**Montenegro answers to the Questionnaire OHCHR - The Resolution of the Council of Human Rights 37/20 „Rights of the Child“**

**1. Ensuring access for inclusive education for children with disabilities and difficulties in development**

1. **Legislative and strategic framework**

The education of children with special educational needs is based on the Law on education of children with special educational needs (Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 45/10,47/17). The education of children with special educational needs is a part of a unified educational system and an activity of public interest.

The Montenegrin educational system for children with special educational needs, as a primary choice and an imperative, sets the inclusive education within regular schools, which is indicated by a constant trend of growth.

In Montenegro, at the pre-university level, the term special educational needs is used to reffer to children with: disabilities (physical, intellectual, sensory, autism, and combined) and developmental difficulties (speech-language, behaviour, learning, severe chronic and long-term illnesses, difficulties due to emotional, social, linguistic and cultural deprivation).

The Strategy of Inclusive Education (2008-2013) has laid the foundations and directions for the development of a system of education for children with special educational needs. The Strategy of Inclusive Education (2014–2018) aims at an even more intense respect for the rights and characteristics of these children, whose developmental and educational needs have to be fulfilled and met with the aim of training for independent living. A general objective of the Strategy of Inclusive Education is: Children with special educational needs should be entitled to education, to rationally and operatively ensure achievement of developmental and educational achievements through individualized, additional support.

Basic tasks of the current Strategy of Inclusive Education are:

*Task 1*: Carry out an early detection, intervention, learning, development and psychosocial support to children and their parents; *Task 2:* To enable access to education, continuous quality education for children with special educational needs that will prepare them for an independent life and work; *Task 3:* Provide support to the teaching and learning process at all levels; *Task 4:* Advance basic and specialist education, professional training of the teaching and professional staff; *Task 5:* Improve monitoring and evaluation of educational and developmental achievements of children.

The Draft of the 2019-2025 Strategy of Inclusive Education has as its guiding principles the promotion, protection and insurance of full and equal participation of all SEN children in the inclusive education, without discrimination and exclusion, based on equality with others. The overarching goal of the Strategy of Inclusive Education is to provide SEN children with access to good quality inclusive education on all levels. The goal is to be reached operationally through three tasks: *Task 1*: Provide for and apply *accessibility and equality* of education for all children; *Task 2*: Provide for and apply *continuity* of inclusive education from the moment of detecting a disability/ difficulties in order to ensure the child’s full and effective inclusion in society; *Task 3*: Support and improve the *quality* of inclusive education.

**b. Specific measures taken for the empowerment of the children, especially those with psychosocial difficulties and intellectual disabilities**

During the ‘90s, Montenegro recognised the need to modernize the educational system and introduce inclusive orientation to children with disabilities.The so called social model is used today, which puts emphasis on obstacles and barriers in the environment, rather than on issues that are a childs developmental or current characteristic.

The inclusive principles are stategically being implemented: the right of the child to grow up in a family; developmental status, characteristics and preserved abilities are the base for the development of Individual Development and Education Plan - IROP; parents are partners and others. As a first choice, children with disabilities attend primary schools.

The Backbone of Working with Children with Disabilities is the Individual Development Education Program (IROP). Kindergartens and schools for each child develop the IROP, within which academic and development goals are defined to be achieved. Emphasizes is in the activities, methods, techniques and methods of teaching which should be applied in order to achieve defined academic and development goals. The responsibilities of the school, roles and responsibilities of team members for its development and application are precisely defined. IROP allows supplementation with alternative forms of communication, such as sign language, Braille letter, images communication, use of specialized didactics, equipment, aids, assistive technology, etc. It defines concrete activities/methods/forms of work in order to achieve developmental and educational goals.

The Individual Transition Plan is precisely defined and legally based: objectives, measures and activities are focused on supporting the pupil in the process of transferring from one educational level to the other, from the educational system to labour market – employment. It is implemented in two phases: at the end of primary school and at the end of secondary school education. In the first phase cooperation between primary and secondary school is being established, responsible persons are being identified, as well as a mechanism of cooperation. The cooperation is directed towards the exchange of information, identification of the potential and inclination of the child with the goal of moving to the next level of education that should enable it for the independent professional life. In the second phase (finishing of secondary education) ITP 2 focuses on preparation for trade market and professional engagement through the networking and cooperation among schools and employers. The Transition Mechanism from the High School to Faculty was designed as a guideline in connecting secondary and tertiary education. Recommendations for further movement towards the faculty derive from pupil achievements, especially in relation to the skills and styles of communication, then measures for further adaptation and organization of the teaching process in accordance with the needs.

Special schools have been transformed into resource centers., which have a significant role in the education of children with special educational needs. There are 3 Resource centers in Montenegro: JU Resource Center for Hearing and Speech “Dr Peruta Ivanovic” Kotor, JU Resource Center for Children and People with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism, “June 1st”, Podgorica; JU Resource Center for Children and Youth “Podgorica” for physical and visual impairment. These Centers provide support to inclusive education through: counselling and professional work, trainings of teachers and professional associates for work with children with special educational needs, use of the sign language, conduct preparation, adaptation, development and training for the use of special textbooks (in Braille, in Daisy format[[1]](#footnote-1)) and other specialized teaching materials. All preschool institutions have been trained by the resource centers for the early recognition and answer on child developmental needs (adaptation, approach etc.). Centers for Early Development have been established, they serve to encourage the development of children, for training: staff, kindergartens, parents, interested public.

At the moment, the assistive cabinets of resource centers are being established for the creation of specialized teaching material and didactics. Bureau for the textbooks and teaching aids and RC “Podgorica” are transferring textbooks for elementary schools into audio-format in Daisy format. The implementation of the training packages for schools in connection with assisted communication is underway; a basic, creative team and an advisory team has been formed. After the initial training of the schools “Development and Use of Assisted Communication Facilities”, conducted visits of primary schools with the aim of analysing the needs of the children with autism, as well as and the production of working materials. The visit is carried out by the expert team of the Resource center “June 1st”, comprised of defectologists and educators trained for assisted communication.

Mobile teams are coordinated at the Bureau for educational services, and they visit schools as a support to inclusive education: preparation of IROP, methodical advice, teaching adaptation, etc. Networks are established to support inclusive education in general secondary education.

Inclusive teaching network have been formed (it is made of experts, practitioners from schools from all over Montenegro) to promote and support inclusive education. An inclusive portal has been created and in function: offers examples of good practice, novelties, r ideas and solutions for overcoming doubts and dilemmas from practice, etc.

A litterature was made as a support to staff in this field. The instructional-educational material for inclusive learning offers precise instructions for customization.

Based on the previously conducted research a Guideline for working with children with intellectual disabilities was prepared, which contains the description of research, the definition of intellectual disability and the description of characteristics and needs of these children, approaches to work, recommendations, examples of good practice. Based on the Guidelines for working with children with intellectual disabilities which contains the description of research, the definition of intellectual disability and the description of characteristics and needs of these children, approaches to work, recommendations, examples of good practice, an accompanying teacher training program for working with pupils with intellectual disabilities was prepared.

For children with special educational needs, schools engage teaching assistants as technical support. In accordance with IROP and the class schedule, the extent of support provided by the teaching assistant is supervised by teachers, professional service and school principals. The conditions, scope and method of providing this service is precisely formulated.

**2. Ensuring the environment through examples of good practice of inclusion and empowerment**

**a. Raising awareness in relation to the human rights of the children with disabilities among general population, parents, children themselves**

As part of the efforts to raise public awareness and influence changing attitudes and practices when it comes to inclusion of children with disabilities in society, a comprehensive “Talking about opportunities” campaign was conducted. Monitoring the effects of the Campaign point to indicators that speak about the growth of attitudes towards accepting a fellow with disabilities: pointed to their potentials, encouraged interaction of the general population with this population, promoted access to facilities, provided funds for the work of these youngster, formed a strong coalition involving Government, local communities, NGOs, the media, the private sector, the children, parents. Through the project with the SE “Regional support for inclusive education”, a campaign was conducted with the aim of promoting inclusive education, fighting negative attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices (towards the general public and the professional public). An Inclusive Day was organized and a documentary film on inclusive education was recorded and broadcast.

Index for inclusion implemented with Save the children - trainings, promotions, workshops, monitoring standards. Schools regularly carry out activities aimed at developing an inclusive culture; politics and practice, i.e. On the basis of the Index for Inclusion schools have implemented action plans that include, among other things, promotional measures.

The Project “Encouraging the democratic culture of the schools” is implemented within the framework of the European Union and the Council of Europe program framework called “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey” and is based on the idea that democratic and inclusive education becomes a means of social cohesion, conflict prevention and instability, lead to the reduction of communication barriers, establishing the wealth of diversity on the basis of equality. Guided by previous experience, a network has been established to support the development of inclusive education in secondary mixed schools and gymnasiums with a special emphasis on general education in order to achieve communication and exchange experience in work and modernize work methodology with students with special educational needs at this level of education.

With primary school principals, consultations were held with the aim of encouraging inclusive policies, culture and practice. The consultation included the Inclusiveness Index, Non-Discrimination, Accessibility and schools agreed to conduct self-evaluation, design activities to strengthen inclusion and equal opportunities.

To promote non-discrimination, a software package on the subject of equal rights and non-discrimination was created. A package for organizing school-level activities on non-discrimination is intended to provide pupils with additional knowledge and skills in this field. The idea is to organize a »Non-discrimination Day« during a school year. There are also planned workshops for all pupils. Activities that can be realized through regular teaching content are offered. There is also a set of workshops for teaching staff in order to strengthen their positive attitudes of acceptance, culture and practices of non-discrimination in schools.

For the purpose of comprehensive, binding support to pupils, information material on inclusive principles and timely enrollment in the school for health care personnel was prepared.

**b. Provide couseling and active involvement of children in decision-making processes**

In local communities, commissions that conduct the guidance of children with special educational needs in the administration body in charge of education are established. They are composed of pediatricians, psychologists, pedagogues, social workers and defectologists. The Guidance Committees propose a program, professional assistance, personnel, spatial, material and other conditions for each child with special educational needs. In the previous period, trainings of commission members were conducted on topics such as: autism, intellectual disorders, ADHD, visual impairment, behavioral problems, dyslexia, dysgraphia, combined disorders, teaching assignments, integrated departments, communication with parents, etc.

In order to ensure equal treatment of the Commissions, a Guide for Guidance of children with special educational needs (2014) for a balanced work was prepared.

Children are involved in decision-making, IROP development, ITP 1, 2 & 3.

**c. Providing support to families, support networks and service providers**

Training and support to parents for early development, as well as early intervention programs in resourcing centers is actively conducted.

Other services are in the domain of child and social protection, health services.

**d. Ensure the participation of children with disabilities in the communities in which they live, promote de-institutionalization, isolation and segregation**

All activities in education system are oriented to the full learning and participation of all children in school life and in their communities, with aim of deinstitutionalisation. We repeat that special school have been transforme into resurce centers.

1. **– / -**
2. **Policies and programs which respect and encourage the participation in the decission making process of children with disabilities according to their abilities**

In the area of ​​normative regulation in this area, in addition to the Law on Social and Child Protection, several new laws have been adopted in this area, and for some of the existing amendments have been made in this area the Law on Social Housing, the Labor Law, the Act on the Initiation of Persons with Disabilities with the help of a dog's assistant; Law on Pension and Disability Insurance, Law on Privileges and the first Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, as well as a whole series of sub-legal acts.

The Strategy for youth has the area and measures which address this field, as well as the Strategy of Inclusive Education.

Under 2.a. and 2.b. are given examples.

1. **Is there a mechanism of monitoring the situation of children with disabilities?**

The monitoring of children is an integral part of monitoring the implementation of Action Plans within the Strategies, as well as the area for which the Council for the Rights of Children is responsible and the Council for the care of persons with disabilities.

1. **Is inclusion monitored through desegregated data?**
2. Provide information about the number of children in the system

The Ministry of Education through its Information system (MEIS[[2]](#footnote-2)) keeps records on children with special educational needs. For the purpose of keeping better records, instructions and defined criteria for input were made.

Table: CSED 2016/17, 2017/18

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Level od education** | **Number of pupils 2016/17** | **Number of pupils 2017/18** |
| Primary | 3095 | 3395 |
| Preschool | 926 | 804 |
| Secondary | 656 | 804 |
|  | **4677** | **5003** |

Source: MEIS

* Number of children living in institutions
* Children with special educational needs are sent to resource centers when it is the only and best interest for them (these are the most difficult and highly challenging combined disabilities).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Levels* | *RC “1 June”, Podgorica* | *RC “Podgorica”* | *RC Kotor* |
| Primary school | 37 | 26 | 19 |
| Secondary school | 34 | 10 | 18 |

1. DAISY is the acronym od Digital Accessible Information System, for the audio-visual edition of the printed book. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. MEIS – Montenegrin educational information system [↑](#footnote-ref-2)