project. The outputs indicators are adequate for measuring their delivery, with baselines and targets. There are three indicators at the GO level: preschool enrolment rate 0-5, gender parity index (GP) on the preschool level (0-5); and public spending for education/GDP. The achievement of the SO is to be measured through four indicators: preschool spending/total public spending for education, early child development index", number of preschools offering child-centered services, and average number of in-service training hours for preschool staff (0-5). The GO and SO indicators do not depend directly on the project deliverables, but also the overall reform.

The Project application contains the risk analysis and contingency plan, which relate to the factors that may hamper the start of the project and its implementation. The risk analysis has not been updated to include factors which might prevent the achievement of the outcomes, such as the current Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Project has accounted for the Covid-19 risks and the related countermeasures in the periodical progress reports.

EFFICIENCY

The project has delivered its planned outputs efficiently with good use of available resources. The project is implemented through a grant contract with RTM as a coordinator, and the MESTI, KPI, UNIPRISHTINA, CIPOF, SHJ and Botanika, as local partners, and Italian partners: CRE-ISNI, FE35 and FRCH. The previous cooperation of RTM with the non-profit preschools dates back to 2012. RTM signed MoU with the six local partners and with the Directorate for Education of Gjilane/Gnilanje Municipality for the activities in this municipality. The implementation mechanism, using international experience through an experienced lead international civil society organization (CSO), experienced international partners in the field of preschool education and six local Kosovo partners - three non-profit associations, is considered an appropriate tool to achieve the expected results. They represent a good combination of experience and expertise working in preschool education with children 3-5 years. The local partners bring the experience and need in Kosovo in this field, as well as institutional support. MESTI, as an institution leading the education sector, provides institutional support in the implementation of project activities and also utilizes the project outcomes in the ongoing legislation review. UNIPRISHTINA and KPI provided institutional support in the implementation of project activities. UNIPRISHTINA in developing a Syllabus on REA for the IV year students and KPI in preparing two scientific monitoring reports on the changes and developments promoted by the project, the approach practices applied and implemented by the schools. The monitoring tool related to REA aspects was developed in collaboration with RCH. The three non-profit preschools bring the Kosovo experience to early childhood education. The selection of the 15 pilot preschools is a good representation of all types of preschools in Kosovo, public, private and community based, providing for representation of different communities – Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE).

The three international partners bring direct REA experience in planning and implementing project activities, especially in sharing the experience during the study visit, advising on purchasing pedagogical texts, designing ateliers, supporting in designing specific training modules, exchanging good practices, etc.

The Project resources EUR 970,000 (EUR 873,000 AICS contribution and EUR 86,300 contribution by the applicant) are sufficient and correspond to the Project needs. The budget realization is 96% and the expenditures considering the different types of costs are adequate to achieve the project's objectives. In that regard, most of the budget is spent on implementing the project activities – 50,43%. Under human resources (a total of 23,83% of budget realization) and equipment and other investments (total of 13,85%), there is also a budget utilization related to implementing project activities, covering the field missions of international experts (under human resources) and purchasing equipment for pilot preschools (under equipment and other investments).

The three-year implementation period seems at this stage to be adequate and gives time for their preparation, implementation and evaluation. There were two non-cost extensions on RTM request, in 2020 for three and half months considering the outbreak of Covid-19 and in 2022 for additional three months because of the strike in the education sector. Some variations in the budget were also needed, for example, addressing the need of the preschool “Nëna Kabrini” from Prizren to renovate the balcony by providing funds for a technical study. The unspent funds from RA3-Public Private Partnership related to activities on Collegium have been modified and spent according to current needs of the preschools related to the Project.

The operational structures of the project are adequate to ensure the implementation of activities. The project team is composed of a Project Coordinator (international RTM staff), RTM Officer (local staff) and one administrative officer (local staff). ~~The position of administrative officer is at the moment vacant.~~ In the third year of the Project implementation, a new Project Coordinator (international RTM staff) and one international Intern started to work on the Project. The change in the Project Coordination didn't affect the project implementation, moreover, it had added value considering the experience in projects on early childhood education funded by AICS ⁶. The project team is responsible for the overall implementation of the Project, coordination with international and local partners and stakeholders, as well as for: (a) visibility and communication; (b) monitoring actions; (c) events organization and logistics. The project team has direct and continuous communication with the beneficiaries to support them in implementing the project activities. This represents a good team with experience in managing projects.

The project has functional monitoring and steering arrangements. A Project Committee with the participation of project partners has been established and has regular meetings. All six local project partners are represented. The Committee held eight meetings: one meeting in 2019, one in 2020, four in 2021 and two in 2022. The agendas and minutes are available for every meeting. Planning and adjusting activities, assessing different needs for implementation of activities because of Covid-19, the development of the Syllabus on REA, pedagogical exchanges, open days for parents and etc.

The implementation of some of the activities was delayed due to delays in the signature of the MoU with MESTI and the Covid-19 outbreak. The signing of the MoUs, especially with MESTI was delayed because of several reasons: a) internal bureaucracy requiring multiple meetings about the text of the MoU and required authorized translation; b) political instability in Kosovo with several government crises during the

⁶ AEPIC- Alliance for an Inclusive and Quality Early Childhood Education in West Bank, and PACE-Partnership for a New Approach to Early Childhood Education in Palestine.

first year of the project; and c) Covid-19 outbreak. The implementation of activities was adequately adjusted to respond to the delays.

The Project team submitted four reports: two Annual Reports in April 2021 and March 2022, and two Semi-Annual Reports in July 2021 and June 2022. The third Annual Report was under preparation during the evaluation mission. The reports provide relevant information and an overview of the implementation of Project activities and the planning of future activities. The Project, on its own initiative also submits monthly reports to the AICS Tirana.

The Project partners have good cooperation with the beneficiaries through discussing planned activities, and regular and direct communication which is much appreciated and valued by the beneficiaries. Financial management related to all project activities is with RTM. The three local partners from the non-profit sector are also responsible for managing one portion of the budget: CIPOF - EUR 24,910; SHJ -EUR 18,290; and Botanika EUR 16,450. One part of these amounts is for a 50% fee of one preschool staff in 50%, responsible for disseminating the project results. The instalments are transferred according to the MoUs and the local project partners submit their reports regularly. The local project partners have experience in project work, and this is an extra added value for them. The project partners are closely involved in the Project work through the Committee and in planning and implementing all activities.

The outputs are produced cost-efficiently within the available project budget and human resources. The use of the preschools' office space for training is added value. The project team is also involved in moderating the trainings, which is directly related to the successful implementation of project activities, efficient management and administration. The trainers come from international partner organizations, which bring their direct experience and lessons learnt.

EFFECTIVENESS

In line with the intervention logic, the delivery of outputs corresponds directly to the performance of activities, with some adjustments caused mostly by the Covid-19 pandemic, and all outputs are implemented with sound quality. However, some of the deliverables under output 3) Public-private partnership – Reform of the National Council of Preschool Institutions (“Collegium”) explained below, remain to be delivered after the end of the project.

Under output 1) Professional Development –the delivery of outputs after the initial delays was according to the plan, with adjustments in implementation modalities and postponement of some activities to mitigate the obstacles caused by Covid-19. One KPI researcher and four professors from the UNIPRISHTINA attended the first International Digital Study Group on the REA organized by FRCH. Four professors from the UNIPRISHTINA visited the Reggio Emilia region and during this visit, among others, the Syllabus on REA was discussed and most of its content was finalized. The Syllabus is a 15-week long module, 100 hours (4 credits), that will be officially available to IV-year students in Early Childhood Education in the 2023/2024 academic year.

One on site mission to establish a direct dialogue between preschool and Reggio Emilia and to reassess the needs on documentary material, educational space, school structure, teaching materials and other needs was organized. The relevant MESTI office officially accredited the 2-year training programme in December

2021. This allows participants - educators to have the credits for their professional update and training to be officially recognized. A series of trainings for all 15 pilot preschools with participation of one director and one educator and representatives of project partners were organized, which in accordance with above stated accreditation will be officially recognized: i) one in person general training and 20 on-line trainings on REA in preschool education; ii) three on-line meetings with PAUSE-Atelier dei Saponi - FRCH on food and kitchen and five days in person training (same presentation presented in one day for participants of different preschools); iii) four on-line meetings with REMIDA-Creative Reuse Centre – FRCH on sustainability and reuse of waste material for recreational and educational purposes, and five days in person training (same presentation presented in one day for participants of different preschools); iv) two on line trainings from the training cycle on “Educational project, educational space and participation of families”, and two webinars on “The 100 languages and the culture of the atelier” and “Graphics and children”. In-person meetings/training with Reggio Children pedagogist on the practical aspect of REA were also organized for all preschools and project partners. Three texts/pedagogical materials were translated into Albanian and Serbian language, printed and disseminated to pilot preschools and local partners. The texts/pedagogical materials are also available online. Three study visits were organized, two study visits for the preschools and local partners, and one study visit for the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education. After the study visits, REMIDA follow-up training was organized, providing the participants with further enhanced skills in using the atelier and digital tools.

In producing the output 2), Good practices, in the preschool “Nëna Kabrini” in Prizren, out of its two identified priorities – renovation of the balcony and the canteen, the refurbishing of the canteen was finalized as a higher priority, easier undertaking considering the current Project’s modalities and as more affordable at the moment; in “Shtëpia e Diellit” in Pejë/Peć the external courtyard was redeveloped; in “Skronjat”, in Prishtinë/Priština a mini-atelier and a canteen were completed; in “Ardhmëria Jonë” in Ferizaj/Uroševac, a mini atelier was developed and the square and dining room were redeveloped. In “SOS”, the atelier is designed outside the main building as a separate construction. Because of the overall renovation of the preschool in the preschool in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica under the World Bank Project on energy efficiency, the adaption of the space for the atelier and the didactical material was delivered at the end of January 2023 and the official inauguration took place on 09 February 2023. Six pedagogical exchanges between the preschools and preschool

In the delivery of output 3) Public-private partnership – Reform of the National Council of Preschool Institutions (“Collegium”) with the participation of public, private and community-based preschools, the Work Plan for reforming and re-launching of Collegium from a participatory perspective was developed. Two workshops for approval of the roadmap and a workshop about the creation of the Statute were held. The ToR/Statute for the Collegium was drafted with the Project support and endorsed by MESTI end of January 2023. The implementation of the National Campaign on the importance of the Collegium and the implementation of two integrated pilot initiatives were partially implemented. The first pilot initiative was organizing a conference on REA with all the directors who are members of the Collegium and the second pilot initiative was the field visits in the PEDAKOS pilot schools.

The Collegium members held visits/exchanges to four pilot preschools and talked with the director and educator who participated in the project. They had a guided tour of the preschools, where directors explained the work with a focus on the atelier. The National Campaign on the importance of the Collegium has not been implemented because the ToR/Statute for the Collegium was adopted towards the end of the

Project. To implement pedagogical exchanges and workshops, the Project Coordinator and the Project Officer held 50 meetings with the preschools, providing added value and in-house support to the preschools, especially in understanding how to apply the REA.

The KPI published its first Scientific Report in March 2022, providing assessment and recommendations, while the second Scientific Report was drafted in February 2023.

At the request of the 15 pre-schools, Covid-19 protection items were also purchased and distributed to the preschools.

Evidence from documentary sources and stakeholders⁷ confirmed that the quality of outputs is sound. In particular, the preschools expressed their content about the constructions of the ateliers, canteens and external courtyards and bringing new opportunities in their use. Interlocutors (preschools and UNIPRISHTINA-Faculty of Education) were particularly excited about designing and equipping of the atelier because it is a new concept not known in Kosovo, especially in the public preschools. The study visits in Italy were fundamental for participants in this project to understand the REA and methodology through observing and visiting the preschools and environments where the approach is implemented and interacting with school staff: educators, atelieristas and staff in charge of the canteen service. The directors and educators expressed positive experience in using the new techniques and designed ateliers will enable them to bring the REA into their daily work directly. Though the participants initially found it difficult to understand the core of the new concept through the online presentations, this obstacle has been overcome with in-person training and direct discussion with the trainers. Organizing training in different preschools across Kosovo is assessed by participants as good practice. Most positively and with the biggest impact were assessed the study visits, both from an organizational and professional aspect, helping directors and teachers to understand the REA.

IMPACT

The three project outputs will influence advancing the quality of preschool education in Kosovo. The impact can be assessed as direct and immediate, and indirect impact. The Project has a direct impact on the pilot preschools and their staff, strengthening the formal education and in-service training and re-functioning of the Collegium.

The main impact of the project is that it shows there can be a different approach in working with the children in the preschools, which will place a child and the child's needs in the center. It has a direct impact on the pilot preschools and their staff - 15 preschools and a total of 30 preschool staff (one director and one educator per preschool). This can be concluded through direct observation and comparison with the Interim Evaluation held in January 2021. The REA approach is introduced in 15 preschools and directors with a direct impact on increasing educators' skills. Now, directors and teachers have a good understanding of implementing REA in everyday work. In 2021, most of the interviewed preschool staff expressed concern

⁷ 1) RTA Report Year 1, April 2021; 2) RTA Semester Report Year 2, 7 July 2021; 3) Meetings with partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries held from 10 January to 13 January 2022; 4) Direct insights of organized in person meetings/training with Reggio Children pedagogist on practical aspect of Reggio Emilia approach held on 14 December 2021 and workshop about Collegium held on 09 December 2021; 5) Evaluations from REMIDA and PAUSE trainings; 6) Text books.

and the need for additional training about implementing the REA in everyday work mostly because the trainings were held online; now, all interviewed showed confidence in applying REA and understanding how to implement REA on guidelines and official Curriculum. All preschools started with the observation and documentation process as one characteristic of the REA, which is much approved, especially after the study visit in Italy, training and pedagogical exchanges. Though the implementation of activities was done with guidance from the project team, the positive impact of the training and the study visit was evident. The preschools started with the recycling of materials, involvement of parents in activities, use of digital equipment and others. The KPI in its two Scientific Researches also recognizes the improved implementation of REA during the third year of the Project.

The Syllabus on REA is developed and will have an impact on the development of the student's skills and knowledge during high education and will provide future preschool educators to have formal education on REA. The Professor who teaches "Step by Step Methodology" in the second year of the faculty, even now is implementing some parts of REA, reuse of materials and waste for educational purposes as a direct impact of the Project outputs considering that the Professor has attended the international digital study group training provided by the Project.

UNIPRISHTINA, with the project support, developed the Curriculum for in-service training comprised of six modules, three days for each module. The in-service training will be delivered by four professors and directors/educators who were part of the Project and will provide future increasing of knowledge and improving skills on REA.

The signed MoU between PEDAPOS and MESTI provides that the training for preschool staff under this project will be recognized as a part of their mandatory in-service training, which will contribute to educators meeting their annual requirements for in-service training.

The Project has a direct impact on the re-functioning of the Collegium as a sectoral coordination body through the development of the Work Plan and its ToR/Statute. With the new ToR/Statute, all three types of preschools – public, private⁸ and community based will be represented. This will provide a ground for the preschool education sector to openly discuss issues of common interest. MESTI, as one of the local partners, has direct access to the Project's outcomes and is directly involved in the planning and implementation of activities. With this, MESTI has tools to use the Project's outcomes on policy and strategic levels.

The project's outputs contribute to achieving the overall ongoing reform of preschool education in Kosovo and the National Strategy for Development 2022-2030 and the Strategy for Early Childhood Education 2022-2026, where early childhood education is the first area of intervention.

The results obtained from the second KPI Scientific Research may further provide a qualitative analysis of the Project's impact.

⁸ Considering the number of private preschools, they will be represented through the Association of Private Preschools.

The President of FRCH, Crisitan Fabi, has been entrusted by the Ministry and UNICEF with leading the process of drafting the new preschool curriculum providing the Project's indirect impact on overall early childhood education reform in Kosovo.

In achieving the Project's GO "Support public institutions and private actors in the implementation of the KEPS – Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 relating to the preschool component (0-6 years)" and SO "To increase the quality of educational services offered by public, private and community-based preschools", the intervention depends on and at the same time influence the overall policy and reform related to early childhood education in Kosovo.

Considering the four SO indicators, according to the data for the first half of 2022, the PEDAKOS accomplished or is near to reaching all four indicators. The Project met the OS1 – "Preschool spending/total public spending for education", with a baseline (2016) of 1,8% and a target of 2,4%. In 2022 it was 3,7%. The baseline (2014) for OS2 – "Early Child Development Index" is 83,4% with a target of 88%. In 2022 it was 91,3%. The Project met OS3 – "Number of preschools offering child-centred services" through the 15 pilot preschools, while for OG4 – "The average number of in-service training" is still 20 hours per year.

In this regard, it should be mentioned the direct Project impact on increasing significantly the number of children in the pilot preschool in Gjakovë from the RAE community (from 9 to 15 in the 3-4 years class and from 14 to 16 in the 5-6 years class), which happened after the promotional activities that this preschool had in the neighborhood.

Concerning the GO indicators, according to Early Childhood Development Index, the public expenditure for education in Kosovo is still 4.3 % of the GDP⁹ (OS1), while according to the OECD, the gross rate of inclusion of children in preschool education 0<5 is 6.7%, whereas, at the pre-primary level, the situation is significantly better where the gross rate of enrolment of children is 88%. In general, in all forms of preschool education, only 19.5% of children are included in preschool education, well below the OECD average¹⁰ (over 87% for children 3-5 and 36% for children 0-2)¹¹.

SUSTAINABILITY

There are several positive aspects from the sustainability perspective, deriving both from the policy level and directly from the project. On a policy level, the National Strategy for Development 2022-2030 and the Strategy for Early Childhood Education 2022-2026 place early childhood education as a priority. The new Draft Law on Education lists different official methodologies, including REA, that preschools may use in their work and regulates different types of preschools. In addition, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with UNICEF and an international expert from Reggio Emilia early childhood education (ECE) system, is drafting a new Curriculum for early childhood education which provides a good basis for increasing the quality in this sector.

Considering the outputs delivered by the Project, the official accreditation of the Syllabus on REA for future educators, will provide formal education on this approach. On the other hand, the developed in-service

⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/what-we-do/early-childhood-development>

¹⁰ Education Statistics in Kosovo 2020-2021

¹¹ https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_2_Enrolment_childcare_preschool.pdf

training Curriculum and readiness of the Training Centre of the Faculty for Education to provide the in-service training guarantees continuous training on REA available both for those who were part of the Project and those who were not. Three publications on REA were made available in local languages throughout the project. They can represent a good tool to support training activities. In addition to that, a dozen of REA books and publications were purchased for the UNIPRISHTINA for the bibliography of the course and consultation for students

For the implementation of the training, the UNIPRISHTINA should provide funds from the MESTI or/and the municipal directorates of education. UNIPRISHTINA is looking for the possibility of signing an MoU with MESTI for which MESTI is interested, while the funds from the municipal directorates can be obtained through public calls from each municipality. For the moment, UNIPRISHTINA is looking for the opportunity of signing an MoU with Prishtina municipality.

The 15 pilot preschools are equipped with ateliers, canteens and courtyards, which preschool educators and children can use in the future. The ateliers, even now in some preschools, are used by educators who are not part of the project. The educators from the pilot preschools are already implementing aspects of the children-centred approach with the common understanding that REA can be implemented along the official Curriculum, especially with the current guidelines for children aged 3-5. The implementation of activities by the preschools showed that although some preschools implemented the same activities, they were comfortable with using REA. Also, some preschools implemented activities that were assessed as better for their region. For example, picking vegetables in the activity involving parents instead of making pasta, which shows that preschools assessed and considered how to implement REA in a way that will be best for their children.

Another positive outcome of the project is that there is a positive momentum around REA in Kosovo at a time when the drafting of the new legislation is in its final stage, a new Curriculum is drafted and early childhood education is the focus of the relevant strategic documents and donors, such as UNICEF, EU and World Bank.

The re-establishing of the Collegium was supported by MESTI and preschools. Although Collegium as a body was functioning in a non-formal way, now having its official ToR/Statute and Work Plan should provide a ground for discussion of all issues relevant to the work of all types of preschools (public, private, community based and public-private) and the early childhood education.

Several challenges exist to the project's sustainability. The first issue relates to the capacity of the beneficiaries to build on the skills acquired from the project. With exception of one preschool, where three staff members took part in the project, in the rest of the preschools, only two staff members – the director and one educator participated in the project and they should share their knowledge on this new approach. In some preschools, directors and educators find it easy to share knowledge among all educators, but that is not the case in all preschools. The need for additional training, especially on observation and documentation, for the staff that was part of the Project and for the staff that was not involved is crucial for the project's sustainability. The draft Curriculum for in-service training will be a good ground for that. How the provision of the funds by MESTI and municipal directorates on education will function is yet to be seen. Also, appropriate participation in all types of preschools: public, private, community-based and public-private should be provided. Another issue is that this pilot project was implemented only in 15 preschools, out of 49 public and more than 83 private and community-based preschools, which raises a question about

disseminating the knowledge across other preschools. The capacities of the Department of Pre-school Education for steering and implementing the legal and strategic reform in the preschool system and implementing the ongoing and planned project is among crucial issues in the reform process.

As stated above, the re-functioning of the Collegium is one of the positive aspects of the sustainability of the Project. Considering that it will have a new composition and a new Statute, it is important to ensure that the Collegium will undertake its responsibilities, considering that some of the preschools expressed concern about how this body will undertake its formal responsibility and provide cooperation and coordination among all types of preschools. The election of new representatives within the Collegium and institutionalization can represent a key step in this direction.

VISIBILITY

The Project's visibility and communication action is two-fold: in Italy through the media agency Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa and in Kosovo mainly through the media agency KosovaPress. Both media partners created dedicated online pages and/or products for the project. The Project provides an overview of its visibility and communication activities through its reports. The accent on media reports was mostly on media in Kosovo. RTM and partners regularly shared information on the Project activities on their social media – Facebook.

For example, the signing of the MoUs with MESTI and Education Directorate of Municipality Gjilan/Gnilanje, the inauguration of ateliers/canteens/courtyard, the start of REMIDA mission, donation of equipment for the atelier in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, video stories and etc, are part of the Project's visibility and communication. A plaque with the name of the project and donor is placed in each inaugurated atelier/canteens/courtyard, except in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, considering that the equipment was donated towards the end of the project.

HORIZONTAL ISSUES

On horizontal issues, the major value is that the Project had the merit and ability to work with and make different types of schools, institutions, cultures and religious and ethnic backgrounds work together, activating exchange processes that did not exist before, above all at the level of "public school that dialogues with private schools" and of preschools that provide services to majority communities with others that relates to non-majority ones.

The Project does not have a direct impact on gender or environmental issues. However, from the gender perspective, it tackles the education sector, notably the preschool sector which employs mostly women. Also, it provides equal opportunities for both genders, though considering the situation and tradition in Kosovo, the education sector is mostly related to women's engagement.

From the environmental perspective, the Project provides knowledge and ideas on using recycled materials and waste for educational purposes. This gives an opportunity for the Project to consider other interventions, and in the future, interventions strengthen the link with environmental issues.

CONCLUSIONS

The Project is relevant and responds to the needs of the children, parents and preschools to increase the quality of educational services offered by public, private and community-based preschools for children (3-5 years) through the REA. It is in line with the National Strategy for Development 2022-2030 and the Education Strategy 2022-2026 on the part related to preschool education. There is a strong alignment between the Project and the SDGs, particularly SDG n.4 "Quality Education" and its targets 4.2¹², 4.a¹³ and 4.c.

The Project is implemented in cooperation with six local partners, of which three are preschool non-profit associations. This partnership provides solid institutional support and representation of the direct beneficiaries. The selection of the fifteen pilot preschools across the whole Kosovo is a composition of public, private and community-based preschools, also addressing the representation of different communities (Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian), which is an added value to the project.

The project is implemented effectively, and cost-effectively within the approved budget. There is a good ratio between funds spent for the realization of project activities and funds for other Project costs, which contributes to achieving project objectives. Although the implementation of project activities started with a delay and the implementation modalities were affected by the Covid-19 outbreak, the project managed to overcome these obstacles, and the implementation of the project outputs, with minor exceptions, was according to the plan. Because of delays caused by Covid-19 and the strike in the education sector, the Project has been extended twice, in 2021 and 2022, each for three and a half months.

Numerous project outputs are delivered, providing a sound ground for impact and sustainability.

The three project outputs will influence advancing the quality of preschool education in Kosovo. The Project has a direct impact on the pilot preschools and their staff - 15 preschools and a total of 30 preschool staff (one director and one educator per preschool) in introducing REA in working with the children in the preschools. In that respect, the renovation activities in the pre-schools and the exchange of good practices provide that the pilot pre-schools can already implement the REA. UNIPRISHTINA developed two important educational documents: the Syllabus on REA from the academic year 2023/2024 will be an optional subject, and the Curriculum for in-service training on REA. The Syllabus will impact the development of the student's skills and provide future preschool educators with formal education on REA, while the Curriculum for in-service training is the basis for continuous education on REA for the preschool staff. To implement the in-service training, the Faculty of Education should provide funds from the MESTI or/and from the municipal directorates of education.

The signed MoU between PEDAKOS and MESTI provided that the training for preschool staff under this project is recognized as a part of their mandatory in-service training, which will contribute to educators meeting their annual requirements for in-service training. The Project has a direct impact on the re-functioning of the Collegium as a sectoral coordination body through the development of the Work Plan and its ToR/Statute. MESTI, as one of the local partners, has direct access to the Project's outcomes and is

¹² 4.2 "By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes."

¹³ 4.a "Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all."

directly involved in the planning and implementation of activities. With this, MESTI has tools to use the Project's outcomes on policy and strategic levels.

There are several positive aspects from the sustainability perspective, deriving both from the policy level and directly from the project. On a policy level, the National Strategy for Development 2022-2030 and the Education Strategy 2022-2026 place early childhood education as a priority, while the new Draft Law on Education lists different official methodologies, including REA, that preschools may use in their work and regulates different types of preschools. The cooperation between the Project, RTM and Project partners with MESTI, UNIPRISHTINA and KPI has shown to be useful and fruitful, laying the ground for further exchange.

Several challenges exist to the project's sustainability. PEDAKOS was implemented only in 15 pilot preschools, out of 49 public and more than 83 private and community-based preschools, which raises a question about disseminating the knowledge across other preschools. Training on REA in the pilot preschools, for the staff that was part of the Project and for the staff that was not involved, is crucial for the project's sustainability. Appropriate participation in all types of preschools: public, private, community-based and public-private should be provided. Re-functioning the Collegium is one of the positive aspects of the sustainability of the Project. With the new composition and ToR/Statute, it is important to ensure that the Collegium will undertake its responsibilities. Further sustainability of the Project can be assured by strengthening the Pre-school Division in MESTI, which can absorb and undertake the ongoing reform in the preschool education sector and implement the donors' support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To Volontari nel Mondo, project partners and Italian Agency for Development Cooperation:

1. Volontari nel Mondo, together with the project partners and Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, should consider Phase II of the Project with the purpose to:
 - Enlarge the number of preschools and staff affected by the Reggio Emilia approach. Phase II should include interventions on both the training and/or technical assistance component and the Atelier component (i.e. renovation works, refurbishment, etc.).
 - Use the good practices from the pilot preschools and the experience of the educators and directors with the new group of preschools, and, at the same time, ensuring mentoring both categories for quality assurance.
 - To continue to work with all types of preschools (public, private, private-public, and community-based), serving all the communities in Kosovo including minority communities (RAE, Serb community).
 - To support the dissemination of informal and reused materials for educational purposes, through the creation of a national centre for the distribution of such materials to preschools inspired by the REMIDA experience.

2. Volontari nel Mondo, with the project partners, should assess any support in delivering the in-service training to University of Prishtina-Faculty of Education, in terms of planning the training, selection of trainees, funding, etc., with emphasis on the staff of the pilot preschools who were not affected by the PEDAPOS.
3. Volontari nel Mondo and Fondazione Reggio Children-Centro Loris Malaguzzi should guarantee quality assurance with their strong involvement in the first in-service training cohorts (i.e. through mentoring, quality monitoring etc.) given that these organizations co-developed the in-service training module with University of Prishtina-Faculty of Education.

To the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Volontari nel Mondo:

4. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Volontari nel Mondo should consider preschools' field visits and pedagogical exchanges as in-service training tools on a national level.

To the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

1. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should consider further support to the Collegium, as a body formally regulated for the first time, and should guarantee the election of new positions in the Collegium, in order to ensure a fresh start and a new composition of the body after the institutionalization.
2. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should consider strengthening the Pre-school Division by expanding its workforce and capacity-building, taking into consideration the priority given to the early childhood education sector by the Government and the various commitments made by the Ministry with various international actors (EU-IPA, World Bank, Reggio Emilia, etc.). In this case, Volontari nel Mondo, could consider supporting the capacity building/training of new civil servants.
3. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MESTI) should benefit from the technical support of the Reggio Emilia early childhood education (ECE) system at the policy level. This is given the expertise of the Reggio Emilia ECE system on integrated management, exchanges between MESTI and Reggio Emilia ECE system, and officially recognizing the Reggio Emilia ECE system as fruitful by MESTI.