REDUCING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH'S LEARNING IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

RAPID SITUATION AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT- EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

PHASE II

UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNESCO Bosnia and Herzegovina

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ACRONYMS

BiH	**Bosnia and Herzegovina**
BAM	**Bosnia and Herzegovina Convertible Mark**
BD	**Brcko District**
COVID-19	**Coronavirus disease**
EU	**European Union**
FBiH	**Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina**
ICT	**Information and Communication Technology**
ISCED	**International Standard Classification of Education**
PISA	**Programme for International Student Assessment**
PPE	**Personal Protective Equipment**
RS	**Republika Srpska**
SDG	**Sustainable Development Goals**
UN	**United Nations**
UNESCO	**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**
UNICEF	**United Nations Children's Fund**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted education for 1.6 billion children and youth worldwide, threatening to exacerbate the already existing learning crisis. Approximately 500,000 children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) were affected by country-wide preschool, school and university closures from mid-March 2020. While there is emerging global evidence on the negative impact of school closures on the lives of children and youth, the long-term consequences of the pandemic are yet to be assessed.

UNICEF and UNESCO jointly conducted the Rapid Situation and Needs Assessment - Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Phase II) in June 2020, aiming to obtain an overview of the current situation and needs in the education sector, considering the COVID-19 pandemic. The data was collected from 15 education authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) via questionnaire with a 100 per cent response rate (Annex 2). The presented data refers to the period from mid-March to mid-June 2020. This report aims to inform the UN and BiH education authorities' response to the COVID-19 pandemic and can be used for further analysis and actions based on the recommendations.

Education authorities included the majority of children in e-learning - 99 per cent of children and youth enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary education had basic access to e-learning. But BiH continued to have children and youth out-of-school and children and youth without adequate access to information communication technology (ICT) and Internet. Roma children were disproportionately affected - representing at least 6 per cent of children without access to ICT and Internet. Although there were no reported students in tertiary education without access to e-learning, education authorities should further assess this due to the possible lack of data. Pre-schoolers were the biggest out-of-school group during the lockdown - 82 per cent of children interrupted their preschool attendance during the preschool closure between mid-March and mid-May 2020. Considering only 25 per cent of children in BiH attended preschools prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this sector is particularly vulnerable.

Education authorities in different administrative units of the country opted for local-specific quality assurance mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the approaches are similar in some areas, there are differences in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, which are elaborated in this assessment. Since in BiH the education sector is highly decentralised, there has been a broad diversity of approaches to e-learning and there is not one e-learning platform. Schools in BiH most frequently used simple communication tools for e-learning and only some education authorities provided their teachers with training opportunities.

Safe school re-opening may represent another challenge for education authorities, requiring multi-sectoral strategic planning and balancing health risks with ensuring education quality, learning continuity and adequate and tailor-made education financing based on specific needs. This assessment finds there is a tendency to decrease education sector budgets to redirect funds to other affected sectors. The estimated education sector cumulative budget cut in 2020 is BAM 14,775,853 and represents 1.1 per cent of the overall public expenditure for formal education.

This assessment generates the following main recommendations which are further specified for education and other relevant authorities in BiH and the UN BiH response and recovery planning.

	EDUCATION AND OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITIES IN BIH	UN BIH
ENSURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH	Integrate e-learning and blended learning modalities into the existing education legislative frameworks. Improve real-time and digital data collection and management, with provided segregation of data related to access to education for children and youth from vulnerable groups. Assess in more detail the issues children, youth and teachers face regarding access to e-learning. Continue to improve access to ICT and Internet for children, youth and teachers. This also includes provision of assistive technology and support for children with disabilities, partnership with private sector to ensure universal Internet access, etc. Continue to monitor potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall enrolment in preschool education and intensify efforts to improve access. Intensify support to families whose jobs are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic by providing affordable childcare. Intensify development of different remote learning opportunities for preschool-aged children in case of further disruptions by combining different modalities of learning (such as TV classes and e-learning). Further develop e-learning modalities which use advanced software solutions and scale-up the number of schools which are capacitated to use the advanced software.	Support education authorities in strengthening their monitoring of access to e-learning at all levels of education and strengthening their data management mechanisms (with special focus on vulnerable groups of children and youth). Support education authorities to ensure the continuum of learning for all children and youth, by improving access to adequate ICT and Internet (with focus on vulnerable groups of children and youth such as Roma). This can also include further advocacy to ensure universal access to Internet for all children and youth and provision of assistive technology for children with disabilities. Continue to monitor potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall enrolment in preschool education and support the authorities in strengthening preschool education sector. Support education authorities to improve access to preschool education during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies by developing capacities to implement innovative e-learning modalities and supporting development of TV content for young children and their parents.

	Enable catch-up programmes for practical tertiary education on all universities.	
ENSURING QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH	Assess the impact of the school closures on learning, with focus on vulnerable children and youth, such as young children, Roma and children with disabilities. Further develop monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms of e-learning and blended learning. Conduct evaluations of e-learning during the school closures and provide recommendations for its improvement. Continue developing and scaling-up the online and blended professional development programmes. Identify and support marginalized teachers to provide them with resources for improving their digital skills and the quality of e-teaching. Continue to develop innovative students' assessment methods to be applied in e-learning and blended learning. Re-imagine education and accelerate teaching and learning- the COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with a unique opportunity to speed up innovations and education sector reforms. Exchange experiences with other education authorities in BiH on good practices and lessons learned on education during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve further education responses.	Support education authorities to assess further the impact of the pandemic on the quality of learning and support international, regional and local experience sharing. Support education authorities in further development of professional development programmes for improving the quality of e-learning. Support education authorities in integrating the blended learning approaches into their education sector reforms.
ENSURING SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOLS	In collaboration and coordination with health and other relevant authorities and stakeholders, develop school re-opening plans in line with the Framework for safe school re-opening. Anticipate possible further disruptions in learning when developing action plans- there should be no single schedule for re-opening of schools.	Support education authorities in development of their action plans for safe school re-opening by providing global and regional resources. Support safe work of preschools and schools by providing materials, equipment and technical expertise.

ENSURING ADEQUATE FINANCING OF EDUCATION	Mobilise resources by protecting and increasing education budgets for safe re-opening of schools and strengthening school resilience to disruptions in education. Protect and increase targeted financing for vulnerable children and youth.	Provide policy recommendations to education authorities for cost efficient safe school re-opening. Advocate towards decision makers on possible negative impacts of the education sector budget cuts and the need to invest in safe school re-opening.

BACKGROUND

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has caused the largest disruption of education in history - 94 per cent of learners worldwide were affected, representing 1.58 billion children and youth from pre-primary to higher education, in 200 countries[1]. From mid-March 2020, approximately 500,000[2] children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) were affected by country-wide preschool, school and university closures. Alongside with many other countries, BiH has responded to the disruption in learning by introducing various remote and online teaching modalities.

In BiH, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the area of education was decentralised, in line with its governance structure. There are 15 authorities in BiH governing education, namely - the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska and the Ministry of Scientific and Technological Development, Higher Education and Information Society of Republika Srpska, ten cantonal ministries of education in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Department for Education of Brcko District of BiH Government. Furthermore, there are two ministries having a coordinating role- the Federal Ministry for Education and Science coordinates the ten cantonal ministries in FBiH and the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH is entrusted for state-level coordination. The country has 326 preschools (ISCED 0) attended by 30,587 children, 1,785 primary schools (ISCED 1, ISCED 3) attended by 273,795 children, 315 secondary schools (ISCED 3) attended by 112,933 children and 31 higher education institutions[3] (ISCED 5, ISCED 6, ISCED 7) attended by 79,886 students[4].

While the evidence to measure the effect of school closures on the risk of the virus transmission is still scarce, there is significant evidence on the adverse effects of school closures on children's and youth's learning, wellbeing and safety. Children and youth attending all levels of education are at risk for learning loss. For instance, the percentage of children who do not reach basic proficiency in reading measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) may increase from the current 53 per cent to 61 per cent in the Western Balkans region[5].

School closures can further widen equity gaps, considering the increased risk of vulnerable groups of children and youth for dropping out of education. Children with disabilities, children on the move, girls and boys from ethnic minorities and children living in poverty can be

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[1] Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and Beyond. United Nations. August 2020

[2] Agency for Statistics BiH, available at: http://bhas.gov.ba/Calendar/Category/15

[3] Full list of higher education institutions available at Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, http://hea.gov.ba/akreditacija_vsu/

[4] Agency for Statistics BiH, available at: http://bhas.gov.ba/Calendar/Category/15

[5] The Economic and Social Impact of COVID-19- Education, Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No 17, World Bank Group, Spring 2020.

disproportionately deprived of access to education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. If families are pushed into severe poverty, empirical evidence shows that children from households in the poorest quintiles are more likely to drop out of education. Thus, combined economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the school closures can have generational consequences[6]. The economic loss in education might reach $16,000 of lost earnings over a student's lifetime, translating into $10 trillion of lost earnings globally[7].

Effects of the prolonged school closures can extend beyond education. Schools are providing many essential services to children and youth, such as health and nutrition and psychosocial services. School closures can have disproportionate negative effect on girls and women, as they are more vulnerable to multiple types of abuse, such as domestic violence, transactional sex and early and forced marriages. Greater share of childcare due to school closures for women can contribute to higher earning gaps, and consequentially widen the gender inequality[8].

Considering the increase of COVID-19 cases in BiH and worldwide in July-August 2020, disruptions in education can be expected in the school year 2021-2022. Education authorities in the country will need to continue adapting to the "new normal", while preventing and minimising learning loss and equity gaps. While the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented disruption of education, it is also an opportunity for all countries, including BiH, to reconsider some of the traditional education practices and to speed up innovations in the sector.

This report presents the findings of the Rapid Situation and Needs Assessment in Education in BiH, Phase II, conducted by UNICEF and UNESCO in BiH. The data was collected from 10 June to 18 July 2020 and covers the period mid-March mid-June 2020. This report builds on the previous Rapid Situation and Needs Assessment in Education in BiH (Phase I) which UNICEF conducted in March 2020.

METHODOLOGY

UNICEF and UNESCO developed the Rapid Situation and Needs Assessment in Education questionnaire (Annex 2) which was distributed to 15 education authorities in BiH (Annex 1) in June 2020. The questionnaire was distributed via email and the designated education authorities' officials provided the responses. The response rate was 100 per cent. The questionnaire was developed based on UNICEF's Rapid Situation and Needs Assessment in Education Phase I conducted in March 2020, with the addition of items related to the areas of higher education and education sector financing. The questionnaire was modified for the cantonal, entity and state-level education authorities based on their area of jurisdiction. The data was collected in line with the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation,

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[6] Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and Beyond. United Nations. August 2020
[7] World Bank, "COVID-19 Could Lead to Permanent Loss in Learning and Trillions of Dollars in Lost Earnings" , 18 June 2020, available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/06/18/covid-19-could-lead-to-permanent-loss-in-learning-and-trillions-of-dollars-in-lost-earnings.
[8] Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and Beyond. United Nations. August 2020

Data Collection and Analysis[9] and the Grand Bargain Principles for Coordinated Needs Assessment Ethos[10].

The purpose of the Phase II assessment is to provide an updated situation overview on education in BiH from mid-March to mid-June 2020, disaggregated per education administrative unit. This report aims to inform the UN and BiH education authorities' response to the COVID-19 pandemic and can be used for further analysis and actions based on the recommendations.

RESULTS

Ensuring access to education for all children and youth

After the school closures in mid-March 2020, due to COVID-19 pandemic, education authorities quickly introduced e-learning and other distance learning mechanisms adjusted to the respective level of education. Since e-learning was a novelty for almost all administrative units[11], many education authorities in BiH were faced with legal challenges. Seven out of twelve education authorities reported having laws and bylaws which were not recognising the e-learning modalities or were not adjusted to the e-learning context. Accordingly, the affected administrative units issued ad-hoc decisions and instructions aimed to mitigate the encountered challenges.

Preschool education

Most education authorities closed all preschools during the lockdown. In Republika Srpska 11 public and 13 private preschools (out of 174) remained open for 313 children. While most education authorities did not organize preschool e-learning, in some administrative units (Republika Srpska, Sarajevo Canton, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and Central Bosnia Canton) children aged 3 to 6 were able to attend online activities. In Una-Sana Canton, although preschool e-learning was not organized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, there were examples of preschools whose management self-initiated it. Online obligatory/ preparatory preschool education for children 5 to 6 was organized in Sarajevo Canton and Posavina Canton. Brcko District Department for Education organized TV preschool education for five-year-olds- the TV series "Školica" was broadcast on the local TV station, developed in cooperation with the local preschool.

Considering the limitations of e-learning for young children, preschool education was particularly challenging. Graph 1 presents the percentage of children in BiH who attended/ stopped attending preschool education during the preschool closure (from mid-March 2020 to mid-May/beginning of June 2020): 82 per cent of children who attended preschool prior to the

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[9] Available at: https://www.unicef.org/media/54796/file
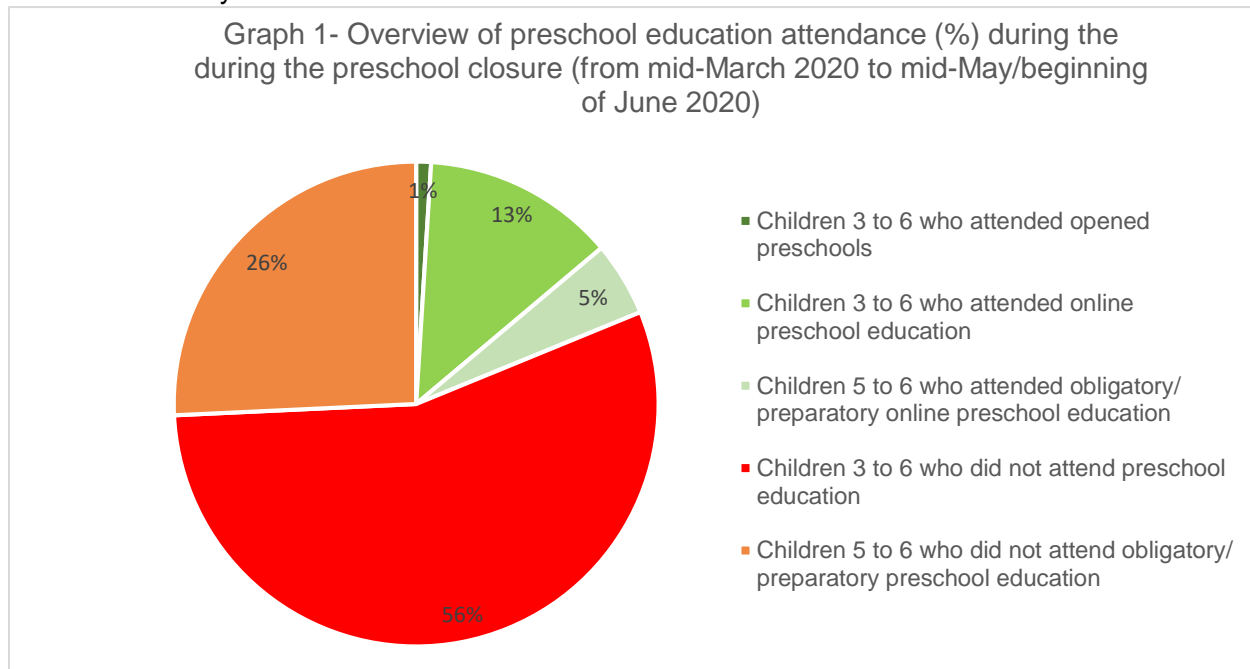
[10] Available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/ws5_-_collaborative_needs_assessment_ethos.pdf

[11] With the exception of Sarajevo Canton which had previously introduced e-learning weeks (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian-"online nastavna sedmica") in a limited number of schools.

pandemic have interrupted their education[12], while only 1 per cent attended open preschools, 13 per cent of children 3 to 6 attended online preschool education and 5 per cent of children 5 to 6 attended obligatory/ preparatory online preschool programmes. Out of children who attended some form of preschool education during the preschool closure, there were no reported Roma children and 19 were children with disabilities.[13] This demonstrates that pre-schoolers were the biggest out-of-school group during the lockdown. The disruption of preschool education is a concern as preschool enrolment rate in BiH prior to the pandemic was only 25 per cent[14]. Considering the wider impacts of the pandemic on socio-economic trends in the country, preschool enrolment can be additionally affected by the loss of jobs and family income, which should be closely monitored.

Graph 1- Overview of preschool education attendance (%) during the during the preschool closure (from mid-March 2020 to mid-May/beginning of June 2020)

- Children 3 to 6 who attended opened preschools
- Children 3 to 6 who attended online preschool education
- Children 5 to 6 who attended obligatory/ preparatory online preschool education
- Children 3 to 6 who did not attend preschool education
- Children 5 to 6 who did not attend obligatory/ preparatory preschool education

Preschool education was interrupted for most children from mid-March 2020. Depending on the location, preschools were re-opened during the period 18 May- 1 June 2020. The education authorities identified the following main challenges in the process of re-opening preschools:

a) *Lack of the needed equipment and materials* for safe re-opening, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfection materials and thermometers.

b) *Complex re-organisation of work* in line with the epidemiological recommendations, including organizing smaller groups, increased workload of teachers and challenges in communication with teachers and parents. Some preschools struggled with larger demands than their limited

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[12] Refers to children who attended preschools, and then interrupted during the pandemic. Please note there are also units which cancelled the obligatory/ preparatory preschool programmes planned to start in April/ March.

[13] Please note that some education authorities were not able to provide full data segregation.

[14] Country Programme Document for Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF 2020.

capacities. For instance, in Posavina Canton preschools had to select children who would be the first to attend them.

c) *Issues with children's health and wellbeing*, including work with children who had trouble re-adapting and children who experienced trauma during the preschool closure.

Primary and secondary education

All education authorities introduced e-learning and distance learning modalities in primary and secondary schools shortly upon the school closure and all students completed their school year online in June/July 2020[15]. A total of 1,695 children interrupted their attendance in primary schools, which is 0.6 per cent of the total primary school children population. Children who interrupted attendance in primary schools were identified in Una-Sana Canton (1,200 children or 6.3 per cent of children), Zenica-Doboj Canton (445 children or 1.4 per cent), Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (21 children or 0.1 per cent) and Brcko District (29 children or 0.5 per cent, all of whom are Roma). A total of 393 children interrupted attendance in secondary schools, which is 0.3 per cent of the total number of secondary school children. They are from Una-Sana Canton (205 children or 2.4 per cent), Brcko District (79 children or 2.8 per cent), Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (4 children or 0.1 per cent) and Zenica-Doboj Canton (105 children or 2.8 per cent).

The Phase I assessment estimated there were 9,765 primary and secondary school children in BiH unable to follow online classes due to the lack of available ICT. Education authorities reported a 50 per cent decrease of the number of children without access to ICT and Internet as part of the Phase II assessment (in total 4,815 children). This decrease could be the result of support from the international community and local resource mobilisation as part of the initial response of education authorities to COVID-19 pandemic.

At least 6 per cent of the total number of children without access are Roma (286) and 1 per cent (50) are children with disabilities[16]. It is important to note that not all children who had access to ICT and Internet had optimum conditions for learning - according to UNICEF's U-report in BiH, 35 per cent of young people faced difficulties with access such as the lack of devices and Internet, but also the necessity to share the devices within the household and the lack of appropriate space for learning. Education authorities identified 523 primary and secondary school teachers who did not have access to ICT devices and Internet, which is 1.4 per cent of the total number of teachers. Most of them (390) were from Central Bosnia Canton.

As reported in the Phase I assessment, schools were distributing printed materials for children without access, either to be picked up by parents or sent by post. Some teachers provided instructions via telephone. Education authorities mobilised their community resources to obtain ICT devices and Internet for children without access, such as approaching to major telecom companies to provide free Internet, engaging international donors and establishing partnerships
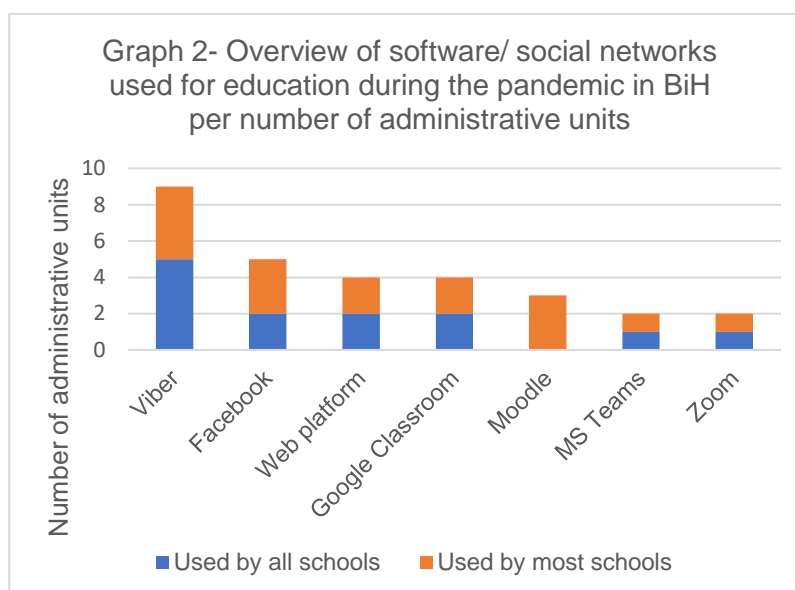
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[15] Date depending on in which area children live and what grade are they (last grades of primary and secondary school have shorter school year).

[16] Total number of Roma and children with disabilities reported by the education authorities, but with considerations that not all authorities were able to provide data segregation. Hence, the total number might be higher.

with the private sector and parent associations. Some administrative units had available ICT resources which were lent to children during the school closure. For instance, Republika Srpska education authorities distributed the ICT equipment procured as part of the "Dositej" project[17] to students in need.

Education authorities and schools opted for different software/ communication tools to implement e-learning. Some units have developed and used web platforms, such as e-Nastava in Republika Srpska, e-Škola in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, and skole.sum in West Herzegovina Canton, Posavina Canton and Canton 10. Una-Sana Canton education authorities piloted their newly developed platform within a smaller number of schools.

Graph 2 presents the most common software and communication tools used in education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The schools most frequently used Viber- a communication platform which allows messaging and (video) calling, while more complex tools such as Google Classroom and MS Office were used less frequently. This implies that many children and teaches did not exercise e-learning and e-teaching in its full scope regarding available ICT resources.

Graph 2- Overview of software/ social networks used for education during the pandemic in BiH per number of administrative units

Number of administrative units

Viber, Facebook, Web platform, Google Classroom, Moodle, MS Teams, Zoom

■ Used by all schools   ■ Used by most schools

Seven education authorities combined online classes with TV instructions, which were mostly organized for children in lower primary grades (ISCED 1). Children in upper primary grades (ISCED 2) and in gymnasiums (ISCED 3) were able to follow TV instructions in some administrative units, as per Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of administrative units which used TV classes during the COVID-19 pandemic

Administrative units in which TV classes were used	Level of education
Posavina Canton	ISCED 1, 2 and 3
Canton 10	ISCED 1, 2 and 3
Republika Srpska	ISCED 1 and 2
Sarajevo Canton	ISCED 1 and 2
Tuzla Canton	ISCED 1
Una-Sana Canton	ISCED 1
West Herzegovina Canton	ISCED 1

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[17] One child-one computer initiative.

Tertiary education

Education authorities closed all tertiary education institutions (8 public and 23 private institutions)[18] during the COVID-19 pandemic as of mid-March 2020[19]. Online teaching and student consultations with teachers were established at all tertiary education institutions shortly after the country-wide school closure. Concerning the completion of the academic school year 2019/2020, in three administrative units (Sarajevo Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton and Central Bosnia Canton) the academic year will finish online[20]. On the other hand, in four administrative units classes will end as before the pandemic (in Republika Srpska, Brcko District, Tuzla Canton and Una-Sana Canton), while one respondent (Herzegovina-Neretva Canton) answered that data was not available at the moment of reporting. Decision on the completion of the school year would largely depend on development of the epidemiological situation and health authorities' recommendations.

11 March - Republika Srpska and Brcko District

12 March - Sarajevo Canton and Tuzla Canton , Herzegovina-Neretva Canton

13 March - Central Bosnia Canton, Una-Sana Canton

16 March - Zenica-Doboj Canton

Education authorities reported having no insight into data on students who were unable to participate in online classes due to lack of ICT equipment and/or Internet access. Reason for this is that there were no specific data collected so far and no evaluations conducted. Only Zenica-Doboj Canton reported that they are planning to conduct an evaluation of distance learning in tertiary-level education.

Practical classes as compulsory part of education and examinations at many technical and medicine-related tertiary education programmes could not be implemented during the university closure. Except for Central Bosnia Canton, all units are planning a catch-up of practical classes. At the time of reporting, catch-up practical classes after the lockdown period were organized in two administrative units (Tuzla Canton and Una-Sana Canton). Concerning the modality of the implementation of the catch-up practical classes, education authorities reported that academic calendars were revised, and the university units were tasked to schedule catch-up classes according to their capacities and further trends in the epidemiological situation (Table 2).

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[18] Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, available at: http://hea.gov.ba/akreditacija_vsu/

[19] Higher education institutions operate in eight administrative units in BiH: Republika Srpska, Brcko District, Sarajevo Canton, Tuzla Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and Central Bosnia Canton

[20] For tertiary-level education 2019/2020 academic year lasts until 30 September 2020.

Table 2. Overview of the organization of practice courses catching-up sessions per administrative units

Administrative unit	Practical classes catch-up planned	Explanation
Brcko District	YES	School calendar revised and practice courses planned
Republika Srpska	YES	Practical classes to be caught-up as soon as the epidemiological situations is improved
Sarajevo Canton	YES	All university units to set up schedules for practical catch-up classes according to their capacities and epidemiological situation development
Tuzla Canton	YES	Practical catch-up classes were organized in the first two weeks of June
Una-Sana Canton	YES	Practical catch-up classes in laboratories are currently being carried out
Hercegovina Neretva Canton	YES	Practical catch-up classes to be carried out per academic schedules of the faculties
Zenica-Doboj Canton	YES	Scientific and university boards and faculty deans are obliged to release decisions related to practical catch-up classes and extraordinary examination sessions, where appropriate
Central Bosnia Canton	NO	N/A

Ensuring access to education for all children and youth - summary of the main findings

Education authorities in BiH quickly mobilized resources to establish e-learning modalities from primary to tertiary-level education. Despite the sudden introduction of e-learning, almost all children and youth who were enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary education had access to it. Many authorities developed mechanisms to reach children and youth without adequate access by combining e-learning, distribution of hard copies of school materials and TV classes. However, ensuring universal access to education during the pandemic remains a challenge, especially for vulnerable children and youth, such as Roma, children with disabilities, children in poverty and young children. The list below summarizes the main findings regarding access to education.

Although some units organized e-learning and TV learning for preschoolers during the pandemic, the continuum of education was disrupted for 82 per cent of children enrolled in preschools.

Education authorities were faced with complex challenges in the process of preschool re-opening, such as the lack of the needed equipment and materials for safe re-opening, changed modalities of work, and issues with children's health and wellbeing.

Although the number of children without ICT and Internet access in primary and secondary education decreased in half, there were still out-of-school children during the pandemic. Roma children disproportionately lacked access to ICT and Internet.

Most schools used communication application Viber for e-learning, while other more advanced tools were used less frequently. TV classes were practised in seven units, mainly targeting children in lower primary grades.

Education authorities reported having no insight into data on students in higher education who were unable to participate at online classes due to lack of ICT equipment and/or Internet access. Almost all administrative units organized catch-up for disrupted practical classes.

Education authorities were faced with legal challenges in establishing and conducting e-learning, mitigated by producing ad-hoc decisions and instructions to education institutions.

Ensuring the quality of education for all children and youth

Students' achievement monitoring, evaluation and assessments

E-learning challenged education authorities in BiH to adjust the existing evaluation and assessment mechanisms to the given circumstances. Most authorities issued specific decisions/instructions for monitoring, evaluation and assessments of students' achievements and/or adjusted the relevant bylaws (example of instructions for students' achievement monitoring, evaluation and assessment from West Herzegovina Canton is provided in the Box 1). In this process, the authorities had to establish regulations which enabled only assessment process, especially when it comes to final grading. For instance, Zenica-Doboj Canton issued instructions by which teachers cannot give *Fail* as the final grade and the final grade cannot be lower than the grade at the end of the first school semester, to ensure the best interest of the child is respected.

External examinations were conducted in four administrative units (Tuzla Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Bosnia-Podrinje Canton and Zenica-Doboj Canton). Tuzla Canton organized examinations only for students who needed the results to apply to universities outside of BiH. In Zenica-Doboj Canton examinations were organized online and in some cases the examination materials were delivered by post. Una-Sana Canton conducted examinations in schools, with the introduction of epidemiological measures such as smaller groups of exam takers, obligatory mask-wearing, setting up exams in schools' sports hall, the usage of disinfection materials, etc.

Box 1- Example of students' achievement monitoring, evaluation and assessment instructions in West Herzegovina Canton

Lower grades of primary school (ISCED 1)

- It is not necessary to have numeric grades for all the subjects.
- It is not needed to conduct oral assessments.
- The teacher should monitor and assess the engagement of student-whether they have completed all the tasks, including complex assignments which synthesize learning, such as the development of posters, essays, drawings, mind maps, etc.

Upper grades of primary school (ISCED 2) and secondary school (ISCED 3)

- The teacher can grade the written assignments (e.g. essays), but real-time written assessments should not be conducted.
- For conduction of oral assessments via video call, the teacher must obtain approval from the student and caregivers.

Full text available at https://mozks-zzh.com/2020/04/27/upute-o-vrednovanju-i-ocjenjivanju-ucenika-tijekom-nastave-na-daljinu/

As for the higher education level, semi-semester exams were conducted at higher education institutions in three administrative units (Sarajevo Canton, Una-Sana Canton and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton) while the higher education institutions in other five units did not conduct examinations.

Monitoring and evaluation of e-learning

Apart from Tuzla Canton, the schools in all units were obliged to weekly report to the respective Ministry of Education and/or the Pedagogical Institute. Some units reported practices of having regular meetings with the school management (Bosnia-Podrinje Canton, West Herzegovina Canton) or establishing online monitoring mechanisms (Una-Sana Canton and Tuzla Canton). The Ministry of Education, Science and Youth in Sarajevo Canton developed a somewhat different monitoring approach presented in the Box 2.

> *„The teachers delivered all their teaching material and work plans to the homeroom teacher. The homeroom teacher was tasked to provide the summary of the obtained data to the school pedagogue, who further delivered curriculum implementation overview and short weekly reports to the Ministry. With this in the place, the Ministry was able to monitor online education and could intervene if the issues emerged."*
>
> Ministry of Education in Posavina Canton

Most of the units are planning to conduct evaluations of education process during the school closure. Brcko District and Tuzla Canton reported that they are not planning to conduct evaluations and Republika Srpska was not able to provide the answer at this point. The most commonly envisaged evaluation methodology is the analysis of school reports and conduction of surveys with school management, teachers, parents and students. As reported previously, evaluations of higher education are not yet envisaged in most of the administrative units.

Box 2- Online teaching monitoring practices in Sarajevo Canton

The Minister has appointed three bodies for monitoring and supervising the implementation of online teaching, as follows:

A) Working group for support and supervision of online teaching practice in Sarajevo Canton,

B) Team for support and supervision of digital content development for e-learning in primary schools,

C) Team for support and supervision of digital content development for e-learning in secondary schools.

All bodies were multi-disciplinary, with the participation of the Ministry's representatives, representatives of parents' councils, teachers, and school management. The three bodies were in constant contact and were tasked to produce recommendations for online teaching improvements. Further, schools were delivering weekly reports to the Ministry.

Teacher training

The fast introduction of online education required teachers to quickly shift from physical to online classrooms. Working in an online environment requires specific skillsets for which teachers most probably were not extensively trained. Professional development of teachers during the school closures was organized in six units (Brcko District, Sarajevo Canton, Tuzla Canton, Una-Sana Canton, West Herzegovina Canton and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton), mostly by the Ministries of Education. Most administrative units were not able to estimate the number of teachers trained as the training sessions were organized via online platforms. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth in Sarajevo Canton estimated that 4,400 teachers were reached with 22 two-hour webinars, which is 80 per cent of the total number of teachers in the canton. Hence, whilst considering the limitations of online professional development programs, the online modalities provide an opportunity for having strong outreach with lesser resources. Table 2 provides an overview of the number of teachers reached and organization modalities per unit.

Table 3. Overview of teacher training per unit

	Number of teachers trained	Organizer
Tuzla Canton	120	Ministry of Education with UNICEF support
Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	No data	Ministry of Education
Sarajevo Canton	4,400	Ministry of Education with UNICEF support
Una-Sana Canton	No data	Ministry of Education
West Herzegovina Canton	142	University of Mostar
Brcko District	No data	Ministry of Education, Save the Children, Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education, e-Twinning ambassadors and ICT teachers

The main topics of the conducted trainings can be divided into two areas: improvement of skills in the digital environment and improving the quality of online teaching. Besides providing the training opportunities directly to teachers, Una-Sana education authorities trained the trainers-school administrators and coordinators, who were tasked to replicate the trainings in their schools. Sarajevo Canton organized additional webinars for school management and parents on relevant subjects.

Ensuring the quality of education for all children and youth - summary of the main findings

Education authorities in different administrative units of the country opted for local-specific quality assurance mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the approaches are similar in some areas, there are interesting differences in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, which should be further reviewed. The list below summarizes the main findings regarding ensuring the quality of e-learning for children and youth in BiH.

Education authorities issued specific instructions for assessment of students' achievement during the pandemic, to ensure the best interest of the child is protected. Six units conducted external examinations by opting out for different modalities.

Three education authorities organized semi-semester exams in higher education.

Education authorities most commonly monitored e-learning by assessing weekly reports from schools. Sarajevo Canton established a more complex monitoring mechanism by designating the multi-disciplinary monitoring teams.

Most units plan to conduct evaluations of e-learning practices, by further analysing school reports and/or by conducting surveys with school management, teachers, parents and children. For higher educations evaluations are not extensively planned yet.

Six units organized online training for teachers and reached to a large number of teachers. The main training topics were the development of digital skills and improving the quality of e-learning.

Safe return to schools

None of the education authorities has fully developed their school reopening plans. The responses indicate the authorities intend to follow epidemiological instructions, but without further explanation on how the education sector will participate in this decision-making process.

Nine education authorities are familiar with the UN Framework for Reopening Schools[21], eight authorities with the UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response-School Reopening and seven authorities are familiar with the UNICEF Guidelines for Reopening Preschools and

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[21] UNESCO, United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank, World Food Programme, Framework for reopening schools, 2020, available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373348
UNESCO, UNESCO Covid-19 Education Response-School Reopening, Education Sector Issue Notes, issue note no. 7.1., 2020, available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373275
United Nations Children's Fund, Guidelines for Re-opening of Preschools and Kindergartens post-COVID19, UNiCEF Europe and Central Asia, 2020, available at:
https://www.unicef.org/bih/izvje%C5%A1taji/smjernice-za-otvaranje-pred%C5%A1kolskih-ustanova-nakon-pandemije-covid-19
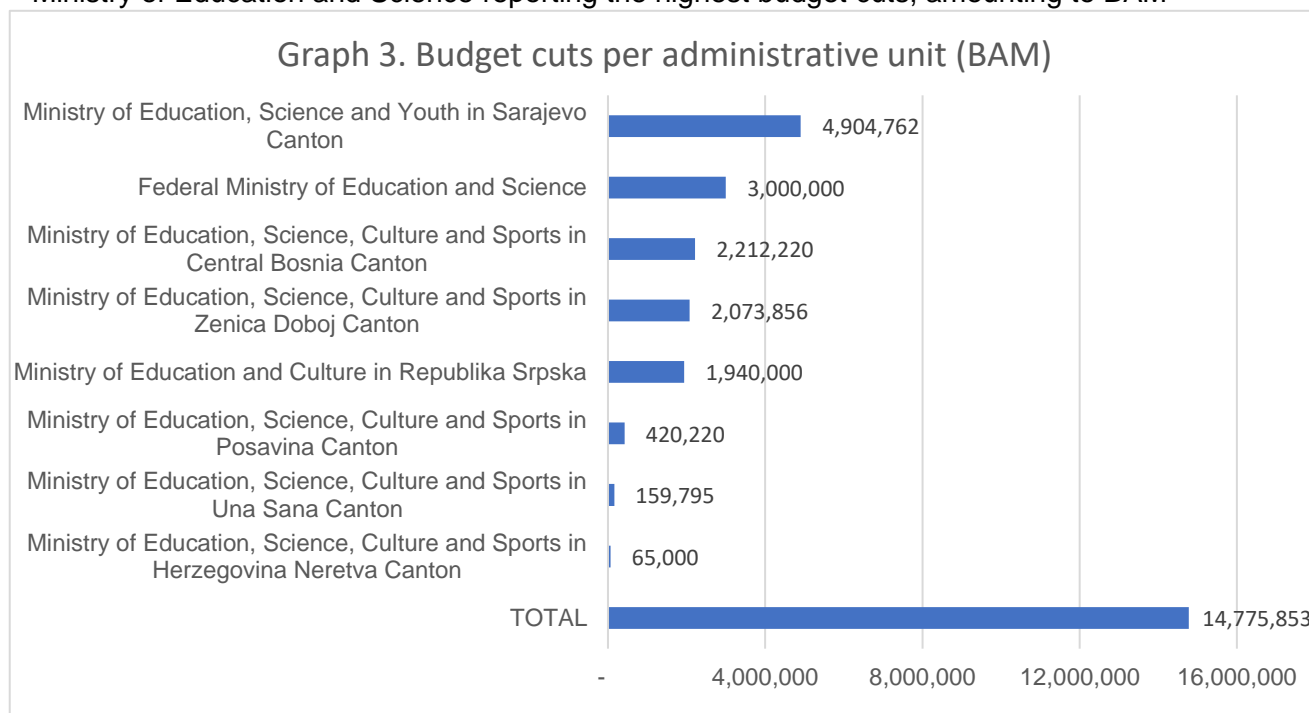
Kindergartens post-COVID-19. Most administrative units have distributed these documents to schools.

Education financing

Due to the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in BiH and necessity for the immediate financial assistance to the most affected sectors in the country, from April to July 2020 many administrative units adopted budget rebalances[22] to address the short-term impacts of the crisis.

This assessment aimed to obtain a snapshot of the potential impact of the financial measures on the education sector budgets in different administrative units in BiH. Out of 14 education authorities, only four reported that the education sector in their respective administrative units will not be subjected to budget rebalance and two reported that a budget rebalance plan in their administrative unit was yet to be adopted. In eight authorities the education sector will be subjected to budget rebalance, which will have negative impact on the sector.

The estimated cumulative amount of the 2020 budget cuts is **BAM 14,775,853** (as illustrated in Graph 3), with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth in Canton Sarajevo and the Federal Ministry of Education and Science reporting the highest budget cuts, amounting to BAM

Graph 3. Budget cuts per administrative unit (BAM)

Administrative unit	Budget cut (BAM)
Ministry of Education, Science and Youth in Sarajevo Canton	4,904,762
Federal Ministry of Education and Science	3,000,000
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Central Bosnia Canton	2,212,220
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Zenica Doboj Canton	2,073,856
Ministry of Education and Culture in Republika Srpska	1,940,000
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Posavina Canton	420,220
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Una Sana Canton	159,795
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Herzegovina Neretva Canton	65,000
TOTAL	14,775,853

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[22] Due to extraordinary circumstances and needs during the fiscal year, urgent and unexpected expenditures or revenues, government authorities in BiH can restore balance by strengthening projected expenditures or by finding new revenues, ie. budget rebalancing. All cantonal and entity-level authorities conducted budget rebalances for 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rebalance is proposed by the cantonal/entity government and adopted by the cantonal/entity assembly.

4,904,762 and BAM 3,000,000 respectively, whereas Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton reported the lowest budget cut of BAM 65,000.

Budget cuts were mainly made on budget items which were not used during the school closure, namely transportation costs, utilities costs, small inventory provisions, contractual services, reconstruction and infrastructural investments, etc. Respondents from Sarajevo Canton reported that budget cuts for contractual services, adopted in the first budget rebalance in May 2020, put at risk the realization of the regular school process, as some of the indispensable preparatory activities (e.g. annual teacher and school staff medical examinations, accounting services and announcement of vacancies for teaching staff for new school year, etc.) could not be funded. Consequently, in the second budget rebalance adopted in July 2020, the Government was tasked to refund app. BAM 600,000 to education sector to ensure covering of essential spending in preparation for the start of new school year. Table 4 provides the detailed explanation of the budget cuts per administrative unit.

Budget savings were, furthermore, made at provision of e-learning equipment (Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and Zenica-Doboj Canton) and at schoolbooks provision for the upcoming school year (Zenica-Doboj Canton).

The Federal Ministry of Education and Science reported the funds aimed at providing small grants support to preschool, primary and secondary schools' projects are cut by 76 per cent, and therefore the public call for the projects was cancelled. Moreover, funds dedicated to projects in the area of tertiary education and funds for supporting student loan service are cut by 100 per cent. Consequently, funds for tertiary education will not at all be mobilized in 2020. At the same time, future subsistence of the student loan service fund is at risk which will disproportionately affect students in poverty.

There were no teachers/staff who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Only in Una-Sana Canton 273 staff did not extend their fixed-term contracts, which was not directly related to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic according to education authorities.

Table 4. Explanation of the budget cuts in education sector per administrative unit

Ministry	Explanation of the budget cuts
Federal Ministry of Education and Science	Due to financial cuts the ministry will not be able to fund projects related to preschool, primary, secondary and higher education, namely: supporting education of Roma children; supporting higher education institutions in improving the quality of education at 1st and 2nd university cycle; improvement of work conditions of education institutions; supporting trainings and up-skilling programs for adults, especially women in facilitating their integration to labor market; supporting student organizations' projects; supporting co-funding of the students' loan service; supporting scientific associations; supporting implementation of scientific and research activities, etc.

Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska	The cuts were done on the following budget items: gross allowance for salaries, gross allowance for staff for annual/sick/parental leave; transport of children-which was not used during the lockdown period, regular maintenance; utilities costs, etc. All the budget items were not used during the lockdown.
Ministry of Education, Science and Youth in Sarajevo Canton	Government of Sarajevo Canton adopted two budget rebalances with objective to address the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to adapt to continuously changing economic situation. As result of the first rebalance, budget savings were done on the following items: travel costs, utilities costs, regular maintenance and contractual services. These budget cuts put at risk the realization of regular school process, as some of the indispensable preparatory activities (e.g. annual teacher and school staff medical examinations) and contractual services (accounting services and announcement of vacancies for teaching staff for new school year, etc.) could not be funded. The second budget rebalance adopted in the end of July 2020 envisages an increase of app. BAM 600,000 for contractual services, as a measure to cover the basic and the most indispensable costs prior to start of the new school year.
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Zenica-Doboj Canton	Budget savings have affected the following budget items: transportation costs, utilities cost, reconstruction and infrastructural investment, contractual services, etc. The most outstanding items of the budget rebalance plan are savings related to provision of schoolbooks and school material for students (BAM 46,740) and procurement of ICT equipment aimed at strengthening the capacities of education institutions for e-learning and distance learning (BAM 112,890).
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Una-Sana Canton	Funds from the budget item "reconstruction and infrastructural investment" will be redirected to budget item "acquisition of ICT equipment" for primary and secondary schools
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Posavina Canton	Budget cuts were done on gross salaries and allowances (due to late signing of the collective agreement for primary and secondary staff-which will enter into force by 1 September 2020), provision of small inventory and regular maintenance, utilities, etc.
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Central Bosnia Canton	Primary education budget cuts: utilities, provisions of small inventory, transportation, etc.; secondary education budget cuts: same as for primary education except for the transportation item.
Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	Budget item for provision of e-learning equipment removed from the budget plan.

Education financing – summary of the main findings

The estimated education sector cumulative budget cut in 2020 of **BAM 14,775,853** represents 1.13 per cent of the overall public expenditure for formal education amounting at BAM 1,296,896,048 (4.1 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product), according to the latest available information from 2017[23].

The reported budget cuts per administrative unit are between 0.8-3.5 per cent[24] of their total education budget amounts in 2020, with the exception of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science which reported a budget decrease of 43 per cent. Based on the overview of the budget items the most affected by the budget rebalances (utilities costs, infrastructural investments, procurements and contractual services, etc.), it is evident that the education sector's budgets, which are already insufficient to address all the education needs in the country, decreased as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, budget rebalances implemented until now are rather aimed at redirecting the budget savings made during the COVID-19 pandemic to assist more severely affected sectors and have been made without considering longer-term and strategic consequences to education sector.

The main findings of this assessment are listed below:

	Due to economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in BiH many administrative units have adopted budget rebalances to address the short-term impacts of the crisis provoked by the pandemic
	Education sector financing will be subjected to budget rebalance in eight out of 14 education government authorities
	The amount of the budget cuts in all 14 education government units is **14,775,853.00 BAM**
	Budget cuts have generally been made on utilities cost, recontruction and infrastructural investments and teachers/students transportation
	No laid off teachers/staff due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
	No teacher/staff salary cuts reported

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[23] Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, available at:
http://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Saopstenja/2019/EDU_06_2017_Y1_0_BS.pdf
[24] Please note this estimation was based on the information received from 5 out of 8 administrative units.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the main assessment conclusions and provides recommendations for UN and relevant authorities and stakeholders in BiH related to the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery in education. It is important to note that the data provided in this report should be used as a basis for further evidence gathering, due to the specific methodology limitations. The upcoming evidence generation should expand the sample of respondents by including different stakeholders in education, including children and youth beneficiaries and further develop the data collection instruments. While there is constant emergence of data worldwide and in BiH regarding education during the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of this unprecedented disruption of education is yet to be fully comprehended.

Education authorities closed almost all education institutions in BiH from mid-March 2020 and quickly introduced different remote learning modalities. Most primary, secondary, and tertiary education students had access to e-learning. Together with communities and partners, the authorities improved access to ICT and Internet the number of children and youth without ICT decreased in half until the end of the school year. However, not all children and youth had access to e-learning, with preschool education sector being especially concerning- 82 per cent of children interrupted their preschool attendance during the preschool closure. BiH continued to have out-of-school children in primary and secondary schools and children without access to ICT and Internet during the school closure. Roma children were disproportionately affected- representing at least 6 per cent of children without access to ICT and Internet. Although the authorities reported zero number of students in higher education who did not have access to e-learning, this should be further assessed due to the possible lack of data. Other possible access obstacles should be considered, such as the necessity to share the devices within the household and the adequacy of available devices for learning. It is of vital importance to continue improving access to e-learning, to ensure there are no out-of-school children and youth during the next potential disruptions of learning. When improving access, the authorities should also prioritise assistive technology for children with disabilities. There was also a notable lack of segregated data on access, with many education authorities not being able to provide data on gender, disability, or specific level of education[25]. Hence, the authorities should invest efforts in strengthening their data management mechanisms and adapting them to the needs in emergencies.

Education authorities used different software and networks to implement e-learning, with biggest prevalence of communication applications. This implies the need to further develop e-learning modalities which use advanced software solutions and/or to scale-up the number of schools which are capacitated to use the advanced software. Many authorities combined the e-learning with TV classes, which is especially valuable for younger children. Almost all units organized the catch-up of disrupted practical classes for university students, but it is important to enable the catch-up programmes in all administrative units.

With the quick introduction of e-learning, education authorities experienced legal challenges and were issuing numerous ad hoc decisions/instructions to schools. Specific legal challenges were

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[25] When it comes to the level of education, major data gaps were observed for the higher education.

revolving around the need to re-consider the usual assessment practices of students' achievements. The grading of students and conduction of external examinations varied between units, with examples of decisions which take into consideration the best interest of the child and equitable assessment conditions. As for the tertiary education, universities from three administrative units have conducted their semi-semester examinations, while others postponed the exams.

The most common primary and secondary education e-learning monitoring practice of education authorities was to review the weekly school reports and to intervene in the case of emergence of specific issues. The monitoring mechanisms need to be further strengthened to ensure all stakeholders are included and quality assurance is in place. Since most education authorities reported they had no insight into implementation of tertiary education e-learning and considering there was no available data on which e-learning platforms they used, it would be valuable to further assess the quality of tertiary education e-learning.

Some units have also organized trainings for teachers with strong outreach due to the usage of online training modalities. Taking into consideration possible restrictions of online professional development programmes, the blended approaches should be further strengthened considering their outreach and financing advantages.

Although most education authorities are familiar with the UN global-level resources on school reopening and they have distributed them to education institutions, none of the education authorities have fully developed their school reopening plans. Considering this assessment was conducted after the end of school year, this information should be further looked into. It is of utmost importance for education authorities to start planning for the safe school reopening and to timely plan for different epidemiological possibilities.

It is important to note that the listed issues in the areas of access and quality of education are also an opportunity to re-think the pre-pandemic education practices. The authorities should use the lessons learned from the pandemic to further innovate the education sector reforms and to develop the blended learning approaches. This momentum is also important for education authorities to strengthen resilience of the education sector regarding potential future disruptions in education, which are not just limited to possible new waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Preschool education in BiH can be particularly vulnerable considering economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further loss of jobs and family income can result in lowering the preschool enrolment rate in BiH which was only 25 per cent prior the pandemic. Education authorities need to invest resources to ensure the continuity of early learning, especially for the most vulnerable children. Provisioning affordable childcare is particularly important in ensuring equal opportunities for women to participate in the labour market.

The estimated education sector cumulative budget cuts can have negative impacts to the sector. Budget rebalances implemented until now aim to assist other affected sectors without considering longer-term and strategic consequences to the education sector. As starting of the new school year is approaching, it is urgent for education authorities to plan funds for safe school re-opening. Considering epidemiological and economic changes, it is possible that the education financing at different administrative levels in BiH will be subjected to periodical budget adjustments (as illustrated in the Sarajevo Canton example-which adopted two budget

rebalances since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic). It is therefore recommended to continue close monitoring of the economic impact to this respective sector. There is a realistic threat that authorities at different levels, pre-occupied with addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to the domestic economy, will not prioritize investments in the education sector in the short and in medium run.

In line with the 2030 targets of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 - Quality Education and SDG 8 - decent Work and Economic Growth, the EU Accession priorities of BiH and all relevant education strategic documents at all administrative levels[26],this report generated recommendations for the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery planning of UN, education and other relevant authorities and stakeholders in BiH. The recommendations are clustered in four main categories: a) access to education, b) quality of education, c) safe return to schools and d) adequate financing of education. They are further targeted to a) education and relevant authorities in BiH and b) UN BiH response and recovery efforts.

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[26] BiH Economic Reform Programme (ERP) for 2019-2021 (relevant chapter on Education and Skills)
Platform for Development of Early Childhood Care and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2017-2022
Strategy for the advancement of rights and status of persons with disabilities in the Federation of BiH 2016-2021
Strategy for Improving the Social Position of Persons with Disabilities in Republika Srpska for the period 2017-2026
Relevant education strategies on entity and cantonal levels

RECOMMENDATIONS		
	EDUCATION AND OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITIES IN BIH	UN BIH
ENSURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH	Integrate e-learning and blended learning modalities into the existing education legislative frameworks and adapt the bylaws accordingly. Improve real-time and digital data collection and management to be able to obtain the relevant data on access of children and youth to education in case of further disruptions of learning, with provided segregation of data related to access to education for children and youth from vulnerable groups. Assess in more detail the issues children, youth and teachers face regarding access to e-learning. Continue to improve access to ICT and Internet for children, youth and teachers. This also includes provision of assistive technology and support for children with disabilities, partnership with private sector to ensure universal Internet access, etc. Continue to monitor potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall enrolment in preschool education and intensify efforts to improve access. Intensify support to families whose jobs are	Support education authorities in strengthening their monitoring of access to e-learning at all levels of education and strengthening their data management mechanisms (with special focus on vulnerable groups of children and youth). Support education authorities to ensure the continuum of learning for all children and youth, by improving access to adequate ICT and Internet (with focus on vulnerable groups of children and youth such as Roma). This can also include further advocacy to ensure universal access to Internet for all children and youth and provision of assistive technology for children with disabilities. Continue to monitor potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall enrolment in preschool education and support the authorities in strengthening preschool education sector. Support education authorities to improve access to preschool education during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies by developing capacities to implement innovative e-learning

	affected by the COVID-19 pandemic by providing affordable childcare. Intensify development of different remote learning opportunities for preschool-aged children in case of further disruptions by combining different modalities of learning (such as TV classes and e-learning). Further develop e-learning modalities which use advanced software solutions and scale-up the number of schools which are capacitated to use the advanced software. Enable catch-up programmes for practical tertiary education on all universities.	modalities and supporting development of TV content for young children and their parents.
ENSURING QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH	Assess the impact of the school closures on learning, with focus on vulnerable children and youth, such as young children, Roma and children with disabilities. The potential learning loss emphasises the need to continue participating in international large-scale assessments and to use the findings when implementing education sector reforms. Further develop monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms of e-learning and blended learning.	Support education authorities to assess further the impact of the pandemic on the quality of learning and support international, regional and local experience sharing. Support education authorities in further development of professional development programmes for improving the quality of e-learning. Support education authorities in integrating the blended learning approaches into their education sector reforms.

	Conduct evaluations of e-learning during the school closures and provide recommendations for its improvement. Continue developing and scaling-up the online and blended professional development programmes. Identify and support marginalized teachers to provide them with resources for improving their digital skills and the quality of e-teaching. Continue to develop innovative students' assessment methods to be applied in e-learning and blended learning. Re-imagine education and accelerate teaching and learning- the COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with a unique opportunity to speed up innovations and education sector reforms. Exchange experiences with other education authorities in BiH on good practices and lessons learned on education during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve further education responses.	
ENSURING SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOLS	In collaboration and coordination with health and other relevant authorities and stakeholders, develop school re-opening plans in line with the Framework for safe school re-opening. Anticipate possible further disruptions in learning when developing action plans- there should be no single schedule for re-opening of schools.	Support education authorities in development of their action plans for safe school re-opening by providing global and regional resources. Support safe work of preschools and schools by providing materials, equipment and technical expertise.

ENSURING ADEQUATE FINANCING OF EDUCATION	Mobilise resources by protecting and increasing education budgets for safe re-opening of schools and strengthening school resilience to disruptions in education. Protect and increase targeted financing for vulnerable children and youth.	Provide policy recommendations to education authorities for cost efficient safe school re-opening. Advocate towards decision makers on possible negative impacts of the education sector budget cuts and the need to invest in safe school re-opening.

ANNEX 1- LIST OF INSTITUTIONS WHICH RESPONDED TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Ministry of Civil Affairs in BiH
2. Federal Ministry of Education and Science
3. Ministry of Education and Culture in Republika Srpska
4. Ministry of Scientific and Technological Development, Higher Education and Information Society in Republika Srpska
5. Department for Education of Brcko District Government
6. Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports in Una-Sana Canton
7. Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports in Posavina Canton
8. Ministry of Education and Science in Tuzla Canton
9. Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports in Zenica-Doboj Canton
10. Ministry of Education, Youth, Science, Culture, and Sports in Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Gorazde
11. Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports in Central Bosnia Canton
12. Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton
13. Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports in West Herzegovina Canton
14. Ministry of Education Science and Youth in Sarajevo Canton
15. Ministry of Science, Education, Culture, and Sports in Canton 10

ANNEX 2- QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATION AUTHORITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - RAPID ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION AND NEEDS

Class Delivery During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A Questionnaire for Education Authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina – a Rapid Situation and Needs Assessment - Phase II

Dear,

in the course of March, UNICEF carried out a rapid assessment of the situation and needs in education in BiH during the COVID-19 pandemic. The relevant education authorities submitted the data which UNICEF used to design activities in order to provide direct support to education authorities.

While appreciating the efforts which education authorities are making to ensure continuity and quality of learning, we are aware that the situation and needs have changed and that there are numerous good practices and lessons learned which can be used to improve further activities.

Accordingly, UNICEF and UNESCO are implementing Phase II of the assessment of the situation and needs in education during the COVID-19 pandemic and we kindly ask you to complete the questionnaire below. Your answers will help to better understand the impact of the pandemic on the education process and will be used to plan our further activities.

We kindly ask that you send a completed questionnaire to e-mail address: llandzo@unicef.org by 18 June 2020 at the latest. Should you have any query, please email us at the same address or call 062 020 220.

Please, answer the questions by:

a) *Choosing one option (or more, if the question specifies it) – by putting an x in the box -* ☒
b) *Writing an answer in a specified blank space.*

Please, answer all questions, in accordance with your responsibilities.

General information	
1. Name of an administrative unit:	
2. The person responsible for completing the questionnaire and contact details:	Name and family name: E-mail: Telephone:
Organization of classes during the pandemic[27]	
3. Were all preschools physically closed during the pandemic[28] in your administrative unit?	Yes ☐ No ☐
3.a. If your answer to question 3 is **no**, please, specify the number of preschools that remained open:	The number of public preschools which remained open: The number of private preschools which remained open: Total:

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[27] The question refers to the period of restrictions on movement and gathering.
[28] Public and private.

4. Was preschool education (POO)[29] organized online for **children aged 3 - 6**? If yes, please, shortly describe how it was organized.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please, describe how:					
5. Was preschool education organized online **for children who attend mandatory preschool education/ preparatory programme during the year before starting school**? If yes, please, shortly describe how it was organized.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please, describe how:					
6. Specify the number of children who **attended a preschool education programme** during the pandemic.		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
	Number of children aged 3 - 6 who attended kindergartens which remained open[30]					
	Number of children aged 3 - 6 who attended an online preschool programme[31]					

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[29] POO: Predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje (preschool education).
[30] Children who were physically present in kindergartens.
[31] The number does not include the children who attended a mandatory/preparatory programme

		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
	Number of children who attended an online mandatory/ preparatory preschool programme during the year before starting school					
	TOTAL					
7. Specify the number of children who **stopped attending a preschool programme** during the pandemic[32].		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
	Number of children aged 3 - 6 who stopped attending a pre-school programme during the pandemic[33]					
	Number of children who stopped attending a mandatory/ preparatory pre-school education during the year before starting school during the pandemic					
	TOTAL					

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[32] This refers to children who did not physically go to a kindergarten or attend a pre-school education programme via the Internet

[33] The number does not include the children who attended a mandatory/preparatory programme

		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
8. Specify the number of children **in primary and secondary schools who attended online classes** during the pandemic	Number of children receiving class teaching in primary schools who attended online classes					
	Number of children receiving subject teaching in primary schools who attended online classes					
	Number of children in primary schools for pupils with developmental difficulties who attended online classes					
	Number of children in secondary schools – grammar schools who attended online classes					

		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
	Number of children in secondary vocational schools who attended online classes					
	Number of children in secondary schools for pupils with developmental difficulties who attended online classes					
	TOTAL					
9. Specify the number of children who **stopped attending classes in primary and secondary schools** during the pandemic.		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
	Number of children receiving class teaching in primary schools who stopped attending classes					
	Number of children receiving subject teaching in primary schools who stopped attending classes					
	Number of children in primary schools for pupils with developmental difficulties who					

		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
	stopped attending classes					
	Number of children in secondary schools – grammar schools – who stopped attending classes					
	Number of children in secondary vocational schools who stopped attending classes					
	Number of children in secondary schools for pupils with developmental difficulties who stopped attending classes					
	TOTAL					
10. Specify the number of children in **primary and secondary schools who did not have access to online classes** due to the lack of technology and internet		Boys	Girls	Total	Of that, Roma children	Of that, children with difficulties/disability
	Number of children in primary schools who did not have access to technology (e.g.					

		Men	Women	Total
	laptop, tablet, smartphone)			
	Number of children in primary schools who did not have access to the Internet			
	Number of children in secondary schools who did not have access to technology (e.g. laptop, tablet, smartphone)			
	Number of children in secondary schools who did not have access to the Internet			
	TOTAL			
11. Specify the number of **teachers who lacked the necessary technology and the Internet** for online classes.		Men	Women	Total
	Number of teachers who did not have access to technology (e.g. laptop, tablet, smartphone)			
	Number of teachers who did not have access to the internet			
	TOTAL:			

12. How were classes organized for children who did not have the necessary technology/access to the Internet for attending online classes?	Please, describe how:			

13. Which software tools and social networks did providers of education use to provide online classes (e.g. *MS Teams, Viber, Google Classroom, web platform, etc.*)? To what extent were the tools used?				
Software tools / social networks:	All providers of education used	Majority of providers of education used	A smaller number of providers of education used	Providers of education did not use
MS Teams	□	□	□	□
Google Classroom	□	□	□	□
Moodle	□	□	□	□
Viber	□	□	□	□
Facebook	□	□	□	□
Zoom	□	□	□	□
Skype	□	□	□	□
Web platform- please, specify*:*	□	□	□	□
Other- *please, specify*:	□	□	□	□

14. Were TV classes organized during the pandemic? If yes, please, specify levels of education[34].	Yes ☐ No ☐ Levels of education:
15. Did the Ministry issue decisions /guidance /instructions for online classes? If yes, please, specify.	Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please, specify the decisions /guidance / instructions:
16. Were there any legal challenges in regulating online classes? If yes, please, specify and describe how they were addressed.	Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please, specify legal challenges: If yes, please, describe how the legal challenges were addressed:
17. How is/was student assessment done and final grades awarded in schools?	Please, describe:

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[34] Levels of education: pre-primary education (ISCED 0), primary education (class teaching) (ISCED 1), primary education (subject teaching) (ISCED 2), secondary education (ISCED 3).

18. Were external exit exams/student assessments implemented? If yes, describe shortly how they were implemented.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please, describe:			
19. How did the Ministry monitor the implementation of online classes?	Please, describe:			
20. Will the Ministry implement an online evaluation of classes? If yes, shortly describe how.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please, describe how:			
21. Were all providers of higher education in your administrative unit closed during the pandemic? If yes, since when?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Date:			

21.a. If your answer to question 21 is **yes**, please, specify the number of students who stopped attending courses at providers of higher education during the pandemic?		Men	Women	Total	Of that number, students with difficulties/disabilities
	Number of students who				

	stopped attending courses at providers of higher education during the pandemic		

22. Were online teaching activities and student consultations with teachers established at providers of higher education in your administrative unit?	Yes – at all providers ☐ Yes – at some providers ☐ No ☐				
22.a. If your answer to question 22 is *yes*, please, specify the number of students who did not have access to online courses because of the lack of technology and access to the Internet.		Men	Women	Total	Of that number, students with difficulties/disabilities
	Number of students who did not have access to technology (e.g. laptop, tablet, smartphone)				
	Number of students who did not have access to the Internet				

	TOTAL			

23. Were regular student examination activities conducted at providers of higher education during the pandemic?	Yes ☐ No ☐
24. Are catch-up practice courses planned at providers of higher education? If yes, please, describe shortly.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please, describe:
25. Will the current academic year at providers of higher education be finished online?	Yes ☐ No ☐

Training of teachers

26. Was teacher training[35] organized during the pandemic for the purpose of improving online teaching? If yes, please, specify the names of training, duration and topics.	Yes ☐ No ☐

Name of training	Duration of training - hours	Topics of the training

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[35] Pre-school, class and subject teachers.

26.a. If your answer to question 26 is **yes**, please, specify the number of teachers involved in training.		Men	Women	Total
	Number of teachers involved in training:			
	TOTAL:			

26.b. If your answer to question 26 is **yes**, please, specify the total number of teachers in your administrative unit.		Men	Women	Total
	Number of teachers			
	TOTAL			

26.c. If your answer to question 26 is **yes**, please, specify how training was organized (you can choose more than one option).	a) Education Ministry organized training without external support	☐
	b) Education Ministry organized training with donor support. *Please, write down the name of the donor:*	☐
	c) Training was organized by civil society organizations. *Please, write down the name of the organization/s:*	☐
	d) Other. Please, specify*:*	☐

Organization of classes after the pandemic	
27. Please, specify the date on which preschools reopened after the pandemic.	Date:
28. Please, specify the main challenges faced by preschools in their work after the pandemic.	Main challenges:
29. Did the Ministry develop a plan for reopening of schools? If yes, please, describe shortly how schools will be reopened.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please, describe:
30. Is the Ministry aware of the UNICEF and UNESCO guidelines for reopening of schools after the pandemic? If yes, *mark one or more documents that the Ministry is aware of.*	Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes: a) UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response, Issue Note No. 7.1; UNESCO, April 2020 — ☐

	b) Framework for Reopening Schools; UNESCO, UNICEF, WB, WFP; April 2020	☐
	c) Guidance for Re-Opening of Preschools and Kindergartens post COVID-19; UNICEF, May 2020	☐
30.a. If your answer to question 30 is *yes*, did the Ministry distribute the documents to education institutions?	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Financing		
31. Is the education sector included in the budget amendment plan to revise the budget in your administrative unit as a result of the fallout from the pandemic?	Yes ☐ No ☐	

29.a. If your answer to question 29 is *yes,* will the revision of the budget affect the education sector positively or negatively? Please, describe shortly the way in which the budget revision will affect the education sector.	Positively ☐ (e.g. procurement of equipment for online classes, new employments for the purpose of technical improvements of digital platforms, etc.) Negatively ☐ (e.g. reduced budgetary allocations, reallocation of funds between different sectors, as opposed to initially earmarked funds) Please, describe:
32. Were any teachers made redundant[36]? If yes, how many teachers lost the job?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, how many teachers lost the job? |	Number of teachers who lost job | |---|---| | Employed under a permanent contract | | | Employed under a fixed-term contract | | | Employed under a service contract | | | TOTAL | |

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[36] This refers to all levels of education.

33. Additional comments:	

Thank you for answering the questions.