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Brief Assessment of Basic Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Brief Assessment of Basic Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nina Branković
Dženana Husremović
Ivana Zečević
Naida Čaršimamović Vukotić

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List of Acronyms

APOSO	Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education
BHAS	Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency for Statistics
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BPK	Bosnian Podrinje Canton
CEI	Center for Educational Initiatives
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPU	Centre for Policy and Governance
ECA	Europe and Central Asia Region
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ELES	Entrepreneurial Learning in Education Systems
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETF	European Training Foundation
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GIZ	German Association for International Cooperation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IT	Information Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoCA	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PPDM	Pedagogy, Psychology, Didactics, and Methodology
RS	Republika Srpska
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SBC	Central Bosnia Canton
SECEL	Regional Center for Development of Entrepreneurial Competence
StC	Save the Children
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TZC	Tuzla Canton
USK	Una-Sana Canton
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YERP	Youth Employability and Retention Program
ZDC	Zenica-Doboj Canton

Executive Summary

PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

USAID/Bosnia and Herzegovina Mission (USAID/BiH) commissioned Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity (MEASURE-BiH) to conduct a brief assessment of ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of basic education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The specific focus of this assessment is on the role, influence and ongoing interventions and processes in basic education supported by the international community in BiH as well as BiH government education institutions.

The assessment findings will be primarily used for the design and implementation of a possible new education Activity by USAID/BiH, but will also inform the development of the next USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).

KEY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

The assessment examined the following questions:

- What is the general picture of the basic education system in BiH? What is the current situation in the education reform processes? And what are the most important challenges?
- Which recent and ongoing interventions and reform processes have been led by BiH government education institutions and major bilateral and multilateral international donors (including a review of current international assistance activities, their objectives, results, potential for sustainability, and lessons learned)?
- What are the most important challenges that could be the subject of a possible USAID/BiH \$1 million of basic education interventions in 2016–2018, based on gaps identified from situational analyses and gaps in ongoing interventions?

The recommendations resulting from the assessment will serve as initial inputs for the development of the Program Description for the new USAID/BiH basic education intervention.

METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

The methodology used by the assessment team was designed to ensure systematic and efficient collection of data and triangulation of information across different sources and methods. The methods included:

- Desk research of relevant documentation and data
- Semi-structured key informant interviews with the most important local and international stakeholders in the education sector reform
- Interviews with stakeholders were conducted in-person or by telephone when possible. Otherwise, the questions were submitted via email.

The stakeholders included government education institutions in BiH (Agency for Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education [APOSOS], selected Ministries of Education, and Pedagogical Institutes) and international stakeholders and donor organizations involved in educational programs and sector reform (including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], the European Commission, Save the Children, and the Open Society Fund), as well as local NGOs (including the Center for Educational Initiatives [CEI] Step by Step and Genesis Project Banja Luka).

This assessment includes an overview of the basic education system in BiH and an analysis of each of the three education levels in BiH, which fall under USAID's definition of basic education (USAID, 2009): preschool, primary, and secondary education. The assessment examined the main issues facing each of these education level in the following six thematic areas covered by USAID basic education earmark:

- i) Thematic Area 1: Access to or quality of basic education,
- ii) Thematic Area 2: Pre-service or in-service teacher training,
- iii) Thematic Area 3: Programs in adult literacy and out-of school youth programs,
- iv) Thematic Area 4: Basic life skills components of workforce development program,
- v) Thematic Area 5: Community/familial engagement, and
- vi) Thematic Area 6: Education system reforms including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, and monitoring and evaluation

The USAID's definition of basic education as incorporating "literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development for learners" essentially coincide with the ten key competencies, adopted for BiH by APOSOS. Taking the eight already-defined key competencies of the European Union as a foundation, BiH developed its own set of 10 key competencies to be attained in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education (Husremović & Đapo, 2011). These competencies are as follows: i) Linguistic and communication competence in the mother tongue, ii) Linguistic and communication competence in foreign languages iii) Mathematical literacy and competence in science and technology, iv) information technology literacy, v) Learning to learn, vi) Social and civic competencies, vii) Self-initiative and entrepreneurial competencies, viii) Cultural awareness, ix) Creative and productive competencies, and x) Physical and health competencies. Thus, this assessment used these ten BiH competencies as another reference point throughout this report.

FINDINGS

The main findings of the assessment are presented below.

Preschool education

The average proportion of children included in preschool education is low at about 9 percent, with a range from 6 to 12 percent across the country (interview, APOSO), although the World Bank (2015) has reported that this figure stood at 13.1 percent in 2011. The most important activities in this area are connected with the implementation of compulsory preschool education, which occurs one year before children enter primary school. Compulsory education is defined by the Framework Law for Preschool Education, and most Ministries have begun the design and implementation of compulsory education. However, there are significant problems related to this activity. One major problem is the unevenness of curricula across Cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), Republika Srpska (RS) and Brčko District, with a varying number of compulsory hours prescribed for preschool education. For example, Sarajevo Canton prescribes 300 preschool classes (totaling 150 hours), while Bosnian Podrinje Canton mandates 150 classes. Often, even when the curricula are the same, different implementation practices may be employed.

Primary education

The proportion of children enrolled in primary education has been assessed as very satisfactory by the World Bank (2015). The main problem occurs among children who are not registered at birth (mostly within the Roma community) and children with disabilities. This problem is complicated by the fact that such children usually live in isolated areas.

The initial education of future teachers is one of the weakest points in the overall BiH education system, particularly in primary education. This initial education is undertaken in pedagogical faculties; philosophy, science, and mathematics faculties, and art academies. The curricula are designed by the core department, and the faculty determine curricular content. Because of this autonomy, curricula vary greatly and most do not provide a sufficient amount of time and credits for subjects in which a future teacher should develop teaching competencies, such as psychology, pedagogy, didactics, and methodology (PPDM). Standardization of these curricula is an important need. Moreover, there is no requirement for a specified amount of classroom practice for student teachers (Čelebičić et al, 2014).

Another important issue is the additional education of instructors who are not trained as teachers but nonetheless work in schools. The continuing professional education of teachers is also inadequate. Professional education has been severely affected by budget cuts at various governmental levels during the past decade. Although the need for critical thinking and communication skills is increasingly recognized, career counseling and career development have been neglected.

Community participation at the primary school level is of high importance. Schools have parent and student councils that function as advisory bodies. The main purpose of these councils is to include parents and students in school life. However, Cantonal Ministries and pedagogical institutes believe that such bodies are not involved to the extent that they could be. This passivity is the result of the continuous turnover of parents due to the relative brevity of preschool education. As a result, the officials interviewed do not think that investment in

such councils is advisable. Monitoring and evaluation and statistical data gathering are also weak parts of the primary education system (and the education system as a whole). Information is provided by schools using the Education Management Information System (EMIS), but the use of the data by the Ministries is insufficient.

Secondary education

Secondary education is mandatory only in one Canton of FBiH and in Brčko District. In spite of this, school attendance throughout the country is relatively high, with 36,395 students enrolling in the first year of secondary education in the 2014-15 academic year, compared with 36,669 students enrolled in the final year of elementary school at the start of the 2013-14 academic year (data from BiH Agency for Statistics - BHAS). However, the high dropout rate remains an issue throughout the country.

Secondary education offers the following options:

- *Gymnasia*, four-year schooling programs intended to qualify students for the tertiary education level, offering limited immediate employment options.
- Technical schools offering four-year technical programs intended to lead to employment, enrollment in non-university post-secondary vocational education, or higher education.
- Three-year vocational training programs for specific professions, including crafts, which are generally intended to lead directly to employment, although students are allowed to continue their studies by passing an additional examination.

Key issues affecting secondary education include the issues of the initial education of future teachers, continuous professional development of the teachers, and additional education of instructors who are not trained as teachers but nonetheless work in schools, as explained above under primary education. This is further exacerbated at the secondary education level by greater prevalence instructors who are not trained as teachers but work in vocational schools.

Additional key issue at secondary education level is a lack of strategies and inadequate data collection. Another issue is that teaching of the 10 “key competencies” has not been adequately integrated into curricula or assessed. Pertinent to vocational education is the issue of cooperation between schools and local industry and commerce, with a high level of disassociation between the skills taught in schools and those required by local labor markets. Teacher motivation is also a weaknesses, where teachers are rewarded for career longevity rather than competence. The formation of councils (both parent councils and industry councils) to guide and advise schools and their curricula is a particular area of concern. Directly pertinent to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s 10 identified key competencies is access to resources for improving information technology (IT) and second language skills, particularly in socially deprived and isolated areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this brief assessment, assessment team identified that the area requiring urgent attention is in key competencies and life skills that build knowledge society and support economic growth.

To improve these competencies, the following eight possible basic education interventions were identified:

1. **Development of operational teaching curriculum in mathematics based on the learning outcomes defined in the adopted outcome-based core mathematics curriculum.** This would entail preparation of a teaching plan and methods in order to achieve learning outcomes defined in the Common Core Curriculum for Mathematics Based on Learning Outcomes already developed by the Agency for Preschool, Primary, and Secondary Education of BiH.
2. **Adjustment of curricula for initial education of teachers by expanding the required number of courses/credits in subjects essential for teaching competencies in pedagogy, psychology, didactics, and teaching methods (PPDM).**
3. **Revision of the system for continuous professional development of teachers** to include development based on needs assessment, long-term planning, mentoring and coaching, as well as monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance. Systemic support for continuous professional development must be ensured in all education institutions, and knowledge transfer and behavioral change should be encouraged.
4. **Upgrade of education information systems** to better align data collection and processing with the decision-making needs. **Capacity building and training in the use of the information system, data analysis, and monitoring and evaluation in order to facilitate evidence-based teaching and decision-making.**
5. **Revision of the system of acquiring teaching competencies for non-teachers and capacity building of non-teachers.**
6. **Technical assistance and support for development of strategic policy documents at the State level,** needed for drawing of future IPA funds.
7. **Development of legislation and models for additional specialization of the adult labor force in accordance with labor market needs.**
8. **Establishment of Vocation Education and Training (VET) Councils** where not established.

The assessment team believes that the most effective use of USAID/BiH funds in the immediate short term would be to focus on the first two recommendations, based on the following criteria:

- **interventions should take into account limited financial resources,**
- **interventions should focus on solving the technical complexities which are essential for children's competencies, and**
- **interventions should focus on solving core issues rather than alleviating the symptoms.**

A separate document with details on background, rationale, and inputs for program description for these two recommendations for a possible USAID/BiH intervention was prepared by MEASURE-BiH and submitted to USAID/BiH.

Introduction to the Assessment

The goal of this research was to identify the main areas for effective and efficient investment in basic education in BiH. The main themes under this goal, as defined by USAID in its documentation, are:

- Access to or quality of basic education
- Pre-service or in-service teacher training
- Programs in adult literacy and out-of-school youth programs
- Basic life skills components of workforce development programs
- Community/familial engagement
- Education system reforms including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations.

Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, a definition of basic education consistent with USAID's definition has been created for application across curricula. In 2010 APOS0, with the support of UNICEF BiH, initiated the Youth Employability and Retention Program (YERP), a project aimed at defining clear goals for primary and secondary education. These goals were to be defined in accordance with official recommendations of the European Union and were intended to serve as the main guidelines for preparing curricula for primary and secondary education.

Within the scope of YERP's first outcome measure—increased capacity of the educational system and local communities to improve youth employability—was the identification and establishment of “key competencies” to be taught throughout the BiH education system. Taking the eight already-defined key competencies of the European Union as a foundation, Bosnia and Herzegovina developed its own set of 10 key competencies to be attained in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education (Husremović & Đapo, 2011). These competencies are as follows:

1. Linguistic and communication competence in the mother tongue
2. Linguistic and communication competence in foreign languages
3. Mathematical literacy and competence in science and technology
4. Information technology literacy
5. Learning to learn
6. Social and civic competencies
7. Self-initiative and entrepreneurial competencies
8. Cultural awareness
9. Creative and productive competencies
10. Physical and health competencies

These key competencies, adopted by APOS0, essentially coincide with USAID's definition of basic education as incorporating “literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development for

learners” (USAID, 2009). Therefore, for the purposes of this assessment, as well as for the design and implementation of future educational activities undertaken by USAID/BiH and the development of the next USAID CDCS, the assessment team recommends that basic education be defined using the key competencies identified by BiH as an additional reference point.

Methodology

The methodology used by the assessment team was designed to ensure systematic and efficient collection of data and triangulation of information across different sources and methods. The methods included:

- Desk research of relevant documentation and data
- Semi-structured key informant interviews with the most important local and international stakeholders in the education sector reform
- Interviews with stakeholders were conducted in-person or by telephone when possible. Otherwise, the questions were submitted via email.

Desk-based research included the identification and analysis of laws and regulations, other official documents, reports, and papers concerning basic education and its development at all levels of the BiH educational system, in local, national, regional, and international contexts. The analysis also included project documents in which advocacy work or laws, regulations, and strategies were reported in relation to the development of the key competencies.

Interviews were conducted in-person and by phone and email with relevant officials in Ministries and agencies for education at the State, Entity, and Cantonal levels, and with representatives of international organizations and local non-governmental organizations.

In-person and telephone conversations were semi-structured with a series of questions submitted to interviewees prior to the interview. Interviews usually lasted 30–45 minutes, although additional time was sometimes required to clarify points raised during the course of the conversation. The following seven questions formed the core of the interviews:

1. Have you, in the last five years, implemented projects/activities focused on improving the access of students in BiH preschool, primary, and secondary education in your Canton/Entity? What are the projects/activities and what were the results?
2. Have you, in the past five years, implemented projects/activities focused on improving the attainment of key competencies of pupils in BiH preschool, primary and secondary education in your Canton/Entity? What are the projects/activities and what were the results?
3. In the last five years, have you funded/implemented projects/activities focused on obtaining verified diplomas through non-formal education programs? What are the projects/activities and what were the results?
4. What were the biggest difficulties in the implementation of these projects/activities, and what could have been done differently to achieve a more successful outcome?
5. Have you identified an example that can be used as an indicator of positive/best practices?
6. What are your plans for funding/implementation in this area in the next five years?
7. What do you think the priorities in this area are?

A list of all the interviews conducted may be found in the Annex.

The Basic Education System in Bosnia and Herzegovina – an Overview

The institutional organization of the education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has some important characteristics that must be taken into account. First, the education system in the country is decentralized; education is organized at the Entity and District level in Republika Srpska (RS) and Brčko District, while in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) it is organized at Cantonal level, with the FBiH government's Ministry of Education and Culture primarily playing a coordinating role. According to the Dayton peace agreement, which defined the political organization of the country, the main institutions that deal with education are the following:

- At the country-wide level: the Sector for Education of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) and the Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education in BiH (APOSO).
- At the Entity/District level: the Ministry of Education and Science in FBiH, the Ministry of Education and Culture in RS, and the Department of Education in Brčko District.
- At the FBiH level: 10 Cantonal Ministries of Education

The main decision-makers are the Ministry of Education and Culture in RS, the Department of Education in Brčko District, and the 10 Cantonal Ministries in FBiH. The State-wide institutions and the FBiH Ministry of Education and Science have only a coordinating role; the real decision-making power lies with the aforementioned 12 institutions (10 Cantonal Education Ministries, the Ministry of Education and Culture in RS, and Department of Education in Brčko District).

This decentralized organization makes it almost impossible to have a joint and uniform approach to educational policies. It increases differences in approaches to the development of human potential and generates serious problems in jurisdiction, responsibility, and coordination. The World Bank Report "Skills, Not Just Diplomas" (2012) identified three major impediments to the creation of flexible and responsive education systems in the Europe and Central Asia Region, within which BiH lies: a lack of depth of knowledge about student attainment; overly centralized governance and management of schools; and the highly inefficient use of resources. All three impediments are still present in the BiH education system.¹ The BiH education system can be said to be operating "in the dark" because policies and management decisions are made without systematic and scientifically based data on student learning and employment outcomes. Centralized planning, as the overarching educational management policy, gives schools little to no autonomy in planning and budgeting.

The education authorities in BiH continue to use management practices that focus on compliance with detailed regulations and financing schemes based on inputs, rather than outputs. This means that most local education authorities and school principals lack the autonomy and authority to make crucial management decisions for their own institutions, including how much and what type of vocational content students are taught and how many teachers to employ. The tendency toward control and micromanagement of schools has

¹ http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/101411_FullReport.pdf

recently become even stronger. Financial resources are inefficiently used, especially at pre-university level.

In terms of teaching curricula in primary and secondary schools, BiH is currently implementing the curricula based on prescribed teaching units, rather on global best practice of being focus on learning outcomes with more flexibility on organizing teaching lessons. In other words, compared to traditional subject-based curricula, learning-outcome based curricula focus on the results of the learning process and are comprehensive and flexible. First important steps forward are currently being made in BiH towards this modernized approach, with the APOSO developing and adopting the Common Core Curricula Based on Learning Outcomes for different subject areas. For example, the Common Core Curriculum for Mathematics Based on Learning Outcomes developed by APOSO (with the support by Save the Children) was adopted by the BiH Parliament in 2015 (APOSO, 2015d). Several donors have supported the work on Common Core Curricula Based on Learning Outcomes for different subject areas (including the US Embassy who supported the work in social humanistic science and history). However, the Common Core Curricula Based on Learning Outcomes not being developed yet for all subject areas. Moreover, while the creation of Common Core Curricula Based on Learning Outcomes represents an important first step, the important follow-on work is needed to develop the operational teaching curricula and other operational materials (such as guidelines for teachers) based on defined core learning outcomes, so that this new approach can start being implemented.

There has been a significant decline in the number of children entering schools due to emigration and negative population growth. This reflects the aging of the BiH population. Birth rates across the country are significantly lower than the regional average, with 8.3 births per 1,000 population in 2011. The demographic decline started earlier in RS, in 2002, but in FBiH probably only a decade later (World Bank, 2015). However, schools are not being closed or merged. There was an attempt in Sarajevo Canton to merge schools in communities with small school-age populations, but teachers and teacher unions protested strongly and the decision was postponed.

Table I shows the number of children enrolled at the end of each school year from 2001 through 2015, as reported by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency for Statistics (BHAS).² It is worth noting that the decline in the number of students attending secondary schools between 2007 and 2010 may be due to demographic factors independent of education uptake. Without accurate population data for these years, the causes cannot be determined. Asterisks indicate preliminary results, taken from the start of the given school year. Finally, while the primary school results do not include children with special needs, the figures for the 2010-2011 academic year onward do include preschool students with special needs.

²http://www.bhas.ba/index.php?option=com_publicacija&view=publicacija_pregled&ids=1&id=21&n=Obrazovanje

Table I: Enrollment Rates by School Level

School year ending	Preschool	Preschool waiting list	Primary (both 8+9 years)	Secondary
2001				
2002			364,481	168,628
2003			360,959	168,335
2004			374,915	162,115
2005	13,135		380,995	164,830
2006	12,989		375,688	164,887
2007	13,384		367,618	163,286
2008	14,517		361,283	154,665
2009	16,260		357,749	145,687
2010	16,784		348,972	144,795
2011	17,007	1,418	333,384	149,523
2012	17,293	1,753	314,532	161,244
2013	18,817	2,403	303,601	164,609
2014	19,880	3,019	302,133 *	156,350 *
2015	21,490	1,971	295,783 *	143,881 *

Source: Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency for Statistics.

* Preliminary results from the beginning of the school year.

The preschool system in BiH is the first stage of the educational process. According to information from APOSO and the Ministries, the average proportion of children included in preschool education is only about 9 percent, with a range from 6 to 12 percent across the country (interview, APOSO), although the World Bank reported preschool enrollment at 13.1 percent in 2011 (2015), still considerably below the percentage in other countries in the region. In rural areas, according to the World Bank, this figure falls to 8 percent. These numbers are of particular concern in light of strong global evidence of the importance of early childhood education in helping individuals escape inter-generational poverty.

Although there is a high demand among parents for preschool education in certain areas (there are waiting lists in larger towns such as Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Brčko, and Mostar), the current infrastructure and budget are insufficient to meet this demand, with about 1 in 10 parents being turned away due to oversubscription (data from BHAS). In some 30 of BiH's 143 municipalities, not a single school has a preschool program (interview, APOSO).

The most important recent and on-going interventions and activities in this area are connected to the implementation of compulsory preschool education for children aged 5 or 6, one year before they enter primary school. This requirement is defined in the Framework Law for Preschool Education, and most school administrators have initiated activities related to the design and implementation of preschool education. However, there are significant problems. One of the major problems is variation in curricula across entities and Cantons in FBiH, RS and Brčko. Often, even when the curricula are the same, different implementation practices may be employed. Furthermore, a different number of compulsory hours are prescribed for preschool education throughout the country. For example, Sarajevo Canton prescribes 300 preschool classes (150 hours in total), while Bosnian Podrinje Canton mandates 150 classes.

Primary education is mandatory throughout the country, although whether its duration is eight or nine years depends on the administrative area. Although much effort has been devoted to increasing access to primary education, little attention has been paid to increasing the quality of the education provided.

The implementation of professional education is completely dependent on the approval of the Ministries, which is usually given or denied without any transparent criteria and procedures. NGOs are not authorized to issue recognized training certificates, and in most Cantons they are not even recognized as legitimate providers of education.

Primary school curricula are outdated and do not specify education outcomes (although they have some “outcomes”). The educational process is still based on compulsory content and prescribed literature, despite evident dissatisfaction with this by all stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, or society as whole. Curricular reform is slow, and the key competencies have still not been integrated into the curricula.

There is no clearly defined mechanism for monitoring and evaluating primary education (and overall basic education at all levels), no effective quality control, and no defined standards. No international standardized tests are conducted in BiH. The only time the country participated in such testing was in 2007 (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS]), and the results were disappointing (Mullis et al, 2008).³ It is currently expected that BiH will be participating in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018, which will provide an international context for the analysis of student educational attainment.

Secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina include general schools (gymnasia or high schools), art schools, religious schools, schools for children with special needs, technical schools, and vocational schools (Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH, 2003). Enrollment in secondary schools occurs after completion of primary school, at the age of 14 or 15, depending on regulations and the length of primary education (either eight or nine years). Gymnasia are four-year programs that are intended lead to the tertiary education level, while offering limited employment options. Technical schools offer four-year technical programs, which are intended to lead to employment, enrollment in non-university post-secondary vocational education, or higher education (World Bank, 2009; Corradini et al., 2012). The three-year vocational education and training (VET) programs are intended to lead to employment in specific professions, primarily crafts and trades, although graduates can continue to the next educational level by passing an additional examination.

At the beginning of the 2014-15 school year, 143,381 students were enrolled in 311 secondary schools in BiH, a decrease of 8 percent (12,469 students) compared with the previous year (BHAS, 2015).⁴

Secondary education, according to the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education of BiH (*Official Gazette of BiH*, No. 18/2003), is available to all students, depending on their primary school results and their interests and capabilities. A *Matura* examination (exit exam) at the end of primary school is implemented only in the Cantons of Sarajevo and Tuzla, where the result of the exam is decisive for enrollment in secondary education.

³ <http://www.aposo.gov.ba/o-agenciji/organizacijska-struktura/publikacije>

⁴ http://www.bhas.ba/saopstenja/2015/EDU_2015_001_02-bos.pdf

FBiH has six private international secondary schools (FBiH Ministry of Education and Science, 2014b) and RS has four (RS Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). According to the Agreement on Joint Core Curricula and Programs signed by the Education Ministers of the entities in August 2003, the core curriculum is to be applied in all schools in BiH, although the agreement has not been consistently implemented across all Cantons and Entities.

In regard to vocational secondary education, the Framework Law on Vocational and Educational Training (2008) and the (now expired) Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy for 2007–2013 have, to date, been the main guiding documents. A new State-level VET Strategy for 2015–2020 is in preparation. Recent VET reform has included (World Bank, 2009):

- Streamlining the number of VET occupational categories from almost 500 to about 100
- Creating modular education curricula for 13 families of skills
- Making the VET system more flexible
- Allowing for increased mobility of students across occupations.

EU VET IV, completed in January 2013, aims to strengthen vertical and horizontal mobility in education, to build the capacity of the APOSO's VET Department, to assist in the reform of curricula and training programs, and to develop new laws and bylaws in accordance with the Framework Law on Vocational Education and Training.⁵

The education of students with special needs is implemented in regular schools through specialized curricula and learning approaches. Students with significant special needs are educated in separate institutions.

In terms of access to basic education, article 18 of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH states that educational institutions must take all necessary measures to secure conditions for access to and participation in the educational process by all children. Financial support for children to complete primary education is allocated based mostly on the socio-economic condition of the family, or status as a national minority (predominantly Roma), with only Brčko District ensuring that all students receive free books and transportation.

Article 35 explains that the responsible institutions, together with the schools, are accountable for securing access to and participation in the education process for children with special needs, youth, and adults. However, the legislation has not been fully implemented in practice, resulting in a lack of adequate physical access in many schools (Branković & Oruc, 2015). This is largely the result of economic development and financial constraints at the level of the municipality.

The situation regarding access to and quality of education for children with special needs is ambiguous, particularly in relation to the provision of personal assistants. The need for such assistants, their role, and the conditions of their employment are not specified in the legislation. The rules and regulations on the education of children with special needs in RS

⁵ EU VET website, <http://www.euvet4.ba>

primary and secondary schools (*Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, 85/2004*) do not explicitly state that schools must secure assistants for the education process; Article 5 of this document states that employment of assistants will be secured.

The *Guidance for the Education of Children with Special Needs in the Federation of BiH* (Ministry of Education FBiH, 2013) recommends the employment of assistants in schools where there are children with special needs. However, it is unclear whether the assistants mentioned are teaching or classroom assistants, or personal assistants for a specific child. The different interpretations of the role of the assistant create problems in budgeting for the Ministry of Social Protection and the Ministry of Education (Branković & Oruc, 2015).

While Article 35 states that schools are prohibited from discriminating against children, students from schools that were the focus of a recent Council of Europe report on social inclusion in BiH reported that teachers did not treat all students equally (Branković & Oruc, 2015).⁶

There are no statistics on truancy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, even though experience has shown that this is a persistent problem (UNICEF, 2011).

⁶ According to data collected from seven schools, one of the lowest scores across the dimensions studied was for whether students feel that teachers treat students equally.

Preschool Education System

Thematic Area I: Access to or quality of basic education

Activities that increase access to or quality of basic education in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and in programs that prepare learners for formal certification through non-formal modalities.

In the last several years, a number of international organizations have been involved in the development of access to preschool education. Save the Children developed a fruitful partnership with four Cantonal Ministries of Education: Una-Sana, Central Bosnia, Zenica-Doboj, and Tuzla, as well as with the RS Ministry of Education and Culture. The project, which is called “Education Fit for Children—BiH on the Road to the EU” began in 2013. One component, “Accessible and Quality Development for Children in BiH,” was implemented in the period 2013–2015. In partnership with the Ministry of Education of Tuzla Canton, Save the Children financed an infrastructure project that gave all 12 municipalities in the Canton the material resources to support early childhood development and outreach for all children in the year before they enter primary school, thus implementing compulsory preschool education. This is an important achievement, considering that only 20 percent of children in Tuzla Canton were covered by compulsory preschool education prior to the project’s implementation.

In 2012–2015, Save the Children provided financial support for equipping 187 classrooms in schools in isolated areas throughout BiH and 11 centers for early childhood development⁷ for primary-school-age children (primarily from the Roma community) who are not attending formal education and for those who live in other isolated and underdeveloped areas. Save the Children financed the procurement of supplies for 150 classrooms and organized four-day education courses for professionals in early childhood development. In 2010–2012, in Zenica-Doboj Canton, Save the Children supported education and infrastructure projects that enabled local authorities to implement compulsory preschool education for 4,500 children each year. The organization provided necessary literature, supplied didactic and educational materials and money for in-school meals, which proved to be important leverage. Since 2007, Save the Children has contributed to preschool education of at least 10,000 children in BiH, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. It also supported the process of harmonization and implementation of the Framework Law on Preschool Care and Education in Una-Sana Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton, and Tuzla Canton (interview, Save the Children).

The OSCE has been more involved in juridical issues, such as monitoring of the legislative process. The organization monitored the development process for the Law on Preschool Education and the Curriculum for Preschool Education in RS. Since this curriculum was designed to include education outcomes, it has been assessed as being particularly well developed (interview, OSCE).

While donor assistance significantly improved the pre-school education system, large issues related to strategic direction still remain. The compulsory preschool education is not unified

⁷ Visoko, Vareš, Teočak, Sapna, Čelić Kalesija, which are separate centers, and Banja Luka, Brčko, Bijeljina, Mostar, and Gradiška, which are part of already-established day care centers.

or standardized. The duration of the programs varies between 150 and 300 preschool classes, and children attend only two classes per week (60 minutes in total). In RS, preschool is a recommended rather than a compulsory program. To evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of such programs, relevant stakeholders should conduct some form of comprehensive evaluation.

Recommendations:

There are still some important goals to be attained in the area of access to preschool education. The main recommendations are as follows:

- There is a great need to promote the importance of preschool education and explain its impact on the holistic development of children. Advocacy activities should be aimed at lawmakers and decision-makers.
- Activities related to capacity building are still very important. Infrastructural development was mentioned by all interviewees from the Ministries as highly important. This is especially true in rural areas, where children are almost completely isolated from any kind of organized preschool education. To increase outreach to children, the private sector should be encouraged through incentives to view the establishment of preschool institutions as a legitimate entrepreneurial activity. Further support and guidance from the government would allow (the currently indeterminable number of) private “playrooms” to tailor their activities to the preschool needs of communities. The possibility of registering these playrooms as preschool institutions would help alleviate overcrowding in the schools and provide an additional source of preschool education.

Thematic Area 2: Pre-service or in-service teacher training

Work with higher education institutions that provide pre-service or in-service teacher training for pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers, youth development instructors and counselors, and education administrators.

The current situation regarding the initial education of preschool teachers and their continuous professional development (CPD) is uneven in different parts of the country. Initial education is under the jurisdiction of Entities and Cantons, and there is no uniform system of quality control for teacher training programs, largely due to the fact that university courses and study programs have yet to be accredited in the country.

In order to establish a clear framework for work standards in preschool education, APOSO released the document “Quality Standards for Work of Preschool Teachers, Pedagogues and Principals” (2011) and developed a model for continuing professional development.⁸ As a component of disseminating these standards, APOSO organized public events and conferences to which university teachers and preschool officials were invited. The standards have so far been adopted as a part of official curriculum at the Teaching Faculty of the University of Sarajevo (interview, APOSO). APOSO also organized education for preschool

⁸ *Model for Improving the System of Continuing Professional Development of Preschool Teachers and Professional Assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*
<http://www.aposo.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/KPR-bosanski-26.11.pdf>

teachers, which allowed them to work with children in a compulsory preschool program. The results of the evaluation of this training were very positive (interview, APOS0).

The British Council is currently implementing the EU-funded project for development of a qualifications framework for general education. This project has three components, the third of which, “Education and Professional Development of Teachers,” is in its final phase of implementation (interview, CEI Step by Step). The aim of this component is to develop standards for the teaching profession at preschool, primary, and secondary school levels that will be comparable to those in the European Union. The final document will form the basis for improving the initial and continuing education of preschool teachers.

Parallel with the British Council project, APOS0 is currently undertaking research on teachers’ needs for professional development in preschool education. The results will be released in spring 2016 (interview, APOS0). This research will make recommendations about what type of professional development are needed and how to organize it efficiently and effectively.

However, the full implementation of standards will require curricular reforms in initial teacher education at universities. An inspector in the RS Pedagogical Office said that one of the main obstacles to improving preschool education is the fact that future teachers are educated inadequately and start their careers unprepared. They learn old-fashioned methods and instructional designs that can only be used to teach outdated curricula. This view was echoed by key informants from the cantonal Ministries. Without reform in initial teacher education, the effects of the implementation of standards will be limited.

US Embassy in BiH has been supporting teacher training at pre-school, primary, and secondary level within civic education programs through CIVITAS⁹. This includes comprehensive teacher training and certification programs, curriculum development, and social media programs that has been supported by all education institutions in BiH. Thus, future interventions in basic education teacher training (regardless of whether it is targeted at pre-school, primary, or secondary education level) should take into account this experience (to design and deliver high-quality training, with defined training standards, and exams to confirm that knowledge has been absorbed), and model teacher training after it. Through intervention Mobile Democracy Education, US Embassy specifically supported pre-school kindergarten level.

Recommendations:

- There is a great need for reform of the initial education of preschool teachers. The new and reformed curricula should be based on the educational outcomes and professional standards developed in Component 3 of the British Council project “Development of a Qualifications Framework for General Education.” Initial teacher education should be adapted to follow modern trends in preschool education and curriculum development.
- Cooperation between universities and preschool institutions should be increased. Students should spend more time on the practical components of teaching and more time in preschool institutions and university classrooms.

⁹ <http://civitas.ba/>.

- The mentoring system should be also reformed. The title of mentor should be promoted as an officially recognized title in the teaching profession. Mentors should coach students and document their progress using a standardized approach.
- Increased material and non-material support is needed in professional education, in accordance with the guidelines developed by APOSO.

Thematic Area 5: Community/familial engagement

Community participation focused on improving access and quality of schooling and youth development (e.g., parent teacher associations, school management committees, other community-based organizations supporting parental engagement, girls' enrollment, inclusive education and/or local accountability for school management and use of resources).

Unlike their responses related to the higher levels of education covered in this assessment, none of the interviewed officials mentioned any activities related to community participation with regard to preschool education. Parents, on the other hand, are generally more motivated when it comes to involvement in the life of preschools. Preschools usually engage with parents, for example, by inviting them to parent meetings and children's performances. In the assessment team's opinion, this discrepancy could be interpreted as an indicator of how preschool education is not seen as being as "important" or as "serious" as other levels of education, or, alternatively, it may be that parents are more highly motivated in the earlier stages of their child's education, but soon become disaffected.

Recommendation:

- It would be desirable to gather more information on the existence of parent councils or similar groups throughout BiH to better understand their relevance to the delivery of basic education.

Thematic Area 6: Education system reforms including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations

Education system reforms for pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels, as well as non-formal education, including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations.

In 2007, RS undertook significant improvements to preschool education. A new preschool curriculum was developed based on educational outcomes. This curriculum respects the holistic development of the child in line with his or her abilities, personality, needs, and interests. The curriculum was supported by a portfolio/diary that enables the teacher to continually monitor the progress of each child in a standardized manner.

RS is currently in the process of adopting a new Education Strategy for the period 2016–2021, in which many changes are planned. The main ones are the following:

- An increase in the number of children included in preschool education
- Improvements in work conditions for preschool teachers

- An increase in public awareness regarding the importance of preschool education.

Interviewees from the Cantonal Ministries did not report any information about comparable activity in FBiH, although this does not necessarily mean that no new curricula approaches to preschool education have been adopted.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs formed a Working Group of professionals, in order to develop a new Strategy for Preschool Education at the State level. This activity was mentioned by MoCA and APOSO officials. The Strategy has still not been adopted by the Council of Ministers, but APOSO will have the mandate to work on the development of the Common Core Curriculum for preschool education. APOSO believes that this curriculum will be a crucial document for standardization and helping authorities at Entity, District, and Cantonal levels develop new and reformed curricula.

At this time, with a low level of preschool coverage, no activities to improve information and data collection systems have been considered. The lack of reliable data limits the ability of primary teachers to learn more about the children entering their classrooms in relation to their pre-primary educational status. The only information the primary school receives is official confirmation that a child has finished compulsory preschool education, the validity of which is entirely dependent on a child not having moved between Cantons or Entities.

Recommendations:

- Support information collection and a database system that would contain essential information about each child for use in the next level(s) of education. This database would be of particular importance for professionals who test the children prior to entry in order to estimate their levels of cognitive, social, and emotional development and readiness for school.
- Develop an effective system of continuous quality control and evaluation of preschool institutions and individual employees according to a predefined set of standards. This new system should not rely on visits from inspectors, but instead should enable the institution to perform self-evaluation.

Primary Education System

Thematic Area I: Access to or quality of basic education

Activities that increase access to or quality of basic education in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and in programs that prepare learners for formal certification through non-formal modalities.

The UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of BiH estimates that, in 2011-2012, 98 percent of children of primary-school age attended school (99 percent in RS and 97 percent in FBiH) (quoted in World Bank, 2015). The main problem occurs in relation to children who are not registered at birth (mostly within the Roma community), as well as children with certain disabilities. This problem is complicated by the fact that these children usually live in isolated areas, far from urban centers.

In Sarajevo Canton, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with Swiss Caritas, supports 12 assistants specifically dedicated to work with Roma children in 12 primary and secondary schools in order to increase the presence of these children in schools. Despite these (and similar) efforts, the inclusion of Roma children in primary education is still lagging.

Since 2003, Save the Children and UNICEF have undertaken numerous activities to improve access to primary education in BiH. Save the Children plans to continue its efforts to identify children who are not participating in formal primary education. According to the model advocated by Save the Children, following identification that a child is not in school, the child receives help in starting or returning to the education system. This model was developed for children between 6 and 15 years of age. An important aspect that the organization supported was the Inclusion Index.¹⁰

CEI Step by Step, a spin-off organization of the Open Society Foundation, has implemented a number of projects with the goal of increasing access to high-quality education at all educational levels. A particular focus is placed on children from minority and marginalized groups through the development of anti-discrimination programs, the creation of inclusive environments, educational programs for decreasing stereotypes and prejudices, and advocacy campaigns.

Recommendations:

- Support curricular reform. This was mentioned by all stakeholders from the primary education sector as the first priority. Without curricular reform, everything else loses the potential for change. The main priorities are mathematics, the natural sciences, and the development of critical thinking (or meta-cognition) as key competencies.
- Improve the capacity of primary schools to work with children with special needs, and work further on capacity building.

¹⁰ <http://www.oscebih.org/Default.aspx?id=32&lang=EN>

Thematic Area 2: Pre-service or in-service teacher training

Work with higher education institutions that provide pre-service or in-service teacher training for pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers, youth development instructors and counselors, and education administrators.

The initial education of future teachers is one of the weakest points in the education system overall, particularly in regard to primary education. Initial education is provided by teaching faculties; faculties of philosophy, science and mathematics; and art academies. The curricula are designed by the core department, and the faculty determine curricular content. Because of this autonomy, curricular content varies greatly.

Recent research undertaken by the Centre for Policy and Governance (CPU),¹¹ on behalf of the University of Sarajevo shows that the teaching methods employed in BiH in the group of subjects of pedagogy, psychology, didactics, and methodology (PPDM) are outdated and that the number of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits available in PPDM varies and is in all cases insufficient in comparison to the most common and recommended EU practice of around 60 ECTS credits (Abadžija, 2015 and Marencic-Pozarnik, 2011). Students reported that they do not feel comfortable competent to work as teachers after finishing their studies. Due to the great differences in initial education throughout the country (and even among teachers from the same higher education institution), the quality of teaching is questionable. Employment and mobility are limited because students who complete education in one part of the country may not find their qualifications accepted in another part.

The continuing professional education of teachers is also at a low level. A number of serious budget cuts have been implemented at various governmental levels over the past decade, with professional education being hit particularly hard. All the Cantonal Ministries mentioned that the current situation in professional development for primary-level teachers is far from satisfactory. In Sarajevo Canton, the current Minister decided to implement a new approach, in which schools are required to provide free mentoring for students, and universities are obligated to provide free professional education for teachers. This model is currently in the testing phase and the results have not yet been released.

CEI Step by Step organized and implemented a number of professional education programs for teachers and other professionals. The content of these programs was connected to the development of the key competencies identified for BiH, with a special emphasis on critical thinking, training in methods for high-quality teaching, and the development of quality standards (interview, CEI Step by Step). According to CEI Step by Step, there is still a great need for reform in the initial education of teachers based on the newly developed "Standards for the Teaching Profession" and "Common Core Curricula."

As mentioned above under pre-school education, the key donor activity in this area is the EU-funded project for development of a qualifications framework for general education. This project is developing standards for the teaching profession at preschool, primary, and secondary school level. The OSCE implemented a project to increase the competencies of teachers to work with students on self-regulated learning for primary and secondary

¹¹ https://issuu.com/cpubih/docs/sa__etak_analize__inicijalno_obrazo

education level¹². The teachers were taught how to help their students use mind maps and mnemonic techniques and how to organize educational content for better learning (interview, OSCE).

Finally, as also mentioned above under pre-school education, future interventions in teacher training for basic education (regardless of whether it is targeted at pre-school, primary, or secondary education level) should model teacher training after CIVITAS experience.

Recommendations:

- Invest in reform of the initial education of teachers to design initial teacher education curricula requirements with clear education outcomes and according to standards specified in the project “Development of a Qualification Framework for General Education.” The initial education of teachers should be aligned with curricular reform at the preschool, primary and secondary school levels, and also with contemporary trends in initial education throughout Europe. The curricula for initial education must adhere to the recommendations based on EU practices of around 60 ECTS for pedagogy, psychology, didactics and methodology. In order to increase the employability and mobility of student teachers, this standard must be promoted and built into every curriculum for teachers.
- Increase cooperation between universities and primary schools so that an internship and practicum is performed in schools (not in university classrooms).
- The mentoring system should be reformed, and innovations are needed. Mentors should coach the students and document their progress in a standardized manner.
- Invest in the continuing professional education of teachers according to the guidelines provided by APOSO.
- There should be a significant investment in capacity building for self-evaluation and mentoring systems.

¹² <http://www.osce.org/bih/108118?download=true>

Thematic Area 3: Programs in adult literacy and out-of-school youth programs

Programs in adult literacy and out-of-school youth programs that provide literacy, numeracy and basic life skills training (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills).

Programs exist in each Canton and in RS to improve levels of adult literacy. Authorities usually designate particular schools to administer adult literacy programs; however, these programs are not free.

GIZ (German Association for International Cooperation) published a manual in 2011 titled “Support for Adult Education in BiH.”¹³ This manual was the product of a project aimed at capacity building for teachers to enable them to work more proficiently with adults. Numerous programs have been established at the secondary school level and are described in the next section

Thematic Area 4: Basic life skills components of workforce development programs

Basic life skills components of workforce development programs, sometimes called workforce readiness skills (e.g., literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills).

Although basic life skills have been mentioned previously, it should be further noted that cross-curricular competence is deemed to be closely intertwined with entrepreneurship and career management skills. Critical thinking and communication skills are recognized as needs in the education system, but career counseling and career development remain neglected. Currently, career counseling in primary schools is, if present, outdated and inefficient. It is performed by teachers who lack the needed time, instruments, and contemporary knowledge.

Activities in this area are strongly connected with programs for entrepreneurship. APOSO participated in a project administered by SECEL (Regional Center for the Development of Entrepreneurial Competence), which provided a series of teacher trainings related to the teaching of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. APOSO, as the direct implementer of the project, developed three modules on concepts, including entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ideas, goals and learning outcomes of entrepreneurial learning for creative students prepared to take risks in order to reach their goals in professional or private life, and the connection between the real-world economy and the economic concepts introduced in the classroom. Many schools in BiH have participated in projects to increase entrepreneurial skills among students (such as the ELES program, described below in the section on secondary education).

The Open Society Foundation (OSF) acts simultaneously as a donor and a civil society actor in BiH. OSF has implemented a project called “Good School Practices.” A call for proposals was issued to schools that have, despite their unfavorable economic and political environment, have managed to introduce innovative and progressive approaches to education. After two

¹³ <https://www.fino.ba/down/Andragoski%20prirucnik.pdf>

rounds of public calls for proposals, 247 schools had applied, with 21 “good practices” awarded (interview, OSF). The insight gained through this process revealed that, generally speaking, schools have a rather narrow vision for quality education, and a lack of resources and enthusiasm for the initiation of substantial changes.

It is important to mention *Školegijum, The Journal for Critical Education*¹⁴ (interview, OSF), even though it falls outside of the basic education mandate in relation to this assessment. *Školegijum* is an OSF project whose mission is to advocate for change in education policies so as to embrace universal values and civic competencies. This journal contains critical reviews and analyses of education and society at the cutting edge of BiH education research. *Školegijum* also publishes regional research, featuring papers from Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania.

Thematic Area 5: Community/familial engagement

Community participation focused on improving access and quality of schooling and youth development (e.g., parent teacher associations, school management committees, other community-based organizations supporting parental engagement, girls’ enrollment, inclusive education and/or local accountability for school management and use of resources).

Community participation at the primary school level is of great importance to the development of basic education in the country. Primary schools have parent councils and student councils that are supposed to function as advisory bodies. The main purpose of these councils is to include parents and students in school life. However, the Cantonal Ministries and the pedagogical institutes do not provide support to such bodies. An exception is the parent council in Sarajevo Canton, which is highly active in public and is becoming more important in decision-making processes.

CEI Step by Step developed and implemented a number of projects to increase the efficiency of schools through cooperation with parents and local communities. The organization educated representatives of parent councils and school administration on how to efficiently involve parents and local communities in all activities both in school and in the community (interview, CEI Step by Step).

Previously mentioned US Embassy’s CIVITAS initiative in civic education significant strides towards greater engagement of primary and secondary school students in their communities were achieved. In their Project: Citizen, students research problems in their communities and propose policy measures which they then present to relevant public institutions. This project is one of the best example of promoting communication between the students and schools with the local communities through solving relevant local governance issues.

World Vision International, through its Education and Life Skills Program, has organized training for parent councils in situation analysis, and negotiation and communication skills in order to make their activism more effective.¹⁵

¹⁴ <http://skolegijum.ba/>

¹⁵ <http://www.wvi.org/bosnia-and-herzegovina/education>

Recommendation:

- The organization of schools, including partnerships with parents and local communities, should be more flexible. Currently, schools must generally obtain approval from the Ministries, and this fact limits the further development of partnerships with the local community. Stakeholders need additional training on how to build sustainable partnerships. Rules and regulations should be revised to reflect the real needs of schools and open up possibilities for cooperation.

Thematic Area 6: Education system reforms including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations

Education system reforms for pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels, as well as non-formal education, including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations.

Monitoring, evaluation, and information and data systems are some of the weakest aspects of the primary education system. Some Cantons have organized external exams after the completion of primary school, for example, Sarajevo Canton, which is currently in its third year of implementing such a system. However, the regulations have changed each year, so the predictability for students is somewhat low. The exams are designed mainly to measure recognition and repetition. The distribution of the grades in the external exams for primary schools are negatively skewed, except for mathematics, which means that most of the children accepted are able to repeat the subject matter, but there is no information on their ability to apply or to analyze and evaluate the information in a real-life context. External exams for primary schools in Tuzla Canton will start in 2016. Sarajevo Canton and RS have organized external exams since 2014, but these are locally prepared and not comparable. The results of these extensive exams, therefore, are only for local use and do not have external validity.

When it comes to the assessment of student achievement in an international context, the only time BiH was involved in international comparative research was in the 2007 TIMSS. The results were disappointing. Only 1 percent of the children involved in the mathematics assessment scored in the highest category. About 23 percent failed to achieve the lowest standard score for satisfactory results in mathematics or the natural sciences.¹⁶ A secondary analysis of the data in TIMSS and subsequent benchmarking research revealed that the explained variance in the academic achievement of students derived primarily from students' individual variables (such as meta-cognitive skills, motivation, and perception of the teacher) rather than from the system variables such as schools and classrooms.¹⁷

In 2013 APOSO defined the Standards of Achievement for the third and sixth grades in mathematics and maternal language. Since the data in the research was collected from students in the eighth grade (which was the final grade in the previous educational program), benchmarks have been set for the evaluation of the differences between the achievement of students in the previous program and those in the current nine-year program. The final stage of the evaluation, however, was never completed due to a lack of resources (interview, APOSO).

¹⁶ http://www.aposo.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/TIMSS_izvjestaj_matematika_BOS.pdf

¹⁷ <http://aposo.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Sekundarna%20analiza%20podataka.pdf>

According to MoCA and APOSO, Bosnia and Herzegovina will participate in PISA in 2018, which will be an important event for assessing student achievement in an international context.

EMIS (Education Management Information System) is the IT system used for data gathering and management in BiH primary and secondary schools. The implementation of EMIS was funded by the World Bank in 2004 as one of the measures in comprehensive education reform (interview, Ministry of Education of Sarajevo Canton). The main goal of the project was to improve the system of information and data management, data-based planning and decision-making, and efficient education resource management. In Sarajevo Canton, EMIS has been used since the 2008-2009 academic year in all primary and secondary schools to produce e-certificates and official documents for students. The system also manages external exams, and the plan is to eventually transfer all administrative records and documentation into EMIS. This has great potential, but it remains underutilized for its most important purpose—the promotion of decision-making processes based on data. Currently, EMIS is mostly used as an administrative tool.

The year 2003 was seen as a milestone in RS for the transition to the new system of primary education, where the duration of primary education was extended from eight to nine years. The same system has now been implemented throughout the country. The goal was to efficiently and effectively support child development and learning. The next milestone occurred in 2011, when a detailed analysis of curricula was undertaken, with a particular emphasis on education outcomes. This analysis confirmed the assumption that the education process relies on teaching units and the majority of educational outcomes were defined as declarative knowledge. Functional knowledge was neglected in the outcomes. The data also pointed to inadequacy in basic literacy. After the analysis, the primary school curricula were revised, but the basic structure of plans and programs stayed the same (interview, RS Pedagogical Institute).

Recommendations:

- To improve the evaluation of student achievement, external exit exams should be promoted as a tool for assessing the quality and effectiveness of the education system.
- Revive the process of data collection and data management for use not only as an administrative tool, but also as a basis for research and evidence-based decision-making and evidence-based teaching. The IT system should enable users to follow children’s progress through the whole education system and beyond, in order to track the employability of students.

Secondary Education System

Thematic Area I: Access to or quality of basic education

Activities that increase access to or quality of basic education in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and in programs that prepare learners for formal certification through non-formal modalities.

The UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of BiH estimates that, in 2011-2012, 92 percent of children of secondary-school age attended school (with broadly the same ratio in both Entities), while transition rate to secondary school is 97%.

There are no reliable statistics on non-attendance in secondary schools, but most vulnerable demographic groups in terms of dropping out are Roma children, with only 15 percent attending any level of school (EU Commission, 2014), and children from families whose parents cannot afford the estimated 2000–3000 BAM needed for one year of secondary education expenses (UNICEF, 2011). The Center for Civil Initiatives reports that about 20 percent of young people drop out during the first two years of secondary school (Branković & Arapović, 2010),¹⁸ but there is inadequate data at the State level.

The main reasons that young people drop out of secondary schools are the economic situation of the family, distance from home to school, and behavioral problems (UNICEF, 2011). The issue has been addressed sporadically and with significantly different policies in the Cantons, Entities, and Brčko District. While public employment services offer adult employment programs for unemployed citizens who have dropped out of school, the centers for social work mostly conduct individual interviews with children who are at risk of dropping out of school.

Pedagogic institutes (of which there are eight in BiH) have no distinct activities or mechanisms for preventing student dropout. The Ministries of Education impose sanctions on those who drop out or have a large number of unexcused absences (ETF, 2013). Some Ministries provide financial support for secondary school students who are beneficiaries of some form of welfare, (UNICEF, 2011). However, once students drop out of school, it is extremely difficult to return them to the system. Those children who drop out of the school system (primary or secondary) have an option to complete secondary education only if they pay for external completion of high school (ETF, 2013). Not all Ministries of Education offer financial support for such completion programs (ETF, 2013).¹⁹

The activities that have been undertaken to improve educational quality in vocational and educational training include (1) developing occupational standards for vocational education (agriculture and food processing, catering and tourism, mechanical engineering and metal processing, and forestry and wood processing) and aligning curricula with occupational standards; and (2) training teachers for the implementation of modular curricula at some levels of BiH.

¹⁸ It is important to note a few factors that influence the data on the dropout rate from secondary schools: (1) Because of a lack of coordination between institutions, children are not monitored when they move from one school to another or from one part of BiH to another; and (2) VET students are not included in the calculation of dropout rates.

¹⁹ In 2012, the Ministry of Education of Sarajevo Canton provided support for only two students to complete their high school education (ETF, 2013).

In general, educational institutions do not provide the quality and skills needed for business. This is a major concern for development agencies (interview, World Bank), and is strongly linked to the quality of teaching and teacher education.

To further access to basic education, the Norwegian government has, since 2013, funded two pilot projects in Zavidovici and Poljice encouraging Roma children to continue or re-enter basic education. The project focuses exclusively on primary and secondary level education, but also includes some aspects of adult education.

The upgrading of classrooms throughout the country has been funded in recent years by many foreign donors (including the governments of Spain, Slovenia, and Norway, as well as international organizations, including UNICEF, and charitable organizations such as Lions Club International and the Kennedy Foundation). These localized projects primarily focus on the renovation of classrooms, including furniture and equipment, the provision of IT equipment (in line with the fourth key competency identified by APOSO), and the improvement of access to classrooms in mainstream education for persons with disabilities. In some instances, the refurbishment of IT suites has been undertaken with the provision that the facilities also be made available for community use and adult learning.

Save the Children Norway funds the “Basic Education Rights” project that uses various methods to ensure that all children start primary and secondary school, to reduce the number of students who drop out, and to raise awareness on the part of children and their parents about the importance of remaining in school through graduation. In addition, the project provides assistance to and follow-up on children who are not attending school or have dropped out. Several hundred children in Una-Sana Canton and Central Bosnia Canton receive this support.²⁰

In regard to social inclusion, the focus of the EU Delegation in BiH continues to be on the overarching theme of employment, with the aim of all population groups (including those with special needs) being involved in the education process, gaining equal rights and skills, and having easier access to and conditions of employment.

Recommendations:

- The Ministries of Education in the ten Cantons of FBiH and in RS should fully apply the existing Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH and secure support for all children in all parts of BiH who come from socio-economically underprivileged families.
- Schools should ensure that students with special needs have physical access to their premises.
- Schools should employ assistant teachers for children with learning difficulties.
- Training should be organized for teachers with the specific aim of increasing their capacity for equal treatment of all students. This is also directly linked to a lack of participation by students in teacher evaluations, to pre-service and in-service teacher training, and to improved information and data systems, monitoring, and evaluations.

²⁰ http://www.norveska.ba/arkiv/ongoing_projects/savethechildren/#.Vt6f6sfPDFI

Thematic Area 2: Pre-service or in-service teacher training

Work with higher education institutions that provide pre-service or in-service teacher training for pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers, youth development instructors and counselors, and education administrators.

The current policy system in Bosnia and Herzegovina creates an ambiguous framework for the both the initial education of teachers and CPD at all education levels in BiH. Thus, the secondary education also suffers from aforementioned issues of the initial education of future teachers, continuous professional development of the teachers, and additional education of instructors who are not trained as teachers but nonetheless work in schools (as explained above under primary education).

This is further exacerbated at the secondary education level by greater prevalence instructors who are not trained as teachers but work in vocational schools. The situation at the According to a recent European Training Foundation (ETF) report (2013), 26 percent of VET teachers have not completed a formal teacher education program.²¹ For example, some industrial engineers become teachers without any formal teacher education, with only having to take a professional exam. Only 33 percent of teachers in the ETF survey had studied pedagogy or didactics as part of their formal education, which means that many may have difficulty transferring their knowledge to students. Moreover, research undertaken by the NGO Promente indicates that there is no mandatory requirement for teachers to have a specific amount of classroom experience or practice before starting to teach (Čelebičić et al, 2014).

Although in-service teacher training is required in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its practical implementation is regulated by laws and bylaws at the Cantonal, Entity, and District level, creating different expectations across the country (Čelebičić et al, 2014). Mentoring is a requirement for new teachers, although regulations vary. However, questions about the quality of mentoring and whether the requirements are observed have been raised. Only a minority of mentors receive training. A model has been developed by APOSO for the continuing professional development of teachers, but a lack of coordination between different policy levels, coupled with insufficient financial resources for CPD, has resulted in short-term goals in both planning and implementation. The current mode of governance creates challenges for the provision of cost-effective CPD. Another problem specific for VET is that BiH lacks people with the experience and capability to provide CPD that addresses the needs of VET teachers and instructors. While pedagogical institutes are currently the major providers of CPD training, they lack expertise in CPD for VET. The overall provision of CPD for VET teachers and trainers is low when compared to other countries in the region. Forty percent of VET teachers and instructors received no CPD at all in a 12-month period. Only 41 percent benefited from events outside of school and only 30 percent received CPD that was directly related to their vocational specialty. An ETF report stressed that this is, above all, a supply issue: there is insufficient provision of relevant CPD (Branković, 2015). When VET teachers are able to access CPD, most view it positively. However, there is no catalogue that communicates offerings of CPD programs to teachers at the Entity or State level.

²¹ The survey of VET teachers included 24 schools in FBiH and Brčko District and 14 in RS, with 161 questionnaires returned from 14 schools in RS and 3 questionnaires from 2 schools in FBiH. The survey was conducted in May and June 2015.

As the ETF report also explains, several schools organize CPD specifically to meet the needs of their staff, working in partnership with universities, private companies, or pedagogical institutes. Wherever this takes place it is valued. However, it is difficult to judge the extent of local CPD (Branković, 2015). While CPD is formally linked to the career ladder, to promotion, and to salaries (Branković, 2015), current incentives are provided based on teachers' length of service and not on the quality of teaching that they deliver (interview, World Bank). As a result, most teachers recognize that CPD is a requirement for their careers and view it as an obligation. Teachers are less likely to recognize the value of CPD as a way of improving their competencies and, in particular, their teaching practice. Teachers and trainers alike believe that many teachers are not motivated to participate in the training that is offered (Branković, 2015).

APOSO summarizes the key problem areas regarding teacher education as follows:

1. The initial education of teachers, where a lack of standardized programs negatively influences the mobility of teachers and the quality of their education
2. Outdated curricula for teacher education
3. A lack of financial resources
4. Outdated skills and knowledge of teachers, which should be addressed through a comprehensive continuing professional development plan.

In terms of stakeholder activities, as mentioned above the key donor activity in this area is the EU-funded project for development of a qualifications framework for general education, including secondary education. In addition (also mentioned above), the OSCE worked on increasing the competencies of teachers at primary and secondary education to work with students on self-regulated learning.²²

The Norwegian Embassy has been involved in improving the competencies of teachers through the delivery of training in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton geared to working and teaching in a multicultural environment, which is directly related to key competencies 6 and 8 (social and civic competencies and cultural awareness) as identified by APOSO.

DVV International (Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association) has supported training in methodology and didactics in adult education for basic education and VET teachers, technical advisors and counselors from the educational institutes, and teachers from adult education organizations, including NGOs.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is currently implementing a nine-month program for continuing professional training in metal processing for all vocational metal-processing teachers in RS. The Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, through the Republic Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises, provides the training.

The ETF has begun a three-year project (2015–2018) for professional development for teachers and trainers, which will be implemented in Western Balkan countries.

²² More information also available at <http://www.osce.org/bih/108118?download=true>

The World Bank recognizes that there is a huge task ahead in assessing curricula prior to the accreditation of courses, but it currently does not have any plans for projects that directly tackle education issues. However, the World Bank Labor Team is preparing a report that will examine barriers to employment, and this should be indirectly connected to education.

Finally, as also mentioned above under pre-school education, future interventions in teacher training for basic education (regardless of whether it is targeted at pre-school, primary, or secondary education level) should model teacher training after CIVITAS experience.

Recommendations:

- Increase the quality of initial education of teachers in accordance with the EU system at all levels in BiH through a thorough assessment and overhaul of pre-service teacher training, with close collaboration between all in-country stakeholders.
- Examine the licensing and certification of teachers and introducing a system of rewarding good teachers and a framework for training and motivating student teachers, including an incentive scheme.
- The ETF official (interview, ETF) stressed a need for the development and implementation of a model for continuing professional development of teachers and has recommended revising the APOSO model for the improvement of CPD to make it functional in the BiH political context. The model's major focus is on planning, implementation, and evaluation. In each of these three phases, certain policy documents should be developed. Each educational institution should have a team created especially for the purpose of CPD. Such a team would develop a plan for professional development, outlining activities, priorities, and goals on an annual basis. The team should include a coordinator, teachers, and the school's director.
- Quality assurance processes should be developed to accredit CPD programs and providers, and also to monitor and evaluate the CPD provided. For the purpose of cost effectiveness and increased quality, opportunities for trans-Cantonal and trans-Entity partnerships to design and implement CPD on a larger scale should be explored, with a focus on priority vocational sectors. Professional standards for vocational teachers should be developed in order to inform needs assessment and planning and to allow a more systematic approach. Schools should be supported in identifying training needs and in CPD planning and monitoring. In addition, a greater variety of types of feedback for teachers could be developed, for example, peer observation, student questionnaires, self-assessment, and achievement data.
- CPD offerings should be communicated more effectively by publishing online catalogues at the start of the year and updating them during the year. Initially, catalogues could be developed at the Entity/Canton level and subsequently linked, if appropriate. Support and training should be provided to mentors to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities.
- All appropriate stakeholders, including employers and business representatives, should be engaged in policy-making and in the implementation of CPD. Increased cooperation with employers should be encouraged; for example, CPD for VET teachers could be provided on business premises together with company-based trainers.

Thematic Area 3: Programs in adult literacy and out-of-school youth programs

Programs in adult literacy and out-of-school youth programs that provide literacy, numeracy and basic life skills training (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills).

Adult education programs (both formal and informal) are regulated by legislation. To regulate adult learning and develop lifelong learning in the country, "Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina" and the "Strategic Adult Education Platform in the Context of Lifelong Learning in BiH 2014-2020" were adopted in 2014 by the Council of Ministers. At the Entity level, RS adopted the Law on Adult Education in 2009, and FBiH completed the draft of its Law on Adult Education in 2014. Since education is regulated at the Cantonal level in FBiH, the situation with regard to adult education differs among Cantons. A Law on Adult Education was adopted in Una-Sana Canton in May 2013; however, the development of bylaws and implementation of the law have been constrained by financial resources. Laws on adult education were completed in Canton Tuzla in 2014, as well as in the Cantons of Zenica-Doboj, Bosnian Podrinje, and Sarajevo.

Central Bosnia Canton began the development of a law on adult education in 2014, and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton expressed interest in developing such legislation in 2015. Western Herzegovina Canton is currently developing a Strategy for Adult Education and is interested in developing a law on adult education as well. Only Posavina Canton and Canton 10 have not yet begun the process of developing an adult learning policy. No adult education law has yet been adopted in Brčko District, although the government there adopted a development strategy, and, in an accompanying action plan, explained the need for improvement of the adult learning policy, including the adoption of adult learning legislation.

Literacy and primary and secondary adult education are continuously provided in practice, allowing people who have not completed their primary and secondary education to be included in the educational process. Certain schools in BiH are designated for these activities and can be contacted directly by such persons, allowing them to implement all necessary procedures for the acquisition of primary and secondary education in the fastest and best way possible. In addition, centers have been established to facilitate the acquisition by adults of supplementary training, retraining, and specific skills and knowledge (IT, foreign languages, etc.) (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2014).

In practice, NGOs account for one-third of the providers of adult education services (34.6 percent) (by formal/legal status). Public institutions supply 32.7 percent, and private organizations 32.7 percent. Adult education is provided in formal education (30.7 percent) and non-formal education venues (25.4 percent) followed by scientific and development organizations (11.4 percent), while trade union and professional associations provide only 2.6 percent of programs (Despotović, 2016).

Programs allowing adults to complete primary school, thereby reducing illiteracy, have been implemented in BiH. As part of the project "Support for Adult Learning," the relevant educational authorities in BiH signed memorandums of understanding with GIZ, with a focus on basic adult education. The most tangible achievements of this project have been the training of over 100 teachers in pedagogical skills for working with adult learners, and the subsequent

training of teacher trainers to ensure project sustainability, as well as the creation of an online database of adult education programs and opportunities available in the country.²³ This program is scheduled to be concluded in 2016.²⁴ Save the Children Norway developed the Accelerated Learning Program for the primary education of youth aged 15–18, focusing on those not in school and dropouts.

In general, adult education donors largely focus their efforts in this area on vocational education and training as defined under Thematic Area 4 in this report. The EU Delegation has not conducted activities in this field.

Recommendation:

- It is necessary to support further development of sub laws of the Laws on Adult Education that would facilitate finalization of formal education together with additional specialization of adult labor force in accordance with the labor market needs.

Thematic Area 4: Basic life skills components of workforce development program

Basic life skills components of workforce development programs, sometimes called workforce readiness skills (literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills).

The process of developing an overarching Qualifications Framework for BiH, aligned with the European Qualifications Framework started in 2008. In 2011, the Council of Ministers of BiH adopted the Baseline for the Qualifications Framework in BiH. The idea was to establish a clear foundation on which to develop more detailed and relevant qualifications for different purposes and for different groups of learners. The Action Plan for Implementation of the Baseline for the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH in February 2015. The EU supported this effort, but there have been political problems in implementing the project across the country (interview, MoCA). On March 7, 2016, a new EU-funded project—Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning—began. The Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is expected to further the development of a system of informal and non-formal education in VET and for adults. Finally, it is designed to contribute to the development of skills that better match the needs of the labor market. Moreover, the project will include the introduction of a credit-based system in secondary education. The EU also runs a lifelong learning program, of which a significant proportion is related to adult education (interview, EU Delegation).

While there is no workforce readiness skills policy as such in BiH, it has been recognized that the labor force in BiH requires more entrepreneurial skills. For this reason, the Strategy for Entrepreneurial Learning in Education System in BiH (2012 -2015) was created, but this has now expired. Moreover, the project “Entrepreneurial Learning in Education Systems (ELES) of Bosnia and Herzegovina—Phase II” was supported through Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) resources, but has now concluded. This project was devoted to introducing entrepreneurial learning into formal education at ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 levels

²³ <http://www.obuke.ba/>

²⁴ <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/21076.html>

(primary and secondary school levels) based on a cross-curricular approach, and into non-formal education as part of lifelong entrepreneurial learning. The aim of the project was to increase the employability of the labor force by reducing the gap between educational systems and business communities in BiH.

With education directed toward workforce development earmarked as a key priority in Bosnia and Herzegovina by many stakeholders, it is no surprise that it has received much support. Important donors include Germany and Switzerland, through GIZ and SDC, respectively, which have had a long-term engagement with vocational training, including basic education, and have invested in a wide array of skills and sectors. In the period 2010-2014, GIZ invested a more than USD \$3 million in vocational training and adult education geared toward the labor market. SDC invested over USD \$2.25 million during the same period, primarily through its "Skills for Jobs" initiative.

The Skills for Jobs initiative incorporated a number of programs, including the ongoing Prilika Plus program, which consists of interventions focusing on innovations in informal education in order to better match the knowledge and skills of workers with the needs of businesses, enabling a better functioning of job intermediation services, and supporting increased employability of young job-seekers. The current (second) phase of the initiative is due to run until November 2018, and has received funding of more than USD \$7 million in the period 2014–2018.

UNICEF BiH actively promotes an interactive learning process that enables students to gain knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes about healthy behavior. According to UNICEF,²⁵ life skills include critical thinking, decision-making, and communication with peers and adults, which is comparable to the general description of key competency 10 for BiH, Physical and health competencies. Education in this area includes HIV/AIDS prevention, STD prevention, reproductive health, and prevention of alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse. UNICEF, in partnership with US Embassy's CIVITAS, has included education about life skills in all secondary schools in BiH. Generally, the adult education in terms of basic education is not priority, but rather the re-qualification of adults (interview, Office of Public Affairs of the US Embassy). The next step would be the development of standards and a curriculum for informal education to support governmental endeavors.

Recommendations:

- One of the most important recommendations regarding entrepreneurial learning is that all employment offices offer regular education in the field of entrepreneurial learning (echoed in an interview with EU Delegation)
- Another important recommendation is the introduction of grants for those who provide entrepreneurial learning to adults, which would require quality assurance for both the providers and the programs. For example, grants for education in entrepreneurship, potentially through public-private partnerships and cooperative agreements could be provided.

²⁵ http://www.unicef.org/bih/ba/education_4798.html

- The Ministry of Civil Affairs stresses as a priority the inclusion of more long-term unemployed youth from rural areas in programs of prequalification/ additional qualifications.

Thematic Area 5: Community/familial engagement

Community participation focused on improving access and quality of schooling and youth development (e.g., parent teacher associations, school management committees, other community-based organizations supporting parental engagement, girls' enrollment, inclusive education and/or local accountability for school management and use of resources).

Cooperation between parents and schools is institutionalized through parent councils (Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH, Article 53), while students are included in student councils (Article 54). According to the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH, parents and guardians are the basic educators of their children and exercise rights and obligations resulting from that role in accordance with this law and other regulations (Article 22). Parents have the right and obligation to choose the type of education their child will acquire, according to what they believe is in the best interest of the child. This choice of education is subject to availability, provided that such a choice exercises the right of the child to appropriate education (Article 23).

The current level of parental participation in school life is low, and parents are poorly informed about their rights and obligations. They are also poorly informed about their child's potential and choices for continuing the child's education in high school. Even though some parents actively participate in parent councils, there is a general lack of interest in becoming involved in school life.

The parent councils in general seem to exist on a purely perfunctory level: a council is formed, but it is made up of "suitable" parents who often support the decisions of the school's director (principal) without question or discussion (Education Support Program, 2009). School councils are defined differently at different levels in BiH (see Annex), but parental involvement is largely focused on the organization of events, renovation of facilities, tidying the school yard, etc. The school directors consider communication between parents and the subject and form teachers as positive in general, while parents are significantly dissatisfied with their communication with Ministries of Education. According to the Cross-National Survey of School Principals, over 70 percent of principals in BiH consider that parental participation in school life leads to enhanced student educational performance. Moreover, more than 40 percent of school principals consider that parental participation is positively associated with the way in which parents relate to the school (Cross-National Survey of School Principals, 2009, OSI).

The participation of community and business representatives is particularly important in vocational education and training. Although Article 5 of the Framework Law on VET in BiH prescribes the establishment of VET councils in each Canton/Entity/Brčko District, most Cantons have yet to establish them. A VET council should include education representatives, local community representatives, and employers, and should support improvement of the curricula at the Cantonal/Entity level. Moreover, although Article 18 mandates the establishment of an advisory board in each school, most still lack one. It is recommended that

an advisory board be composed of local employers, to help guide curricular improvement, foster connections between the school and employers, and organize practical classes.

The slow process of adapting curricula to labor market needs has been the major complaint by companies according to a number of research reports (ETF, 2013, Prilika Plus, 2015). The curricula for certain subjects (IT) have not been changed since 2003 and for some not since 1994. Schools are allowed to change up to 30 percent of its curriculum independently, while the rest is established by the responsible Ministry through an extensive bureaucracy (Article 9 of the Framework Law on VET in BiH, 2008). On the other hand, according to an ETF report (2013), faculty are not in favor of changing the teaching program, because they fear that they might lose their jobs as their knowledge of their field becomes outdated. In addition, communication with the Ministries and conveying new ideas, especially regarding curricula, is very difficult.

Beside policy reforms in this area, little on-the-ground activity has been undertaken by donors to encourage education stakeholders in the country to establish community- or parent-led councils or committees to assist in the direction of school policies and activities. This is largely a civil rights issue; many community members are unaware of the schools' obligation to involve them in the decision-making process.

OSCE's monitoring of the politicization of school boards through its "Better Governance, Better Schools" project has resulted in the initiation of a project aimed at encouraging citizens to actively participate in schools' decision-making processes. Project staff have worked directly with parent councils to create an Index for Inclusion assessment program, in line with Thematic Area I, facilitating the appraisal of schools' efforts toward inclusivity and access to education. The Center for Civil Initiatives had a campaign for the depoliticization of education in 2009 that focused on the direct election of school directors by parents and teachers. This indirectly had a positive influence on the inclusion of parents and community members in school life in Cantons where the project was implemented: Bosnian Podrinje, Sarajevo, Una-Sana, and Herzegovina-Neretva.²⁶

As mentioned under primary education, the US Embassy's CIVITAS initiative in civic education engagement of primary and secondary school students with the local governance in their communities was achieved.

Recommendations:

- To increase inclusion in the education process and enhance dialogue (in accordance with the Framework Law on VET in BiH), the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH should set as a priority the establishment of VET councils in Cantons that have not yet established them. The World Bank sees this initiative as a positive move. In addition, there is an urgent need for the establishment of advisory boards in schools. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation strongly favors this activity and would be interested in supporting it.
- Awareness among parents about their right to participate in parent councils should be raised. An awareness campaign could be implemented, targeting, in particular, families

²⁶ <http://www.cci.ba/campaigns/1/3/4.html>

at risk of marginalization, to make parents aware of their right to involvement in the process of their child's formal education.

Thematic Area 6: Education system reforms including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations

Education system reforms for pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels, as well as non-formal education, including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations.

Regardless of the education level, most strategic documents in BiH have expired (interview, MoCA), with the exception of Action Plan for the Implementation of a Qualifications Framework in BiH, a Road Map for the Regulation of Professional Qualifications, and a Strategy for Preschool Education (which has yet to be adopted). There is an urgent need for their redevelopment and renewal. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH explained that key strategic documents must be developed at the State level in order to access funds under the new EU IPA. Therefore, the Ministry has planned, in cooperation with Save the Children, to undertake, by September 2016, a review of the General Strategy for the Education Sector (Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in BiH with the Implementation Plan 2008–2015). After that, a proposal to create a new Strategy will be submitted to the Council of Ministers of BiH.

Since the expiration of the previous VET Strategy in 2013, there has been no Strategy for VET at the State level.

While guidance on statistical reporting in education has been developed (interview, MoCA), which will facilitate the collection of all data needed for required reporting to international organizations (EUROSTAT, UNESCO), this has not yet been implemented. There is a lack of data in education at all levels, and data collection is not adequately supported (interview, MoCA).

A Sectoral Planning Document for Education and Employment has been developed and is expected to be submitted to the Council of Ministers in April 2016 (interview, Ministry of Civil Affairs, BiH). If everything goes according to plan, in May and June 2016 Terms of Reference will be drafted for two years. However, political problems may arise that are indirectly linked to the document's coordination, and it is possible that it may not be accepted by the individual entities. The EU Delegation has advocated sectoral budget support, which means that it will provide direct support to the budget of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina for a certain degree of reform in the above-mentioned areas. Therefore, those areas/sectors where strategic documents exist at the State level are eligible to be included. (For sectors to be involved, there must be strategic sectoral documents at the State level). The final amount of the IPA, which will range between €30 and €70 million, is dependent on meeting this requirement (interview, EU Delegation). The plan is that the IPA II phase will run until 2020. It will include education, employment, social inclusion, and the development of small enterprises. However, support for Republika Srpska is still not guaranteed.

The OSCE has stressed curricular reform, primarily with a human and civil rights foundation at the forefront. A major emphasis has been placed on the teaching of history and the inclusion of the history of minorities in curricula (in line with key competency 8: Cultural awareness).²⁷

The German government has had input into curricular development in certain parts of the country in regard to the teaching of German as a second language (key competency 2). Norway has also recently (in 2013) provided funds to the BiH government to facilitate curricular reform.

Recommendations:

- All key stakeholders agree that there is a need for further development of data collection and external assessment mechanisms. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH stressed the need for support for data collection at the State level. The World Bank emphasized that improved dialogue on external student assessment mechanisms is needed, and monitoring of educational performance should be a priority. The EU Delegation confirmed as well the importance of the implementation of PISA testing and prioritizes its implementation in 2018 in BiH.
- IPA II is focused heavily on education aimed at employment. BiH needs documentation for each sector/sub-sector in order to access funds. The formulation of new strategic documents in this regard should be seen as a priority.
- The Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH highlighted a need for support in the development of all relevant strategies in education that would facilitate access to new IPA funds. Support is needed for:
 - Development of a new Education Strategy for BiH
 - Development of a new VET Strategy for BiH

²⁷ <http://www.osce.org/bih/108118?download=true>

Recommendations for USAID Interventions

The effectiveness of education is based on quality and equity. There are many models that explain the elements and processes of an effective education system. By looking at these models and the activities of the stakeholders in BiH, the assessment team identified three approaches:

1. **Key competencies and life skills for labor markets:** Basic education includes key competencies. Although basic education in BiH is usually interpreted through two key competencies—literacy and numeracy—this perspective should be broadened according to the European Union frame of key competencies.
2. **Human rights:** Attainment of basic education is one of the main human rights in terms of education. Projects reported in this document also deal with inclusive education. It is almost impossible to separate basic education from inclusion processes.
3. **Social justice.** All projects should have the promotion of social justice as a main goal. Approaches to the delivery of basic education in Bosnia and Herzegovina currently have a structural social injustice and discriminatory impact.

Based on the findings of this brief assessment, assessment team identified that the area requiring urgent attention is in key competencies and life skills that build knowledge society and support economic growth.

To improve these competencies, the following eight possible basic education interventions were identified:

1. **Development of operational teaching curriculum in mathematics based on the learning outcomes defined in the adopted outcome-based core mathematics curriculum.** This would entail preparation of a teaching plan and methods in order to achieve learning outcomes defined in the Common Core Curriculum for Mathematics Based on Learning Outcomes already developed by the Agency for Preschool, Primary, and Secondary Education of BiH.
2. **Adjustment of curricula for initial education of teachers by expanding the required number of courses/credits in subjects essential for teaching competencies in pedagogy, psychology, didactics, and teaching methods (PPDM).**
3. **Revision of the system for continuous professional development of teachers** to include development based on needs assessment, long-term planning, mentoring and coaching, as well as monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance. Systemic support for continuous professional development must be ensured in all education institutions, and knowledge transfer and behavioral change should be encouraged.
4. **Upgrade of education information systems** to better align data collection and processing with the decision-making needs. **Capacity building and training in the use of the information system, data analysis, and monitoring and evaluation in order to facilitate evidence-based teaching and decision-making.**
5. **Revision of the system of acquiring teaching competencies for non-teachers and capacity building of non-teachers.**

6. **Technical assistance and support for development of strategic policy documents at the State level**, needed for drawing of future IPA funds.
7. Development of **legislation and models for additional specialization of the adult labor force in accordance with labor market needs**.
8. **Establishment of Vocation Education and Training (VET) Councils** where not established.

The assessment team believes that the most effective use of USAID/BiH funds in the immediate short term would be to focus on the first two recommendations, based on the following criteria:

- **interventions should take into account limited financial resources,**
- **interventions should focus on solving the technical complexities which are essential for children’s competencies, and**
- **interventions should focus on solving core issues rather than alleviating the symptoms.**

A separate document with details on background, rationale, and inputs for program description for these two recommendations for a possible USAID/BiH intervention was prepared by MEASURE-BiH and submitted to USAID/BiH.

Annex I: List of Interviewees

1. Flora Kelmendi, Acting Head of BiH Office, World Bank, telephone interview, 02/26/2016
2. Adnan Hušić, Assistant Minister, Section for Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH; Daria Duilović, Head of Department for Educational Policy, Section for Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH; and Aida Durić, Head of Department for EU Integration and International Cooperation, Section for Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, in-person interview, 02/23/2016
3. Jadranka Mihić, Task Manager, EU Delegation to BiH, in-person interview, 02/23/2016
4. Samir Avdibegovic, British Council, in-person interview, 02/22/2016
5. Julian Stanley, Specialist, Thematic Policy Unit, Operations Department, European Training Foundation, telephone interview, 02/29/2016
6. Dobrila Govedarica, Open Society Foundation BiH, in-person interview, 03/11/2016
7. Abid Fejzić and Indira Mešić, Ministry of Education and Youth in Sarajevo Canton, in-person interview, 03/10/2016
8. Representative from the Ministry of Education in Una-Sana Canton, email correspondence, 10/03/2016
9. Representative from the Ministry of Education in Bosnian Podrinje Canton, email correspondence, 03/03/2016
10. Representative from the Ministry of Education in Posavina Canton, email correspondence 04/03/2016
11. Žaneta Džumhur and Hašim Ćurak, Agency for Pre-school, Primary and Secondary School in BiH, in-person interview 02/26/2016
12. Ivona Čelebičić, proMENTE social research, in-person interview, 03/05/2016
13. Radmila Rangelov Jusić, CEI Step by Step, email correspondence, 02/23/2016a
14. Fatima Smajlović, Save the Children, email correspondence, 02/29/2016
15. Nina Ninković, RS Pedagogical Institute, in-person interview, 03/02/2016
16. Staka Nikolić, RS Pedagogical Institute, in-person interview, 03/02/2016
17. Dijana Pejić, Genesis Banja Luka, in-person interview, 03/11/2016
18. Valerija Tišma, OSCE, in-person interview, 03/01/2016
19. Ivanka Matović, OSCE, telephone interview, 03/05/2016
20. Rahela Džidić, Office of Public Affairs of the US Embassy, in-person interview, 03/16/2016

Annex II: Parents Councils

Cross-National Survey of School Principals, 2009, OSI

Administrative unit	Who can be member?	Establishment Procedure	Co-council
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Parents	Defined by general school acts	
Republika Srpska	Parents	Defined by school statute	✓
Una-Sana Canton	18 Parents and 3 teachers	Defined by school regulations	
Posavina Canton	Parents, teachers, school administration, students, all interested community members	Defined by general school acts	
Tuzla Canton	Parents	Defined by the Cantonal Minister of Education	✓
Zenica-Doboj Canton	Parents		
Bosnian Podrinje Canton	Parents, teachers, school administration, students, all interested community members	Defined by general school acts and by each council independently	
Central Bosnia Canton	Parents, teachers, school representatives (teachers, students, and school administration), all interested community members	Defined by general school acts and by council statute	✓
Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	Parents constitute the majority	Defined by general school acts	
West Herzegovina Canton	Parents	Defined by school statute	✓
Sarajevo Canton	One parent from each class		✓
Canton 10	Parents, teachers, school administration, students, all interested community members	Defined by general school acts	
Brčko District	Parents	Defined by general school acts	

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MONITORING AND EVALUATION
SUPPORT ACTIVITY (MEASURE-BiH)

Fra. Anđela Zvizdovića 1
UNITIC Tower B, Floor 21
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Phone: +(387) 033 941 676
contacts@measurebih.com