



CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN COUNTRIES OF THE BALKAN REGION

Briefing
2017

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), as part of their support for The Balkan Forum's work in the Western Balkans. The content is the responsibility of Prof. Assoc. Dr. Tomi Treska and The Balkan Forum, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the donors (NED or RBF), their staff, associates or Board(s).





Executive Summary

It is very much evident how dependent our world and work is becoming on data, especially on genuine well collected data. As this is becoming the new “power” to justify decisions or produce valuable feedback for profitable or non-profitable purposes, this consideration makes the situation in the Balkan region even more complex.

The Balkan’s complexity in ethnicity, language and religion has been translated throughout the years by a variety of circumstances. As the OECD has reported, it is argued that as there is no majority ethnic group in South East Europe as a whole; all are, in some sense, minorities, and should be regarded as such. On the other hand, in long term policy and strategy, it is important to “think synoptically about the Southern Balkans as a whole”².

It is remarkable to see how the Balkan countries, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are developing their collaborations through international conventions and goals on education, putting aside the stigma of nationalism that have had an adverse effect on the image of these countries. This study uses a mixed approach using a “birds eye view” of trends and developments in education in each country and regional collaboration and initiatives.

The international institutions presence in these countries is seen as having a positive influence on education, at country and region level. The European Union (EU) is the main actor and goal for these 8 countries, by setting the standard to aim for, whatever the actual situation and pace of progress. Nevertheless, the major feedback, for all the countries in this study, is “*Education remains a high risk sector for corruption and political influence, especially in higher education.*”³

¹ Reviews of National Policies for Education, South Eastern Europe, Volume 1, 2003

² Katarina Tomasevski, (UN Special Reporter on The Right to Education), Preliminary Report submitted to the UN Commission on human Rights, 1999.

³ Report by EU Commission on Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016

I ntroduction

The political and geographical changes that took place in the region in the 1990s were very similar to a “wave” that involved all 8 Balkan countries profiled in this research. *The development of the national education systems of the Western Balkan countries since the break-up of Yugoslavia has been impacted by war and ethnic conflict, by the process of nation-building, democratisation and by European integration. These developments have been accompanied by a steep reduction in government funding and the partial disintegration of education systems following the war, integration into the Bologna process and the European higher education area, and by structural reforms in the public sector which affected education.*



ALBANIA

Albania is a member of the United Nations (UN), North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). On June 27, 2014 Albania received the European Union Candidate Status⁴.

Albania is focused on developing and aligning its education policies and practices with European and international standards, in particular the European Union’s Education Benchmarks for 2021 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4) - Education 2030.

According to the Albania 2016 Report - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions by the European Commission (EC), *Albania is moderately prepared in the field of education and culture. Some progress has been made in education, especially by adopting the pre-university education strategy and implementing the higher education reform. Further efforts are needed to develop liaison with employers, continuous curriculum development and integrated work-based learning schemes.*

Albania has adopted the pre-university education strategy⁶ and has started implementing the law on higher education⁷. However, the quality of education needs to be evaluated and improved, especially since emigration by young, skilled people is high while job opportunities are limited. As PISA results indicate, Albania is far below OECD and EU average in terms of basic skills of 15 year olds.

The Law on Higher Education was amended by the Albanian Parliament on September 2015⁸. The general aim is to structure the Albanian education system according to the Western European model. The whole education system is primarily unitary. All education levels are provided by public and private institutions and faculties. (After research by the Ministry and Instat, we cannot specifically define progress as the data are not regularly updated in between private/public year on year for all levels of education).

⁴ Albania and EU - <http://em-al.org/sq/albanias-eu-membership-process/>

⁵ Albania 2016 Report by the European Commission - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf

⁶ Albanian Pre-University Education Strategy 2014 – 2020 - <https://arsimi.gov.al/al/arsimi/shkolla/strategjia-e-zhvillimit-te-arsimit-parauniversitar-2014-2020>

⁷ Albanian Law on Higher Education - https://arsimi.gov.al/files/userfiles/arsimilarte/ligjet/Ligj_80_2015_22_07_2015.pdf

⁸ Albanian Law on Higher education - http://www.qbz.gov.al/botime/fletore_zyrtare/2015/PDF-2015/164-2015.pdf

The new law on Vocational Education and Training (VET)⁹, and related legislation and quality assurance mechanisms are yet to be adopted. The lack of a modernized VET legal framework is a major constraint for effectively implementing a number of measures in the jobs and skills strategy. Education remains a high risk sector for corruption and political influence, especially in higher education.¹⁰



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), on the accession process to be part of World Trade Organisation (WTO) and aspires to join North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to participate actively in the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training and hosted the 2016 Ministerial meeting in Sarajevo. The country continues to participate also in the external dimension of the Erasmus+ programme and its Western Balkans Youth Window, as well as in policy support networks and electronic platforms.

At the European Council summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina was identified as a potential candidate for European Union (EU) Membership¹¹. However, the lack of effective coordination at state level remains an issue of concern and it may put at risk the country's full participation in the EU's education programme. According to the *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016 Report* - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions by the *European Commission (EC)*, during 2016, there was some progress in education. A state-level policy document setting priorities for developing higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2016-2026 was adopted in March¹². Efforts to establish national education statistics continue.

Coordination between bodies responsible for quality assurance is weak at the level of pre-school, primary and secondary education. In higher education, coordination and cooperation between the state-level Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance and the *Republika Srpska* Agency for Accreditation should be improved. Further efforts should be made to establish national education statistics. Cooperation between education institutions and the business sector still needs to be improved. The relevance of education to the labour market remains weak.

Implementation of the action plan for implementing the 'baseline qualifications framework' has not started yet due to the lack of a state-level intersectorial commission responsible for implementing the action plan. An effective coordination mechanism has not been established by the Federation and the two existing coordination bodies are still acting in parallel. The education sector, especially in higher education, remains a high-risk area for corruption and political interference. (Referring to the conclusions on the report and document on the Priorities 2016-2020)

⁹ Albanian Law on Vocational Education Training - http://www.qbz.gov.al/botime/fletore_zyrtare/2017/PDF-2017/43-2017.pdf

¹⁰ Albania 2016 Report by the European Commission - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf

¹¹ BiH integration process in EU - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/bosnia-herzegovina_en

¹² Priorities for 2016 – 2026 Higher Education Development in BiH - http://www.mcp.gov.ba/org_jedinice/sektor_obrazovanje/dokumenti/strateski_doc/default.aspx?id=7565&langT_ag=bs-BA



CROATIA

Croatia is EU member country since July 1st 2013, also a United Nations (UN) member, a Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe OSCE member, Council of Europe (CoE) country member as well as World Trade Organisation (WTO) and North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) member.

Croatia is taking ambitious steps to improve the quality of education. While access to education remains an issue, the quality of early childhood education has been addressed by the introduction of a national curriculum in the 2015/2016 school year. However, an important factor is the insufficient number of kindergarten places in cities and smaller villages. This hinders access, despite a modest 6.4 % increase in the number of preschool institutions in the past 5 years¹³.

A comprehensive structural and curricular reform of primary and lower secondary education which started in 2015 is tackling basic skills deficits. The reform entails a gradual transition from the current eight-year system to a nine-year system and a large-scale upskilling of teachers. In parallel, a significant investment programme, financed through EU funds, was begun in 2014 to raise the level of digitization in 60 % of primary and secondary schools by 2020.

The level of participation in VET at upper secondary level in Croatia is one of the highest in the EU, at 71.1 % against an EU average of 48.9 % in 2013. However, the employment rate of upper secondary graduates is one of the lowest. What is more, about 45 % of these graduates are employed in jobs outside their field of education, and around one third below their skill level. One third of employer's report difficulties in recruiting suitable employees. Public sector employers highlight the shortage of candidates with the right level of qualifications (49 %), while private sector employers struggle to find candidates with relevant work experience (43.5 %)¹⁴.

In higher education, the current design of tuition fees and scholarships aims at increasing enrolment in fields of high labour demand. However, the admission quotas for study programmes set by public institutions are not in line with market demand. In addition to labour market conditions, outdated curricula and limited opportunities for high quality work-based learning also contribute to the poor employment outcomes of recent graduates at all levels.



GREECE

Greece is a member of UN, NATO, and member of the EU since January 1st 1981 and Eurozone since January 1st 2001¹⁵. Since 2011 an economic crisis in Greece has been accompanied by dramatic social and economic changes, with sharp falls in real incomes, increased unemployment and poverty and sometimes material deprivation.

Also since 2011, there have been a number of education reforms across primary, secondary and tertiary education. At primary and secondary levels, the Greek education system underwent significant rationalisation between 2011 and 2014 in terms of: *number of students per classroom and number of teaching hours (closer to OECD standards); consolidation of school and pre-schools network; legal changes allowing more teacher mobility; Education offices, operating at the district level allocating these competencies to the*

¹³ Education and Training Monitor 2016 Croatia -

https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-hr_en.pdf

¹⁴ EU Country Report Croatia 2016 - https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2016-european-semester-country-report-croatia_en

¹⁵ European Union, Country Profile, Greece - https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/greece_en#greece_in_the_eu (accessed November 5th 2017)

directorates of education (prefecture level) and the regional education directorates; the wage bill and operational expenditure have been significantly reduced, leading to a reduction of 24% in human resources costs.

At the post-secondary level, there were reforms in governance of higher education institutions such as: New regulations to improve internal governance and management; University councils were created; Responsibility for adult education was passed from the central to the regional level; The Hellenic Quality Assurance Authority carried out an evaluation of all the university departments and almost all universities by the end of 2015. As part of the Athens project, which aimed at increasing efficiency gains and at consolidating the network of higher education institutions in Greece, it completed a wave of consolidation of higher education institutions, including some mergers, while also addressing the issues of the increase in the number of study fields and the geographical dispersion of departments and faculties¹⁶.

Since December 2015, two committees have been established by the ministry with a mandate to develop recommendations for education development and policy. They are the Committee on National and Social Dialogue on Education and the Parliamentary Committee on Educational Affairs.

Following new legislation strengthening its work-based component, vocational education training (VET) in Greece is in transition. The dual learning approach in VET was reinforced with the expansion of apprenticeships at secondary level and more work-based learning opportunities at post-secondary and tertiary levels¹⁷.



KOSOVO

Kosovo is not yet a member of the United Nations (UN). North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has been leading a peace-support operation in Kosovo – the Kosovo Force (KFOR) – since June 1999.

Among the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) largest field operations, the Mission in Kosovo runs a wide array of activities, from support to the functioning of democratic institutions and civic participation in decision-making, to the promotion of human rights and

the rule of law.

Since 2013 the Council of Europe (CoE) has intensified cooperation in Kosovo, in line with CoE neutrality and taking account of democratic developments and relations with neighbouring countries in the region. Kosovo is on the way towards membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). On October 27, 2015 A Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Union and Kosovo was signed.

Education in Kosovo has been continuously identified as a priority for governments during the last decade. The general education system is governed by a number of laws which regulate the functioning of the education system¹⁸. The umbrella law for pre-university education was approved in 2011.

One other important piece of legislation that governs the education at the municipal level is the law on education in municipalities of Kosovo. The law was approved as an attempt to decentralize education competencies from central level to municipal level. The law prescribed a set of responsibilities which would be devolved at municipal level including school staff hiring, management of school staff

¹⁶ OECD, Education Policy in Greece - <https://www.esos.gr/sites/default/files/articles-legacy/education-policy-in-greece-preliminary-assessment-2017.pdf>

¹⁷ Spotlight on VET Greece - <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8076>

¹⁸ Kosovo Law on higher education - <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2761>

Kosovo Pre-University Law - <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2770>

Kosovo Law on VET - https://aaaparr.rks-gov.net/documents/Ligji_per_afesimin_profesional_2013_alb.pdf

performance, monitoring of education provision quality as well as managing activities related to school infrastructure. (*Law No.04/L-143–2012 on Adults Education and Training*). Progress in education and research is at an early stage. During the 2016, there has been no progress in the area of education and some minor progress in the area of research compared to the previous year, 2015¹⁹.

Expenditure per student is declining and infrastructure in schools is still poor. Rates of school enrolment are comparable with countries in the region, with the exception of access to pre-school education or early childhood education.

Around half of all students in upper secondary choose vocational education and Kosovo has received EU support to reform this sector. However, progress remains slow, the link to the labour market remains weak and programmes lack practical and applied courses with only a few being accredited by the National Qualifications Authority. The role and future of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education remain unclear. The government must ensure the implementation of the quality assurance strategy and establish quality assurance mechanisms at the municipal level.

The Accreditation Agency for Higher Education has revised its criteria, taking into account EU standards. This resulted in a reduction in the number of higher education institutions and accredited study programs, which gives a clear message on the importance of quality. However, the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes is only starting. Kosovo needs to improve transparency in the operation of higher education institutions to address politicised recruitment.



MACEDONIA

Macedonia is a member state of United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) but not yet a member of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia applied for EU membership in March 2004. The Commission issued a favourable opinion in November 2005, and the Council decided in December 2005 to grant the country candidate status.

In October 2009, the Commission recommended that accession negotiations be opened.

The country is *moderately* prepared in education. Some progress was made, in particular on a strategic framework. Children from non-majority communities and children with special needs continue to face barriers to accessing quality education. The legal framework for protecting human rights is broadly in line with European standards, but laws are sometimes not fully or correctly applied. The bodies involved in protecting and promoting human rights lack sufficient staff and financial resources, they coordinate poorly and, in some cases, are not considered independent²⁰. Legislation on education was aligned with the law on general administrative procedure. The consultation process for reforming the higher education law, involving students and professors, stalled. Pre-school education continues to be under-resourced. Systems in place for the professional development of teachers and career advancement in education require greater investment and better implementation.

The education and training system of the Republic of Macedonia aims at accomplishing its role in support to the development of a contemporary democratic society by strengthening the socio-economic, scientific, technological, cultural and civic aspects of society. The system aims to be the driver of an inclusive, innovation-based society and high quality of life. This lifelong learning system is anticipatory and responsive to the dynamic and mobile labour market and promotes the constructive dialogue of socially responsible stakeholders.

¹⁹ Kosovo 2016 Report by the European Commission - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_kosovo.pdf

²⁰ EU Country Report Macedonia 2016 - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20161109_strategy_paper_en.pdf

In 2015, the national qualifications framework (NQF) came into force and the country successfully presented its referencing report to the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group in February 2016²¹. Education remains a high risk sector for corruption and political influence, especially in higher education. The country continued to participate fully in the Erasmus+ Programme.



MONTENEGRO

Montenegro is a member state of United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The accession negotiations of European Union (EU) with Montenegro started on 29 June 2012.

Some progress has been made in education with the start of the revision of curricula based on learning outcomes. The 2016-2020 strategy for early and pre-school education was adopted in November 2016²². Curricula for secondary schools were revised based on learning outcomes. The challenge now is to improve the capacity of existing and future teachers to implement the new curricula and to revise teacher training programmes. A Strategy and Action Plan for the development of higher education 2016-2020 were adopted in July, covering, inter alia, a sustainable model of financing, and the harmonisation of education output with labour market needs²³.

Regarding the modernised programme for VET, priority areas for teacher training for 2016/17 were set, and are being addressed. Rationalising entry from vocational to higher education requires continuous effort, and consideration should be given to reducing the enrolment rates in VET. The 2016-2020 Strategy for lifelong career orientation and its 2016 action plan were adopted in June.

Montenegro continues to actively participate in the Erasmus+ programme.



SERBIA

Serbia is a member state of United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE). The country's current status is in the accession process to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Unlike other Western Balkan partners, Serbia does not aspire to join the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). However, the country is deepening its political dialogue and cooperation with NATO on issues of common interest. Support for democratic, institutional and defence reforms is an important focus of NATO's partnership with Serbia.

On 21 January 2014, the 1st Intergovernmental Conference Search took place, signaling the formal start of Serbia's accession negotiations into the European Union (EU). Serbia is at a good level of preparation in the area of education. Some progress was made in curriculum development. The implementation of the education action plan is progressing, although with some delays. Additional investment in education is most needed at pre-school and basic education levels.

²¹ Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) - <http://mrk.mk/?p=619&lang=en>

²² Strategy for Early and Pre-School Education - https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/UNICEF_-_Strategija_PVO_u_CG_-_ENG.pdf

²³ Strategy and Action Plan for the development of higher education 2016-2020 - <http://www.mna.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rId=247445&rType=2>

Reforms for the training of primary and secondary school teachers are planned and should focus on improving basic and transferable skills of pupils.

There has been progress in curriculum development in VET to better meet the needs of the labour market. The plans for reducing VET enrolment should continue. The national qualifications framework needs to be finalized and cross-referenced with the European Qualifications Framework; the relevant law is currently being drafted.

The ongoing reform of higher education needs to put particular emphasis on the relevance of its study programmes. Emigration by young, skilled people remains high.

An Office for the Recognition of Foreign Diplomas was opened in October 2015. So far, 500 foreign diplomas were recognised, contributing to graduates' employment opportunities. Education remains a high risk sector for corruption, especially in higher education.

Serbia continues to successfully participate in the international dimension of the Erasmus+ programme. In March, a government decision was adopted to nominate the existing Tempus Foundation as the national agency in charge of fully participating in Erasmus+, on equal footing with Member States²⁴.

²⁴ https://www.ceepus.info/public/nco/ncoinformation_main.aspx?Country=RS#nbb

Facts and Figures

**Limitation: Data management and seeding is a common problem among the 8 countries of this study as there is very little data available from reliable international data sources.*

1: Croatia and Greece, being members of the EU, have different approaches (because of their membership of the EU) on education, national politics, strategies, plans, funding and monitoring. nevertheless, the aim for the 8 countries remains *at least attaining the EU standards* on Education.

2: The two main groups of regional cooperation are likely to be based on shared language:

- Albania and Kosovo;
- Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Macedonia.

3: Cross Border Cooperation, in the EU context, uses an approach mainly based on structural fund principles such as multi-year programming, partnerships, and co-financing, adapted to take into account the specificities of the European Commission's external rules and regulations to facilitate the alignment of country politics towards EU standards.

CBC Assistance provided by the EU in the IPA Framework 2007- 2013							
In Mil €	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Croatia	9.7	14.7	15.9	15.6	15.8	16.1	16.7
Macedonia	4.1	4.0	4.3	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.2
Albania	6.6	8.5	9.8	9.9	10.1	10.2	10.6
BiH	3.9	4.9	5.2	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.9
Montenegro	3.9	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.4
Serbia	8.2	11.4	12.2	11.7	11.9	12.1	11.6
Kosovo	0	0	0	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9

** Source: Communication from the Commission, IPA 2011-2013, Com (2009) 543, 14th October 2009.*

***Implementation of IPA 2007-2013 is still underway.*

4: Due to war and the demographics of the Balkan countries, minorities are still a “hot point” especially in education. On the other hand, minorities could become a valuable asset to enhance and develop Cross Border Cooperation in the Balkans.

5: Good examples of Cross Border Cooperation:

1. Three former Yugoslav republics, in August 2010, joined to form *a common railway company* aimed at winning back some of the Central European freight business lost during the wars of the 1990s²⁵.
2. With the aim of bilateral relations with other countries seeking EU integration, Montenegro signed an *agreement* with Albania on cooperation in science, technology and culture in 2009.
3. Integration of the education systems and further steps towards developing a more unified national education system based on traditional national values, and European and contemporary education trends has been established between Kosovo and Albania.

²⁵ Corridor X - [http://www.railwaygazette.com/news/freight/single-view/view/joint-management-of-corridor-x-agreed.html?cHash=02d486a3c4602fc3fcad19563ebda020&sword_list\[\]=modernisation&no_cache=1](http://www.railwaygazette.com/news/freight/single-view/view/joint-management-of-corridor-x-agreed.html?cHash=02d486a3c4602fc3fcad19563ebda020&sword_list[]=modernisation&no_cache=1)

4. The Ministerial Meeting of *the Western Balkans Platform on Education*²⁶. This regional conference of education ministers is organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) and Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). Launched in 2012, the EU's initiative for cooperation in education with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia has encouraged regional cooperation and communication, exchange of good practice in the region and the EU and pooling of resources. It also provides a follow-up in terms of joint projects, studies and events²⁷.
5. *Regional Cooperation Council* (The RCC) is an all-inclusive, regionally owned and led cooperation framework. This framework engages RCC participants from South East Europe (SEE), members of the international community and donors. The Council addresses subjects of importance and of interest to the SEE, with a view to promoting and advancing the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region²⁸.

6: Donor coordination:

1. Albania: *The Education Excellence and Equity Programme (EEEP)* is an example of donor coordination where the leadership role is exercised by the Ministry of Education and Science. This programme supports the implementation of the first phase of the Government of Albania's sub-sector strategies - strategy for pre-university education, including implementation of Higher Education Reform and brings together the major donors – World Bank (WB), Council of Europe Bank, and European Investment Bank²⁹.
2. Bosnia and Herzegovina: *The Donor Coordination Forum* (DCF) was established in 2005. It is a semi-formal information sharing and coordination platform for twenty of the major donors in BiH, including the EC, the WB, the Netherlands, the United States/USAID; Austria/ADA, France, Germany/GTZ, Italy/IC, Norway, Spain/AECID, Sweden/SIDA, and UNICEF.
3. Croatia: There are no specific mechanisms of donor coordination in education in Croatia. While the overall donor coordination by Croatian authorities is spread between several Ministries, the European Community jointly with the WB still play an active and important role through their regular coordination meetings.
4. Kosovo: A large number of donors are providing support to the education sector in Kosovo. The EU and the WB have been the most important donors supporting Kosovo's education system since 1999 followed by other key development partners active in education and training such as the American, Austrian, British, Danish, Finnish, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Swiss Governments, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), UNICEF and others.
5. Macedonia: Effective donor coordination by Macedonia has been lacking, although there has been support by UNDP for aid coordination and the work of the Committee of Ministers for Coordination of Foreign Assistance.

²⁶ 6th Meeting of the Western Balkans Platform - https://ec.europa.eu/education/events/20170927-6th-meeting-western-balkans-platform_en

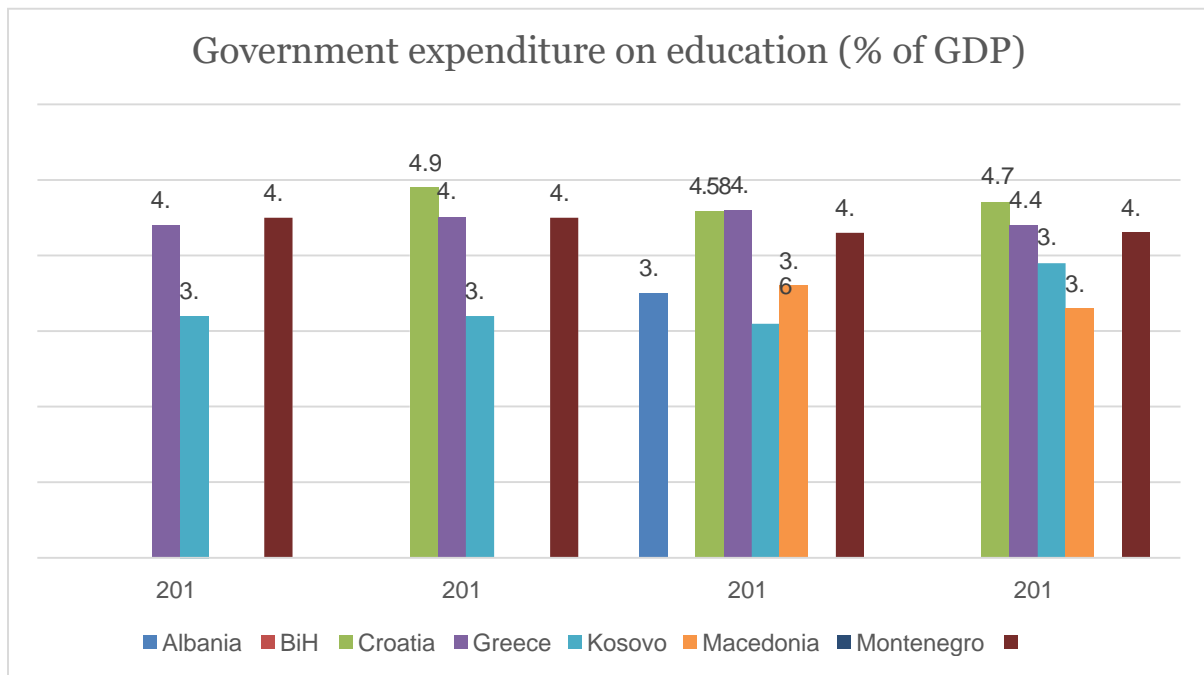
²⁷ Western Balkans Platform On Education and Training Progress Report, July 2016 - http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/international-cooperation/documents/western-balkans/progress-report-2016_en.pdf

²⁸ RCC - <http://www.rcc.int/>

²⁹ Donor coordination in education and training systems in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/projects-in-focus/donor-coordination/2-3_april_2009/working_group_education_discussion_paper_en.pdf

6. Montenegro: Key investors into Montenegro human capital development are the EU which has focused primarily on VET, with further support for qualifications development and active employment measures next in line for investment. The country is also an active partner in the TEMPUS programme. The World Bank is presently supporting the education authorities in development of quality of teaching and learning in schools and in the efficient use of budgetary resources. With the support of the WB and other donors, the Government has established relevant agencies to enhance and oversee education-related activities.
7. Serbia: The Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister's Office coordinate the Instrument for Pre Accession (IPA) programming as well as other international assistance on the side of the Serbian government. On the donors' side coordination meetings have been organised by UNDP and the WB. In the sector of education, donor coordination mechanisms are not yet in place.

Government expenditure on education (% of GDP)



**the above data are collected form the statistical institution of each country based on the data on UNESCO, UNDP, World Bank, EUROSTAT.*

Pupils and students enrolled																
	Albania		Bosnia		Croatia		Greece		Kosovo		Macedonia		Montenegro		Serbia	
	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers
In primary	328,100	31,000	287,729	23,824	317,312	32,429	N/A*		263,779	17,563	192,715	17,887	68,278	4,814	566,296	54,770
In secondary:	127,114	12,000	126,824	12,652	N/A	N/A			87,847	5,275	76,394	7,420	27,752	N/A	259,586	30,634
In Tertiary	139,607	N/A	100,333	1028	N/A	16 625			120,429	N/A	59,865	3,980	21,422	N/A	251,162	15,659
2016-2017																
*The Hellenic Statistical Authority informs users that the Press Releases concerning the Primary and Secondary Education Statistics, end of the school year 2015/2016,																

Snapshot of performance in science, reading and mathematics

Countries/economies with a mean performance/share of top performers above the OECD average Countries/economies with a share of low achievers below the OECD average								
Countries/economies with a mean performance/share of top performers/share of low achievers not significantly different from the OECD average								
Countries/economies with a mean performance/share of top performers below the OECD average Countries/economies with a share of low achievers above the OECD average								
	Science		Reading		Mathematics		Science, reading and mathematics	
	Mean score in PISA 2015	Average three-year trend	Mean score in PISA 2015	Average three-year trend	Mean score in PISA 2015	Average three-year trend	Share of top performers in at least one subject (Level 5 or 6)	Share of low achievers in all three subjects (below Level 2)
	Mean	Score dif.	Mean	Score dif.	Mean	Score dif.	%	%
OECD average	493	-1	493	-1	490	-1	15.3	13.0
Albania	427	18	405	10	413	18	2.0	31.1
Greece	455	-6	467	-8	454	1	6.8	20.7
Cyprus	412	-2	481	2	464	0	3.3	14.2
Montenegro	411	1	427	10	418	6	2.5	33.0
FYROM	384	m	352	m	371	m	1.0	52.2
Kosovo	378	m	347	m	362	m	0.0	60.4

³¹ <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>

C

onclusions and Recommendations

“Education remains a high risk sector for corruption and political influence, especially in higher education.”

Regional development and cross-border cooperation in the Western Balkans is one of the key areas of intervention by multilateral international institutions such as the EU, the WB, UNDP, Council of Europe, and EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development). Being in such a focus can be very positive for all the Balkan countries in developing skills, strategies and steps towards the EU.

Nevertheless, education, especially cross-border cooperation between Balkan countries have only been partially successful. The centralization of education is a policy found in all 8 Balkan countries listed in this analysis and reflects the insecure atmosphere perceived by the Balkan population (for more, see Balkan Barometer 2017³²). Namely:

- Infrastructure remains poor in all 8 countries, even though there is huge attention on developing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) on national level by different strategies and increased financing.
- Human resources continue to struggle with many problems with the status of “education worker” as low wages, low level of autonomy within their work, lack of personal development etc.
- Curricula is constantly changing with the changing of ministers.
- Funding in all the 8 countries remains very low, despite the aspiration to reach EU levels.
- Constant dropout due to poverty, infrastructure and local reasons is an important factor in all of the 8 countries. Identifying the extent of ESL in the Western Balkans is a challenge due to the lack of reliable data, a problem which is explicitly noted in some of the strategic documents (e.g. BH 2010, SRB 2020). For example, the Strategy for the development of education in Serbia until 2020 notes that “we do not have systematic research on drop-out in Serbia, which categories of pupils are most affected, what is the regional profile of drop-out, what are the main reasons”.³³

Even though these 8 countries are neighbours, it is perceived as they are very separate from each other. Six of them aspire to be part of EU but, without any vision of “what’s next”, policymakers often forget the fact that even if they join the EU nothing will change in terms of neighbourhood. They will still be neighbours within the Balkan family.

This lack of vision towards collaboration in terms of policymaking at the executive level is setting these countries back on the path to become EU Members.

³² <http://www.rcc.int/seeds/>

³³ Is there anything specific about early school leaving in the Western Balkans? - Doolan, Karin, Jugović, Ivana

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Research documents and sources:

- Eurrydice - https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Main_Page
- European Commission - https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en;
http://ec.europa.eu/education/events/20160627-western-balkans-platform_en
- The Knowledge Base for Higher Education and Research in the Western Balkans (HERDATA)-
<http://www.herdata.org>
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia - <http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs>
- Kosovo Agency of Statistics - <http://ask.rks-gov.net/en>
- Institute of Statistics - <http://www.instat.gov.al>
- Agency for Statistics - <http://www.bhas.ba/?lang=en>
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics - https://www.dzs.hr/default_e.htm
- Hellenic Statistical Authority - <http://www.statistics.gr/en/home/>
- State Statistical Office - http://www.stat.gov.mk/Default_en.aspx
- Statistical Office of Montenegro - <http://www.monstat.org/eng/index.php>
- Panteia - <http://www.w-balkan.hequalifications.panteia.eu/>
- Euro Education - <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/>
- Western Balkan Countries - Research, Technology, Innovation - Information Platform -
<https://wbc-rti.info/about>
- Regional Cooperation Council – www.rcc.intl
- European Investment Bank - <http://www.eib.org>
- The political economy of donor intervention in Western Balkans and Turkey: mapping and potential for stronger synergies - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2015/20150203_the_political_economy_of_donor_executive_summary_en_with_identifiers_final.pdf
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- European Commission, Macedonia Report 2016 - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf
- Western Balkans Platform On Education And Training Progress Report, August 2017 - https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/progress-report-2017_en.pdf

A hand holding a clear pen over a corkboard with papers. The background is a blurred office setting with a corkboard and various papers pinned to it. The pen is held diagonally across the frame, pointing towards the top right. The hand is visible at the bottom left, gripping the pen. The corkboard is a light brown color, and the papers are white with some text and graphics. The overall lighting is warm and soft, creating a professional and focused atmosphere.

About The Balkan Forum

The Balkan Forum is a regional, cross-sectoral platform that aims to create a new vision for the Balkans through sustainable cross-border dialogue on economic development, democratic values and the rule of law.

Our positive vision is built on the common values of hospitality, solidarity, and generosity. We commit to celebrating ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, aiming to regenerate interaction and catalyze stronger relationships among the Balkan countries; and to create a stable platform of regular communication and cooperation.

Our geographic focus is Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The following four broad thematic areas, which have been identified as having a special dynamic in the Balkan region; thus, presenting great opportunities for cooperation and joint development - form the framework of The Balkan Forum initiative: (1) Education, (2) Energy and Environment, (3) Tourism and Infrastructure Development, (4) Human Capital and Labor Market.

CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN COUNTRIES OF THE BALKAN
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