

HOW TO REACH *100%* ENROLLMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS?





Center for Research and Policy Making

Research | Analysis | Trainings | Policy advice

Published by:

Center for Research and Policy Making
Cico Popovic 6-2/9, 1000 Skopje
Tel: +389 2 3109 932 Fax: +389 2 3109 932

www.crpm.org.mk | crpm@crpm.org.mk

This publication has been produced with the assistance of The German Marshall fund of the United States (The Balkan Trust for Democracy). The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Center for Research and Policy Making.

B | T | D The Balkan Trust
for Democracy

A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

Research Coordinator:
Ana Mickovska-Raleva

Layout editor
Riste Zmejkoski


Layout and Cover design
D2 Design Studio

We appreciate if you send us your comments or remarks to the following e-mail: crpm@crpm.org.mk

Skopje, 2009

CONTENT

SUMMARY	6
I. SECONDARY EDUCATION: NECESSITY OR OBLIGATION?	6
II. MACEDONIAN CONTEXT VIS-A-VIS OTHER EXPERIENCES	7
2.1. Legislation	7
2.2. Standpoints regarding the policy of compulsory secondary education	7
2.3. Compulsory education in the European countries, with emphasis on Croatia	8
III. METHODOLOGY	9
IV. ANALYSIS	9
4.1. Enrollment ratios for students in secondary education	9
4.2. Transition trough secondary school	10
4.3. Factors of non-enrollment, and/or early dropouts	10
4.3.1. Unfavorable social and economic position of the family	10
4.3.2. Unfavorable infrastructure	12
4.3.3. Gender aspect	13
4.3.4. Cultural norms (related to ethnic and religious belonging)	14
4.3.5. Low performance at school and study motivation	14
4.3.6. Inability to enroll in the desired school/vocational stream	15
4.4. What is done to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts?	15
4.4.1. Policies of the Ministry of Education and Science	15
4.4.2. School policies	17
4.4.3. Municipal policies	17
V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	18
ANNEX 1. DURATION OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES	20
ANNEX 2. METHODS OF DEALING WITH DROPOUTS IN DIFFERENT STATES	21



HOW TO REACH *100%* ENROLLMENT
**IN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS?**

SUMMARY

Beginning with academic year 2008/09 enrollment in secondary education became compulsory. Implementation of this policy was accompanied by controversies and oversights. Nevertheless, the final outcome, according to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is that 95% of eighth-graders who completed elementary education enrolled in secondary education. The question is: which are the remaining 5% missing, and what will happen with the students who only enrolled in secondary school in order to avoid high penalties, without any plans to continue their education? The goal of this analysis is to investigate reasons for non-enrollment and dropouts from secondary schools, and adequacy of policies implemented for eradication of these problems. At the same time this analysis suggests ways of overcoming the problems and attaining bigger involvement in the education process.

I. SECONDARY EDUCATION: NECESSITY OR OBLIGATION?

In terms of equal life chances for all, it seems that children are better off with compulsory schooling laws than without them. But mere attendance, without quality or achievement, cannot be the goal of compulsory education¹

Joana Crighton

There is no reference made to secondary education in Article 26 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration (1950). It was considered back at that time that education needs of the society would be met if majority of the population completed elementary education, while selected majority pursued secondary and higher education. The first Covenant denoting secondary education is the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, which underlines that secondary education needs to be generally accessible to all.²

The change in concept results from the idea that education is continued process which lasts from childhood till adulthood and that one shouldn't perceive education as a twofold set of different types of education processes accessible to different categories of citizens (differentiated on the basis of social and economic differences, differences in abilities, etc).

Consequently, the terms 'elementary' and 'secondary' education are considered subsequent stages of a continued process, which needs to correspond and go parallel to the continuity in development.³

At the same time, the concept of 'education level' is changing and what was considered as literacy or basic life skills some 20-30 years ago is not relevant any longer, considering the new global trends. The global economy has increased demand of technical and behavioral skills, especially those shaped between the age of 15 and 24. Consequently, the need for bigger involvement of the population in higher degrees of education is necessary for easing the pressure of demand of skills, because secondary education is perceived more as a perspective for further lifelong learning.⁴

Increased number of countries show tendency to increase the years of compulsory education (see Annex 1). Keeping in mind the higher involvement of citizens in higher degrees of education, it is especially important that this doesn't reduce quality of education.⁵ Therefore in order to ensure successful policies for increased enrolment and transition to secondary education, it needs to be implemented alongside commitment of institutions for improving education quality and possibilities for education of the 'vulnerable' groups of citizens.

¹ School Dropouts: Disadvantaged, Disaffected, Disappeared: Johanna Crighton, во Monitoring School Dropouts, OSI, 2007; доступно на: http://www.edupolicy.net/images/old/180_domonitoring_book.pdf

² World Education Report: The Right to Education: Towards Education for all throughout life, UNESCO, 2000

³ World Survey of Education, Vol. III, pp. 126 -7, Paris, UNESCO, 1961

⁴ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001390/139018e.pdf>, стр. 55

⁵ World Development Report, UNDP, 2007, p. 12

II. MACEDONIAN CONTEXT VIS-A-VIS OTHER EXPERIENCES

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its report on Macedonia (2006) particularly emphasizes concern about problems with low transition from elementary to secondary school, as well as the high dropout rate.⁶ It is highlighted that in Macedonia access to secondary education is quite aggravated for certain categories of persons, especially from more distant rural communities, persons of Roma ethnic background, girls of Muslim faith and children from socially handicapped families.

This is one of the reasons for amendments to the Law on Secondary Education, which as of the academic year 2008/09 became compulsory for all students who completed eighth grade elementary school.

2.1. Legislation

The Law Amending the Law on Secondary Education⁷ defines secondary education as 'compulsory for all citizens and as free in the public secondary schools' (Article 3). The Law stipulates high penalties for parents/legal guardians whose children fail to enroll in high school or irregularly attends it (EUR 1,000 fine) (Article 4).

In order to ensure wider accessibility of secondary education, as of the academic 2008/09 year enrollment fee is abolished, and free transportation is arranged for students enrolled in first year of secondary school living more than 2.5 kilometers away from the selected school, as well as free accommodation in school dormitories. As of 2009/10 the plan was to provide free textbooks for all students, in order to further cut down on education-related expenditures.

The aim of the law is ensuring 100% enrollment of students with completed elementary education into secondary education schools.⁸

2.2. Standpoints regarding the policy of compulsory secondary education

The debate around the rationale of having compulsory secondary education is constant and present in almost all countries. Supporters of the policy for increasing the years of compulsory education underline the benefits such as:

improved labor market conditions, reduction of social differences among the population and the possibilities of abuse of child labor, etc.⁹

Critics of this policy, on the other hand, problematize the concept of 'compulsory' in conditions of low education quality, weak social and economic position of families and the aspect that many children are forced into school-related activities against their own will.¹⁰ Winch and Gingell underline that 'If children are forced into education, then one must provide good reasons that would motivate them to attend education'¹¹

Upon releasing the idea of compulsory secondary education Macedonian citizens generally supported the idea behind the policy. The survey carried out by CRPM before the Law came into force denotes support from almost 83% of respondents, 12% were against it while 5% did not have a stand on that issue. Bigger support was shown by women and citizens with higher education (secondary and higher).¹² The data that smaller number of citizens with lower education were in support of the idea for compulsory secondary education is worrisome keeping in mind that they most often represent the vulnerable categories of citizens, whose transitioning to secondary education is most critical.

The most recent survey conducted in August of 2009 showed that the percentage of respondents in support of the idea for compulsory secondary education increased to 91%. Only 5% were against this policy, while 4% did not express their opinion. Interestingly enough, unlike the previous survey, this time the policy is largely rejected by employed persons and those with higher education.¹³ Most probably they keep more track of the controversies regarding this policy implementation and are more critical in terms of its success.

Even though expert public mainly positively accepted the idea, main remarks addressed the problematic enforcement of concrete policies, that is, lack of preparation of institutions for accomplishment of the planned activities and delay in overcoming obstacles (ensuring free transportation and accommodation, dealing with the practice of payment of enrollment fee in schools, lack of space in some schools, confusion regarding responsibilities of the local, central government and schools, etc.).

⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Council (2006), Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 16 and 17 of the Covenant: Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, E/C.12/MKD/CO/1, 24 November 2006, crp.4

⁷ Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia no. 49, 18.04.2007

⁸ Tomorrow and the day after begins the race for enrollment in secondary schools, Kirilica, 16.06.2009

⁹ In Defence of Compulsory Education, K. Williams, Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol 24, No.2, 1990, Analysis of the need for compulsory secondary education (available on pravo.org.mk)

¹⁰ Key Concepts in the Philosophy of Education, C. Winch, J. Gingell, Routledge, 1999

¹¹ Ibid., crp.39

¹² To which extent do citizens support Government measures? 21.11.2006, <http://www.crpm.org.mk/Papers/PoddrzhanamerkitenaVladata.pdf>

¹³ Data from phone survey of CRPM carried out on 600 respondents during August 2009

On top of that, the provision for payment of high fines for non-enrolment is criticized, because only the family is held accountable and not the state institutions, and usually these families are socially handicapped. Many remarks emerged with regard to the process of prior consultations, especially because there were no prior consultations with citizens, municipal authorities, schools and other main implementers of the policy.¹⁴ This resulted into series of obstacles in the process and incomplete accomplishment of the promises made.

All of this indicates that even though generally accepted as good idea, timely measures are necessary for successful accomplishment which will not jeopardize quality of the education process. The implementation of this policy doesn't only imply free access to secondary education, but also non-selectiveness, as well as adequate ensuring of high quality competencies of students.¹⁵ High degree of enrollment and completion of secondary education doesn't guarantee high literacy level. Therefore, the true impact on education doesn't depend solely on the organizational and technical solutions, but above all on the optimal selection of secondary education curricula, their structure and implementation manners, issues which were largely ignored or just superficially considered.¹⁶

2.3. Compulsory education in the European countries, with emphasis on Croatia

In the past decade, the tendency of West European countries has been to extend compulsory education above ten years, due to the transition into knowledge-based economy and the growing inequalities in terms of access to education.¹⁷

In the EU countries compulsory education normally starts at the age of 5-6, and in many cases lasts 10 years or more. For instance, in Holland¹⁸ it lasts 14 years, in Hungary 13 years, in Northern Ireland 12, in Great Britain and Malta 11, while in France, Norway and Germany it lasts for 10 years.¹⁹

Most commonly lower secondary education is compulsory (which normally lasts till the age of 16), while less commonly it is the higher secondary education. Nevertheless, even though it is optional, in some countries, (such as Finland, Germany, Norway and Holland for instance), over 90% of students carry on with further education upon completing the compulsory education.²⁰

In the Balkan countries, compulsory secondary education was also introduced in academic 2009/10 year in Croatia. Even though the idea for introducing this measure appeared at the same time as in Macedonia, still it is carried out in a different, more gradual way. At first, during the previous two school years, secondary education became free, including transport costs, textbooks and accommodation in dormitories, but it wasn't made compulsory. Still only because it was free, there was increased enrollment in first year of secondary school in academic 2008/09. In figures, the number of enrolled students in first year high school was higher than that of graduated eighth graders, meaning that even some previously graduated eighth graders continued on to secondary education.²¹

The idea behind introducing free education first is owed to the intention of promoting positive motivation methods for stimulating transition into secondary education, under the assumption that penal measures will not be effective, especially for economically handicapped families.²²

The gradual introduction of the policy is owed to the acknowledged fact that successful enforcement of this measure implies 'obligation for the state as well, firstly in ensuring material pre-requisites and funds, in order to ensure equal conditions for all when introducing education accessible for all and in accordance with capabilities and interests of students.'²³

Due to this, a National Program was adopted containing measures for introducing compulsory secondary education which stipulated precise measures for accomplishment of this goal, as well as preparation of action plans by the Ministry of Education at the annual level.²⁴

¹⁴ Education is compulsory, but inaccessible: Handicapped attitude towards students with obstacles, *Vreme*, no 1725, 20.07.2009

Problematic start of compulsory secondary education, *Deutsche Welle*, 07.08.2008

Compulsory high school is still utopia, *Globus*, no 62, 24.06.2008

Secondary education - mandatory!, *BBC Macedonian*, 11.04.2007

Municipalities against hasty education reform: No money for compulsory high school, *Vest*, no 2373, 5.15.2008

Hypocrisy of the brave reforms, *Vreme*, no 1056, 02.05.2007

¹⁵ see: http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/bela_knjiga-07-cro-hrv-t02.pdf, ctp 37

¹⁶ *Ibid.* no. 44

¹⁷ Free and compulsory education for all children: the gap between promise and performance, K. Tomaševski, *SIDA*, 2001

http://www.foro-latino.org/flape/boletines/boletin_referencias/boletin_20/Doc_Referencias20/katarina_tomasevski/Lecturas/8.pdf

¹⁸ since year 2008

¹⁹ Free and compulsory education for all children: the gap between promise and performance, K. Tomaševski, *SIDA*, 2001

http://www.foro-latino.org/flape/boletines/boletin_referencias/boletin_20/Doc_Referencias20/katarina_tomasevski/Lecturas/8.pdf

²⁰ Trends in Secondary Education in Industrialized Countries: Are they Relevant for African Countries?, Briseid, O., Caillods, F, UNESCO:

International Institute for Educational Planning, November, 2004

²¹ <http://www.monitor.hr/clanci/od-jeseni-obavezno-srednjoskolsko-obrazovanje/638>, 13.02.2009 (site visited on 18.08.2009)

²² Nacionalni program mjera za uvođenje obaveznoga srednjoskolskoga obrazovanja, *Narodne novine*, 21.06. 2007 (National program measures for introducing compulsory secondary education, *Narodne Novine*, 21.06.2007)

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Unlike the Croatian example, in Macedonia this initiative was effectuated immediately, without more detailed analysis of the capacity of the institutions in charge, nor any analysis of the profile of persons who usually fail to transition into secondary school and without any strategy for overcoming the problematic aspects of implementation of the policy. A combination was used of positive motivational but also penal measures, but it didn't result into 100% enrollment of eighth graders into first years of secondary education.

III. METHODOLOGY

While preparing the analysis, combination of data was used acquired through research of secondary and primary (field) data. The former include: reports from the State Statistical Office, Ministry of Education and Science (MES), printed media articles, international reports and analysis.

Field data were collected from many sources (policymakers, implementers, and end users) which were interviewed:

- Department for Secondary Education at the MES
- Municipal authorities (focus was placed on 7 municipalities with the lowest transition rate from elementary to secondary education (Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar, Kumanovo, Struga, Mavrovo - Rostushe and Vrapchishte)
- School administration (pedagogues /psychologists or principals) of 5 schools with highest dropout rate of students
- 6 families whose children did not transition into secondary education in academic 2008/09 years and 4 families whose children dropped out from secondary education during the same school year

IV. ANALYSIS

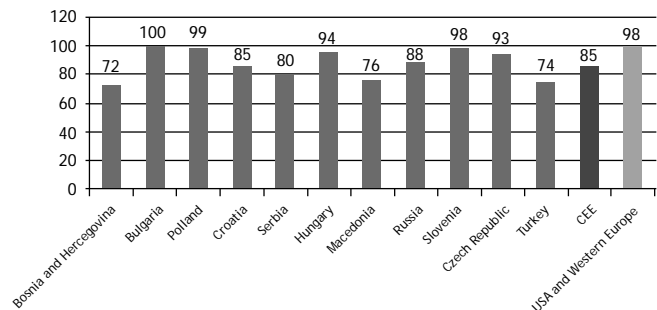
4.1. Enrollment ratios for students in secondary education

The gross enrollment ratio in secondary education²⁵ in the Republic of Macedonia (76%) is far lower than the average in CEE countries which amounts to 85% is, and is somewhat higher than the ratio in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey.²⁶ Only a small number of CEE countries has high school enrollment ratio as that in the USA and Western Europe (Chart 1).

According to these data, 20-25% of children at secondary school age in Macedonia are not enrolled in high school, while 5-10% of them do not even complete elementary education.

Chart 1.

Gross enrollment ratio in secondary education (2007)



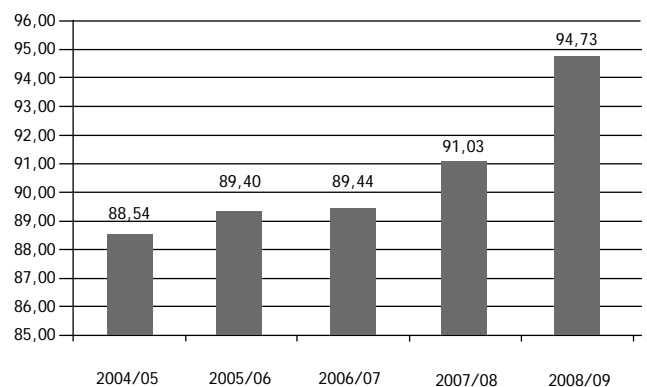
Source:

UNESCO Institute for Statistics: Enrollment ratios by IECD level

The percentage of students who completed elementary and transitioned into secondary education is more optimistic indicator. More precisely, their number in academic 2008/09 increased by around 4 % compared to the previous year (chart 2), which is a notable growth and probably results from the policy of compulsory secondary education. Nevertheless, keeping in mind that this year only enrollment in first year was compulsory, it takes vigilant planning of activities for preserving the vulnerable groups of students in the education process.

Chart 2.

Enrollment rate in high school (of those with completed elementary education)



Source:

State Statistical Office 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009; author's calculations

²⁵Enrollment ratios of all children at high school age in secondary education

²⁶Still no comparative data on 2008

In spite of the relatively optimistic indicators at the national level, in part of the municipalities the situation is more critical and requires increased focus on the part of relevant institutions. The municipalities with highest number of non-enrolled students in 2008/09 were: Tetovo (424), Gostivar (298), Kumanovo (130), Struga (112), Saray (105), Kichevo (68) and Debar (51).²⁷

The initial number of non-enrolled students was 2,400 and after charges were filed it decreased to 1,378.²⁸ These families received court orders for paying penalty fees for non-enrollment of their children in secondary school. Nevertheless, due to the lengthy court procedures (which sometimes take two years) many of these penalties have no effect because verdicts are overdue. Partial success is achieved when education inspection contacts the families before the court order arrives, and if they succeed in convincing them to enroll the child to school.²⁹

4.2. Transition through secondary school

Even though the rate of graduation from secondary education increased since 2000/01, lately it's been stagnating. Around 10% of students from one generation dropout from secondary education (Table 1). This is a significant loss, in light of the fact that they will not complete secondary education formally, and the investment in their education would be squandered. These young people won't specialize in any skill, which jeopardizes their entry on the labor market.

Table 1.
Rate of completion of secondary education

1997/ 1998	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008
86.3	84.8	87.4	90.6	89.1	91.2	90.1	91.3	90.1

Source:
State Statistical Office, author's calculations

Taking this thought further, UNDP analysis of students' enrollment in secondary education of an entire generation (that is, students who enrolled in elementary school eight years before) indicates that **only 77.35% of the same generation transitions into secondary education, while only 69.32% of them succeed in completing secondary education within regular deadline.**³⁰

In spite of the relatively high dropout rate, MoES keeps no record of dropout tendencies in secondary education. They have data on enrollment of students in every school within each and separate school year, but no accurate processed data on transition of one generation though years. Due to this, CRPM processed data available in order to obtain information on schools with highest percentage of dropout rate (that is, number of students from the same generation who did not transition from one to another year). Schools which stand out in terms of dropout rate (15-20% of students failed to transition to the next school year) are vocational high schools, mainly crafts schools, present in all regions. Main reason for dropouts in these school as well as activities taken by schools for reducing early termination of education are further elaborated in the analysis.

4.3. Factors of non-enrollment, and/or early dropouts

The main reasons for non-enrollment and/or dropout from secondary education are interwoven, but generally touch upon the following factors:

4.3.1. Unfavorable social and economic position of the family

Traditionally, the social and economic status of the families is considered one of the main factors influencing the enrollment and attendance in secondary education. Analysis of differences in enrollment between different social groups are rare, and even existing research doesn't lead to any clear and straightforward conclusions. According to the annual analysis of UNDP³¹ (Table 2), the situation is changing. While the survey conducted in 2007 indicated that children from poor families enroll by 10% less in secondary education compared to those from non-poor families, in 2008 this gap was only 2%. Social differences in 2007 were most striking when it came to girls, while in 2008 that wasn't the case.

²⁷ Information from Ministry of Education, 26.05.2009

²⁸ Minimal penalties for non-enrollment in secondary school, Dnevnik, 28.01.2009

²⁹ Interview with Dime Atanasovski, State Education Inspectorate, 28.05.2009

³⁰ MDG Report: Macedonia, UNDP, 2005

³¹ Citizen-based analysis, UNDP, March 2008 and Citizen-based analysis UNDP, March 2009

Table 2.
Gross rate of enrollment in secondary education by gender and poverty status (2007 and 2008)

	Boys	Girls	Total
2007			
Non-poor	90%	82%	86%
Poor	84%	69%	76%
Total	88%	78%	83%
2008			
Non-poor	87%	88%	87%
Poor	85%	85%	85%
Total	86%	87%	87%

Source:
Citizen-based analysis, UNDP, March 2008 and March 2009 (data collected through field research)

Note: Data need to be carefully analyzed primarily due to the high number of households that refused to be surveyed

Also the persons responsible for education in the municipalities indicated **unfavorable economic conditions** as one basic reason for non-enrollment in secondary education. All the interviewed municipal employees confirmed that families are familiar with the proscribed penalties in case of non-enrollment. Part of the charges are already processed, but the general position is that the fines stipulated (EUR 1,000 for non-enrollment and irregular attendance) are too high given the financial possibilities of these families. In effect, judges most often reduce these amounts to EUR 100-150, being aware of this.³²

Municipal authorities agree that the population is informed about the funds earmarked for helping enrollment in secondary education, but their economic hardships are of wider scale and cannot be overcome only by providing free transport and dormitory accommodation. The social aspect results in different barriers, for instance incapacity to cover basic living costs, because of which many children from socially handicapped families are forced to **join the activities for increasing the family budget**.

Latest data from the 2009 Workforce Survey speak in favor of this argument, according to which 16% of the population aged between 15 and 19 (normal secondary school age) is registered as economically active, of which 43% is employed, and the rest is unemployed but searching employment. Almost twice the number of the economically active population is male.

Interestingly enough, almost 80% of the population at this age group are full-time employees and 63% are registered as unpaid family member-workers.³³ These data show that significant percentage of the population at secondary school age is full-time active on the labor market, which is a realistic obstacle for many of them to enroll and regularly attend secondary education. (see Case Study 1). What needs to be investigated further is to what extent is the decision for involving children in families' economic operations a decision of the parent/guardian and to what extent is the child him/herself consulted when such a step is made.

CASE STUDY 1

We have to make a living, there's no money for education

Amdi lives in the municipality of Shuto Orizari with his mother and brothers. In the academic 2008/09 he enrolled at the Chemical High School, which was his wish ever since elementary school. He was a good student, even though initially he confronted prejudice from teachers and classmates who had doubts whether he was going to do well in school only because he is a Roma.

During the first semester, his father passed away and the family lost a significant part of the income. Amdi was forced to terminate education and help his mother with selling at the local market. Both him and his mother wanted Amdi to continue education, but aren't sure that would be possible. Ever since he dropped out from the first year of school, nobody from the school ever reached him to ask of the reasons why he hasn't come back to school or to try convince him to do so.

The family would have allowed Amdi to continue school only if education costs would be completely covered. They think that the MKD 12,000 (conditional financial assistance) which they could potentially receive as welfare beneficiaries would not be enough, because the real education costs are far higher.

³² Minimal penalties for non-enrollment in secondary school, Dnevnik, 28.01.2009

³³ Workforce survey 2008, State Statistical Office, 2009

4.3.2. Unfavorable infrastructure

When comparing dropout rates between rural and urban areas, it's evidently higher in the rural ones³⁴ Infrastructure problems are most striking in villages in the mountain areas, which are pretty isolated especially in the winter (see Case Study 2). The problems of difficult access to secondary schools are commonly supplemented by economic difficulties related to transportation costs to the nearest secondary school.

It doesn't pay out for schools to organize transport for 2-3 children alone, especially considering that transport should be organized with a special vehicle adjusted to terrain conditions. Even though the problem could be solved through awarding rooms in school dormitories, in case of some cities/municipalities (such as Tetovo for instance - Case Study 2) is not possible, because there aren't any dormitories in this city. Even if there were to be a boarding school, rarely would parents consider this a good solution, especially in cases of female children of Muslim faith.

CASE STUDY 2

Living in mountainous villages limits children's access to high school

Hajrie and Afrim live in the village of Sedlarevo, about forty kilometers away from Tetovo. The village is hardly accessible, in a rugged mountainous zone completely inaccessible in the three winter months of the year. In the village there is elementary school which all students attend. Unfortunately, upon completion of elementary school, these children do not transition into secondary school.

The parents of Hajrie and Afrim who completed eighth grade in the academic 2007/08 would like their children to continue in secondary school, but are incapable to send them to high school primarily because of the school's inaccessibility and the inability to reach it by van or common car, especially in the winter period. The Ministry of Education and Science hasn't provided transportation means for these children, and if they were to provide them, they would have to be all-terrain vehicles (like jeeps for instance).

According to my calculation daily transport costs would be MKD 600. How could we cover them?

Afrim's father

The problem increases further due to the fact that in Tetovo there is no dormitory for accommodating high-school children, so these children would have to commute every day from their village to the school.

The families already received letters of warning because of non-enrollment of children to high school, but say that at no case could they pay the proscribed fine of EUR 1,000.

The state should only see the conditions people live in and then set the fine amounts accordingly

Hajrie's mother

These families aren't welfare beneficiaries and wouldn't be eligible for the MKD 12,000 social transfer as motivation for enrollment of their children in high school. Even though they would like to continue education other limitations beyond their control trouble them. They feel that the only chance of sending them to school would be if the state covered entirely their education costs, especially transport ones, for the transport that they would have to organize on their own.

Similar stories were indicated by representatives of secondary schools which witnessed 'loss' of students due to the problems with organizing transportation to the schools.

There are several students coming from villages far away from the school (12-15km away: Srbinovo, Padalishte) so it's not cost-effective for the school to organize transport just for them. It would be best if the Ministry would give them funds for them to organize transport themselves. This is why village population gives up secondary education the most.³⁵

Ten to fifteen children from remote villages were coming to school at their own expense because the transportation issue was not resolved for almost a year. But because this cost them a lot, they stopped coming after several months.³⁶

³⁴ Education in FYR Macedonia: Country Profile, UNICEF; http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/FYR_Macedonia.pdf

³⁵ Interview with Sadudin Sadiki, Psychologist from Gostivar Technical High School, 1.06.2009

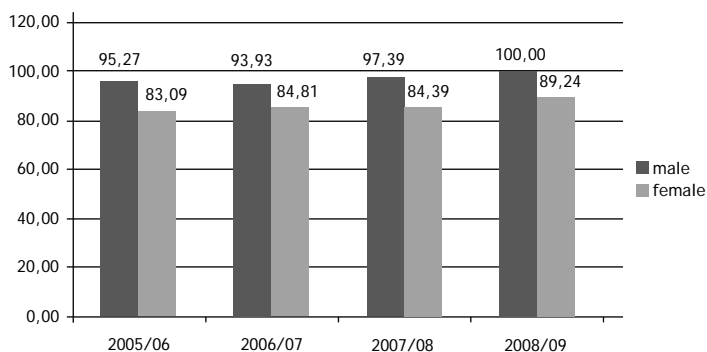
³⁶ Interview with Gjorgji Iliev, Pedagogist from the Strumica Secondary School Nikola Karev, 2.06.2009

Families faced with infrastructural problems would only see chance for continuing education if there would be reimbursement of the exact transportation costs, which they would organize on their own. Otherwise, they aren't very enthusiastic about sending children to school if this would incur additional costs for them.

4.3.3. Gender aspect

Even though UNDP survey results (presented above) point to reduced differences between boys and girls in respect to enrollment ratios in secondary school, data from the State Statistical Office denote a different trend in terms of the transition from elementary to secondary school³⁷ – continual lagging of girls by around 10% in terms of the enrollment in high school (see chart 3). It can be noted that the policy of mandatory secondary education generally resulted into growth of number of students enrolled, nevertheless, growth in male population reached almost 100%, while only 89% of girls which completed elementary education in 2008/09 continued in high school.

Chart 3.
Percentage of male and female students who enrolled in first year of high school (of those who completed elementary education) 2005-2008



Source:
State Statistical Office, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; authors' calculations

Gender as a factor most often prevents further education due to expectations for girls to marry at earlier years, which is still present as opinion in traditional Muslim families (Case Study 3).

CASE STUDY 3

Wife and mother instead of student

Sixteen years old Anka A. has been living for a while now in her husband's house, which marks the start of her new life for after the wedding planned for July. She's prepared herself to be a good wife and mother, and wouldn't like to break this centuries - long tradition among the Roma population. Anka looks like a little girl. A year ago, when she completed elementary education, she finished her education. She says education doesn't interest her, and the only thing she'd like to learn is how to be a hairdresser, and she signed up for hairdresser's course.

Similar is the fate of her contemporaries who decide to marry at that early age, thus terminating their education, which might be their gateway into making something more of their lives. They too dream of becoming hairdressers or cosmeticians.

Source:
Compulsory secondary school is still utopia, Globus Weekly, No 62, 24.06.2008

Gender differences are especially tied to ethnic background, whereby girls of Roma, Turkish and Albanian ethnic background are in least favorable position (Table 3).

Table 3.
Percentage of girls (based on ethnic background) in secondary school or the total number of students in secondary education

	Macedonians	Albanians	Turks	Roma
1999/2000	51%	41,1%	36,8%	39,8%
2000/2001	50,8%	42,1%	38%	43,3%
2001/2002	50,7%	43,8%	42,3%	37,4%
2006/2007	49,7%	42,0%	40,7%	44,4%
2007/2008	49,7%	44,3%	41,8%	46,4%

Source:
State Statistical Office: elementary and secondary schools at the end of school years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2009; author's calculations

The encouraging data is that their secondary education involvement ratio is getting closer to that of boys, but still is far from equal. The critical position of girls from non-majority ethnic communities is recognized and accepted in the National Gender Equality Action Plan.³⁸ The Equal Opportunities Commission plans activities for increasing enrollment ratio in education process of girls from non-majority communities and the rural environment. Planned activities range from campaigns and education of parents, through analysis on the reasons for dropout and implementation of the law on compulsory secondary education.

³⁷ Author's calculations based on data of the State Statistical Office, 2006, 2007, 2008 on enrollment in secondary school of students who completed elementary school

³⁸ National Gender Equality Action plan, 2007-2012, Skopje, May 2007, p.36

4.3.4. Cultural norms (related to ethnic and religious belonging)

In part of the traditional Muslim communities patriarchic norms still dominate, so girls must marry on time (because of which marriage vows are made since childhood), while boys must work for a living since early age. Education is not considered necessary in life, due to which is it often downplayed. Even though such communities are becoming rarity, they still exist in some of the more isolated mountain regions as well as in substantial part of the Roma community. The situation with females is critical also because the family prevents them from attending school because they are in most delicate age (adolescence), and there are many boys in the schools who might “seduce them” (see Case Study 4).³⁹

CASE STUDY 4

Education isn't indispensable, it's more important to marry her well

Blerta from the Struga village of Koroishta completed elementary education in her home village and was regular student, although with weak success. She lives in family with self-supporting mother and other 3 siblings. Her mother says Blerta did not continue education due to financial constraints and problems with transportation, but admits also that the girl should not continue education, even if there were to be secondary school nearby. She fears her child might be seduced at school by a boy and at no case would she allow Blerta to go on with her education. She believes that education is not indispensable for her, what's better is that she gets married and starts her family life.

Our financial conditions here are miserable, I have four children and cannot provide all of them with what they want.

They don't intend to pay the fine for non-enrollment because they don't have the means to do so.

Traditional cultural norms in view of the indispensability of education are most striking among the Roma population, supported by data that gross enrollment ratio in the Roma community is below 20%.⁴⁰ Only 13% of them transition to secondary school, of which only half complete secondary school.⁴¹

Reasons for such a condition, in spite of the traditional values of the community, are often the low expectations of teachers, the constant segregation, the low socio-economic and educational status of families, etc. According to data received from employees in charge of education in municipalities with lower enrollment percentage, in addition to Roma, a smaller part of children of Albanian and Turkish nationality are victims of patriarchic values, even though conditions in these communities improve in time.⁴²

4.3.5. Low performance at school and study motivation

The lack of motivation as a reason for dropout is rarely taken seriously and isn't normally paid account to due to the position that this factor is hard to influence. Nevertheless, in order to comprehend the reasons for non-enrollment and especially early dropout from education, this factor requires close scrutiny.

Research made by OECD confirmed that students' attitudes towards school are significant benchmark for their 'survival' further in the education system.⁴³ In 20 of 28 countries which took part in the PISA 2000 testing, over a quarter of students stated they were bored at school, while around 13% said they didn't want to go to school.⁴⁴ Therefore, special attention and measures needs to be taken in order to prevent dropout of these children from the education process.

CASE STUDY 5

Weak base knowledge from elementary school - adjustment risk for secondary education

Mersiha completed eighth grade elementary at the Marchal Tito Elementary School in Strumica, in the academic year 2007/08, but did not continue to secondary school. Her problems with learning began in fifth grade. She took first to fourth grade in her native Turkish language, but afterwards this was no longer an option, so she switched to Macedonia-taught classes from fifth to eighth grade. But this was a big problem for her, because she know very little Macedonian, so she started getting very bad scores.

Her grandfather says she hasn't got enough knowledge to enroll in secondary school. Normally, weaker students enroll in vocational schools, but mainly boys go to these schools and the family is afraid that some boy might fool her into seduction. On top of that, the family is poor, they life off grandfather's salary and also receive welfare.

³⁹Interview with Sadudin Sadiki, pedagogist from the Gostivar Technical High School

⁴⁰Analysis of potential for good management in education, Open Society Institute Foundation, 2008, http://gg.org.mk/pdf/analiza_obrazovanie.pdf

⁴¹Education in FYR Macedonia: Country Profile, UNICEF; http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/FYR_Macedonia.pdf

⁴²Interviews with municipal representatives from: Vrapchishte, Debar, Gostivar, Tetovo, Mavrovo - Rostushe,

⁴³Monitoring School Dropouts: Albania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mongolia, Slovakia, and Tajikistan, Open Society Institute, 2007; http://www.edupolicy.net/images/old/180_domonitoring_book.pdf

⁴⁴<http://www.oecd.org>; Interactive Data Selection

This family thinks the pre-requisite for their children to continue secondary education is to have class taught in Turkish, and if the Ministry of Education and Science covers all education costs. They think MKD 12,000 as social assistance isn't enough, because the child needs proper clothing for school, all the school material necessary, etc.

Representatives of schools with high dropout rate confirm that many of the children with low grades in elementary school do enroll in high school, but faced with the higher criteria set in high schools, they get demotivated and soon after terminate education.

...most often they are bad students, who hesitated whether to enroll in the first place. Usually they stay with us for the first semester, and then drop out⁴⁵

Many of them didn't even plan to go to high school, they come with very bad grades from elementary school, and cannot manage. They think we'll be easy on them at our school, but then they come across our strict pedagogical measures⁴⁶

Part of them comes to secondary school practically illiterate. Those are children from poorer rural families, whose parents are uneducated⁴⁷

Schools faced with high percentage of cases like this one aren't most often equipped with enough trained staff to provide expert assistance to these children. The faculty usually has low expectations from students and most often don't perceive dropout as their personal responsibility, whereas school psychologists and pedagogues, being so small in number,⁴⁸ cannot actively engage in assisting a bigger number of students.

4.3.6. Inability to enroll in the desired school/vocational stream

The Law on Compulsory Secondary Education is relatively restrictive in terms of the possibility of selection of the desired school. Due to the coverage of transportation costs only to the nearest secondary school, students in unfavorable social position willing to enroll at a school which is not within the scope of coverage of transport costs will have to cover these costs on their own.

For instance, in Debar there is only a general education high school, and students willing to attend vocational schools would have to travel at least to Struga or Gostivar, at their families' expenses.⁴⁹

Many students when rejected from enrollment at the school/major of their choice, or when there isn't enough room for all candidates, have to settle for enrollment to another school, or waiting till next year to apply again. Such a situation is demotivating for many students, and in some cases might result with early dropout.

4.4. What is done to increase enrollment and reduce dropouts?

4.4.1. Policies of the Ministry of Education and Science

4.4.1.1. Funding of compulsory secondary education

The Education Ministry disposes, manages and allocates the funds for secondary education, while the municipal government distributes funds in accordance with the needs of municipal schools. Decisions on the amount of budget funds distributed to the municipalities are primarily reached on the basis of the number of students in the region⁵⁰ With the effectuation of the policy for compulsory secondary school, additional item was added in the Budget of the Ministry of Education and Science with funds for that purpose, increased by around 40% in 2009 compared to 2008 (table 4). The increased amount is owed to the decision on awarding free textbooks to all high school students, as well as increase of number of students using free transport organized by the MES. For that purpose, the utility and block grants transferred to municipalities are increased.⁵¹

Table 4.
Secondary education expenditures

	Total expenditures from main budget	For compulsory secondary education	Municipalities - utility grants	Municipalities - block grants
2007	2.289.437.000	0	0	0
2008	1.379.750.000	237.000.000	62.159.630	2.201.991.021
2009	1.314.891.000	400.000.000	71.890.000	3.008.447.000

Source:
Budget for 2007, 2008 and 2009, Ministry of Finance

4,680 high school students from welfare beneficiary families in the school 2008/09 received free text books, which cost MKD 13,934,004.⁵² As of the school 2009/10 all elementary and high school students started receiving free textbooks, which is implemented with a delay. If equipping one high school student with textbooks costs around MKD 3,000,⁵³ then all high school students (around 90,000) will require around MKD 270,000,000 from the budget for that purpose.

⁴⁵Interview with Goce Alexovski, Principal of Kole Nedelkovski School, Veles, 1.06.2009

⁴⁶Interview with Sadudin Sadiki, psychologist from Technical High School, Gostivar, 1.06.2009

⁴⁷Interview with the pedagogue from Skopje School "8 Septemvri", 2.06.2009

⁴⁸Most usually schools have one pedagogue, and some have one psychologist too

⁴⁹Interview with Rexhat Malovski, Deputy Director of the Zdravko Chochkovski High School, Debar, 2.06.2009

⁵⁰Compulsory secondary education: how to proceed from a good idea to a good implementation, IDSC, D. Talevski, M. Troshanovski, 2007

⁵¹Tomorrow and the day after starts the race for secondary school enrollment, Kirilica, 16.06.2009

<http://www.kirilica.com.mk/vest.asp?id=27354>

⁵²Data from Ministry of Education, received on 26.05.2009

⁵³According to previous data that MKD 13,934,004 MKD were spent for supplying textbooks for 4,680 secondary school students

The activities concerning the free bus transport began with a delay in 2009, and are still not completely over. At the moment, 10 busses are given for use to 10 municipalities: Zajas, Lipkovo, Zhelino, Konche, Karbinci, Mogila, Novaci, Jagunovce, and Chaska, while the 10th bus is earmarked for transport of students with special needs from the City Skopje.⁵⁴ The free bus transport for high school children in academic 2008/09 only covered freshmen, while the coming school year (2009/10) is expected to cover those from first and second year high school. Moreover, free accommodation at school dormitories for freshmen is provided for academic year 2008/09.

Due to the fact that every year there is increased number of students who receive financial assistance for attending secondary school (every year there is one more generation entitled to benefits resulting from the compulsory secondary education), it is also necessary that education budget increases progressively.

4.4.1.2. Project for conditional cash transfer

Beginning from academic year 2009/10, MoES is launching a project for conditional cash transfers, made possible by World Bank loan. This is a three-year project for supporting compulsory secondary education, which envisages that 18,000 poor families with children in secondary education shall receive MKD 12,000 a year provided they send their children to school regularly. This means that the child/the family would have around MKD 60 a day for covering daily education costs.

The project on conditional cash transfers is planned with the goal of increasing enrollment of students into secondary education and their remaining in school until graduation.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this project starts with a delay as well. The 'screening' of students eligible for financial assistance was planned to start during the second half of September.⁵⁶ So again, socially handicapped children are bypassed, as they will not enroll their children to school due to the financial constraints.

It is going to be interesting to monitor the project implementation, because according to interviews with families who during 2008/09 didn't enroll or withdrew their children from high school, the amount of MKD 12,000 they would potentially receive is not considered enough to cover all education costs which are not covered by the Ministry (eg. clothes, school material, food at the school, etc).

4.4.1.3. Activities of the State Education Inspectorate

The Education Inspectorate is the institution directly responsible for implementation of the provisions on compulsory secondary education from the Law on Secondary Education. They are expected to detect families, communicate directly with them, to track them and file charges against them. So, due to the fact that their work is most often formal and legal and not consultative, the effect of their activities is only partial.

Additional problem occurs also because the main focus of the Education Inspectorate is on enrollment in secondary school, while the problem with dropouts is often neglected. Students who drop out from school are often not detected by the system (see Case Study 6). Consequently, institutions don't initiate activities on time to see the reasons for the dropout and the students' motivation to re-enter education process. Hence, by the time the cases are reported and charges filed accordingly, many of them become overdue. In cases which are brought to the end and the child goes back to school, it has difficulties catching up with the school material because of the long absence.

CASE STUDY 6

No reaction from the institutions upon dropout

Albulena and Valona live in the Tetovo village of Novo Selo and share a similar story. Both enrolled in secondary school in 2008/09, the former in agricultural school and the latter in medical school in Tetovo. Soon after enrollment, they terminated education because the free transportation that was supposed to be organized by the MES failed (that happened 3 months after the start of the school year). Single day transport costs for commuting to the school and back cost the families up to MKD 300, which was a huge financial burden for them.

Ever since the girls had dropped out, (in the start of the school year), nobody from the school, nor the municipality or the Ministry ever expressed interested in why the girls dropped out, nor did they receive any warning about the fine.

⁵⁴Data from MES, received on 26.05.2009

⁵⁵Such programs proved very successful in many developing countries. For instance, in Mexico, the program result was 3,5% to 58,% increase in enrollment among boys and 7,2% to 9,3% among girls. In Nicaragua, for instance, growth of 22% was noted in the average enrollment rate. The program in Bangladesh, for instance, targeting only girls, scored in 12% increase of enrollment rate (Policy brief Cash Transfers to Reduce Children's Poverty, Maastricht School of Governance, No.2, August, 2006; http://www.poverty-monitoring.go.tz/documents/ILO_and_maastrichtdt_on_cast_transfers.aug2006.pdf)

⁵⁶Incentives for poor families at the start of school year. Money for secondary school students up to 22 years of age, Vest, 25.08.2009

4.4.2. School policies

Secondary schools are direct stakeholders in the policy for compulsory secondary education. Municipal authorities mainly leave enrollments and dropouts up to the schools. Nevertheless, the impression of the school administration is that they weren't consulted in any of the stages of adoption and enforcement of this policy.

Even though the successful implementation of the compulsory secondary education policy requires systemic approach on the part of all institutions in monitoring the successes and dropouts from secondary education, still there aren't any formal mechanisms of coping with the problems of enrollment and dropout. Schools react in different ways, and mainly spontaneously when faced with such occurrences. Lack of formal policy is evident, such as written documents, rulebooks, due to which some don't react at all if a student drops out, others believe it is the duty of the class master, others leave this up to the school pedagogue / psychologist, and third ones rely on classmates' informing the family of what needs to be communicated.⁵⁷

CRPM research indicated that even though schools with highest dropout rate during 2008/09 school year note increased enrollment rate, this is so only in the first months of school, because many of the 'vulnerable' groups of students enroll only not to be fined, and then quit. Since the system of monitoring of dropouts and their reporting is still dysfunctional, they avoid the fine on early dropout from compulsory education. This is a serious problem, which brings under question the issue of successful effectuation of the policy of compulsory secondary education and reduces it only to formal registering of students' enrollment. This way even through at first glance it seems that the percentage of high school students is significantly higher, the number of dropouts is expected to follow suit.

Responsible persons (principles, pedagogues and psychologists) from the schools mentioned above state they haven't received official guidelines for monitoring, alerting and reporting about dropouts from the Ministry of Education and Science, because of which in such cases they initiate activities themselves. Most commonly, a student is reprimanded upon making 15 unexcused leaves of absence from class, after which the parents are called for meeting at which school officials try to convince them about the importance of continuing education.

Many parents don't even come to meetings, and in such cases the school takes further measures. In case parents come to meeting, the success of keeping students is partial. In case the reason for dropout is the weak achievement, many parents believe their financial investment in education isn't cost-effective and it's better they withdrew the child from school. If the reason is connected to financial problems of the family, the family might be interested in continuing the child's education, but that isn't financially possible for them. At any case, due to the fact that school administration isn't authorized to react in a concrete systemic way, cases of dropout often remain unsolved.

4.4.3. Municipal policies

Municipalities which moved to the second stage of decentralization receive block grants for salaries of education staff. Nevertheless, **the issue of capital investments in education is still not resolved and there is weak coordination between the local and central government**.⁵⁸ Municipal authorities still have no impact on the development of school plans and curricula, or on policies for increasing enrollment in high school. Due to this they are often reserved in terms of implementation of policies reached by the central government.

Municipalities themselves manage the education budget through block grants allocated by the MoES. The amounts of these grants for secondary education in municipalities with lower level of enrollment in high school which moved to the second stage of decentralization are increased by 10-15% in 2009 compared to 2008 (Table 5).

Table 5.
Block grants for secondary education for municipalities which entered second stage of decentralization

Municipality	2008	2009
Gostivar	143.615.500	167.833.000
Kumanovo	191.774.900	212.610.000
Struga	83.086.200	94.830.000
Debar	24.245.900	28.441.000

The question is how will these increased amounts be used. Interviews with persons responsible for education policy in municipalities indicated that different municipalities have different view of their responsibilities in terms of implementing compulsory secondary education policy.

⁵⁷ Child-Friendly Schools, UNICEF, 2007

⁵⁸ Decentralization in Macedonia (Equitable regional development and education) situation and perspectives, A. Spasov, FES, 2008

For instance, administration officials from Gostivar, Kumanovo and Tetovo feel they aren't personally responsible for contacting the families whose children failed to enroll in secondary schools, and place that responsibility on the schools (the school psychologists / pedagogues), which need to inform eight-grade children about the mandatory character of secondary education, the potential sanctions and motivate them for enrollment. On the other hand, Debar municipal authorities underlined their attempts for directly contacting families which failed to enroll children in secondary schools, and when possible they give out a small financial amount in order to help them overcome basic costs for school material.

What was underlined as a **problematic aspect** is that **municipalities have no data on cumulative numbers of enrollment in secondary schools, but only have data pertaining to their municipality**. This limits them from having full insight into the situation and from taking more comprehensive measures for increasing enrollment rate.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

It is evident that high pecuniary fines for non-enrollment and early dropout of education don't bear fruit. Part of the students enroll in secondary schools only to avoid fines, but later drop out, while those who haven't enrolled in the first place are fined with very low amounts or exonerated from payment by courts.⁵⁹ Obviously penal measures aren't a big incentive for families, and they largely cannot or don't intend to pay the fines. Due to this, focus should be placed on the positive incentives, such as, for instance, counseling, providing guidance, help in the education, financial and material assistance. Penal measures ought to be resorted to only when all of the above prove to be unsuccessful. Otherwise, they will have negative effect, especially in cases of socially handicapped families.

Concrete measures recommended for the sake of more successful implementation of compulsory secondary education policy are further elaborated below.

- **Better coordination between the Ministry of Education and Science, municipal authorities and the schools**

Apparently there is lack of systemic approach in regard to delegating concrete responsibilities to each of the stakeholders, as well as a lack of bylaws regulating the specific responsibilities of each institution in enforcing

the compulsory secondary education policy. The MoES needs to get more activated, in cooperation with the schools and the Education Inspectorate for solving the problem efficiently.

Currently the Ministry of Education has data on enrollment of high school students (received by the Education Inspectorate), but has no official data on students' dropout (which they should be receiving from schools). Data they should have pertain to: schools and municipalities with highest dropout rate, profile of students who drop out (gender, nationality, place of living, social status, previous school record, etc). It doesn't take much effort to obtain these data. It only takes for the administrative staff in each school to keep records of students who drop out (according to defined criteria on dropout) and to forward these data to the Ministry and the education departments in local governments, which will react accordingly upon individual cases.

More effective communication with municipalities should lead to responsiveness about their needs and dealing with problems, thus leading to more effective mechanisms of enforcement of compulsory secondary education policy (eg. adequate dispersion of school dormitories throughout the entire territory, especially in Tetovo ad Gostivar.

In addition, improved communication should result into timely start of activities for facilitating access to secondary education: organization of transport, textbooks, etc.

- **Developing mechanisms and standards of monitoring and reaction in cases of dropout**

At present there isn't any standardized approach dealing with the issues of enrollment and dropout. Only the school administrations react in a way they think is right, while municipal and ministry authorities don't get involved in these activities. Therefore, it takes implementation of policy/strategy of response to dropout occurrences; i.e. notification mechanisms, defining responsibilities of school staff, defining conditions under which dropout can be allowed, etc.

In addition, school pedagogues / psychologists ought to keep records on the profile of students who terminate education, in view of their characteristics and reasons for such decision. They should share these data with the MES, so that it develops strategies for dealing with the problem and preventing the risky cases.

⁵⁹ Several judges ruled out fines ranging between EUR 15 to 100, while in other cases parents only received court warning. There is only one case when parent was fined with EUR 300; Education Inspectorate complains about judges, TV Alpha, 23.01.2009

In addition, cases of non-enrollment and dropout should be placed higher on the agenda of courts, because of the needs for their efficient solving.

- **Improving the capacity of municipalities**

Wherever possible, it is recommended to increase the number and capacity of persons dealing with education policy in the municipalities by training and specializing them (on the school curricula, work with vulnerable groups, management of the education process, etc).

Of course it is necessary to intensify the decentralization process, by which municipalities would become authorized to monitor events in their high schools, and to react accordingly. Currently, most part of them refrains from accountability and takes no measures for increasing enrollment in high school. Those who do, take these measures upon their own initiative and without precise strategy.

- **Activities with the families**

Because parents are one of the main factors deciding on students' enrollment and their continuation of education, it takes a more intensive cooperation with families assessed as prone to non-registering or withdrawing the child from school. The detection of these families should happen as early as in the end of elementary education, and needs to be accompanied by counseling and education by expert teams at the schools. Informing parents would be far more effective if done directly, rather than through media campaigns.

Research has shown that families are knowledgeable of the general policy on compulsory secondary education and the legal responsibilities pertaining from it, but don't understand completely the benefits of secondary education. It is the municipalities which should take over this responsibility, as they have the biggest opportunity to detect, in cooperation with the social services and NGOs and to act in the field (by informing, counseling, etc) with the vulnerable families / communities. Particular attention should be placed on education of families from the rural Muslim communities with female children, even before these children complete elementary education.

- **Enhanced professional orientation activities**

Enrollment in secondary school for many students means selecting the desired profession. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the age at which elementary education is completed (14-15 years) it is realistic to expect many of them

to have difficulties deciding. Due to this orientation of students even in elementary school and helping them chose a profession suitable for them, followed by professional qualification, is especially important so that students could find the 'right' school for them, which will bring out the best of their capacities.

- **Support in the teaching process**

Many students which drop out have had lowschool achievement even in elementary school. Upon enrollment in secondary school expectations rise and they have hard time coping with the new conditions, especially if they enrolled later, after having received the warning notice from the Education Inspectorate. This demotivates them and often results with dropout. In the Macedonian education system there is an option of holding additional classes for weaker students, but that rarely ever happens in practice.

One of the possibilities for tackling this problem is setting up mentoring teams of students at a school level. Better students could mentor the weaker ones, which would develop in the latter motivation for continued learning and would develop the awareness for social responsibility. Such assistance should especially focus on students coming from families with lower education level, which cannot rely on their parents/guardians for help in their studies.

- **Financial support**

The policy of free textbooks for all students that should be implemented beginning with school 2009/2010 is positive and will reduce costs of all families. Nevertheless, families on welfare should be helped additionally, for instance their costs for school material could be covered. When approving funds for organizing transport to schools, account should be paid to the accessibility of the place of living of the potential students. Schools which expect enrollment of students who live in more rugged villages which are less accessible should receive bigger funds in order to organize transport better.

It also takes improvement of possibilities for part-time studies in secondary school, in order to offer more options to those who work throughout their secondary education.

ANNEX 1

Duration of compulsory education in European countries

Country	Duration of compulsory education	Duration of secondary education	Age when compulsory education ends
Albania	8	4	15
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8	4	15
Bulgaria	8	3	15
Croatia	8 ⁶⁰	4	15 (18 since 2009)
Czech Republic	10	4	15
Hungary	13	4	16
Poland	12/13	3	18
Russia	10	2	15
Serbia	10	4	15
Macedonia	12/13	4	18
Slovenia	9	4	15
Turkey	9	3	14
Ukraine	12	2	17
Azerbaijan	11	2	16
Austria	9	4	15
Belgium	13	4	18
Denmark	10	3	16
France	11	3	16
Germany	13	3	18
Holland	14 ⁶¹	3	18
Spain	11	3	16
Switzerland	9	4	15
Great Britain	11	3	16

Source:

Unesco Institute of Statistics (http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?URL_ID=3753&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.)and Wikipedia (School Leaving Age) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_leaving_age

⁶⁰As of the school year 2009/2010 also in Croatia secondary education becomes compulsory by which duration of compulsory education extends to 10-12 years

⁶¹As of 2008

ANNEX 2

Methods of dealing with dropouts in different states

	Responsibility	Who takes measures	Method	Punishment
Albania	Parents	Local government	Counseling, then punishment	Pecuniary fines from LEK 1,000 to 10,000, as envisaged by law
Kazakhstan	Parents	Local government	Teachers and the school administration talk to parents	Pecuniary fines envisaged by law
Latvia	Parents	Local government	Local government decides how to work with the families. Sometimes social workers are involved	Administrative committee decides whether to impose a fine or warning. Sometimes termination of social assistance is decided
Mongolia	Not defined by law	Not defined by law		Not defined by law
Slovakia	Parents	School principal alerts - social services take measures	Transfer of child support from parents toward local government	In case a child has over 15 unexcused classes, parents don't get child support that month
Tajikistan	Parents	Local government	Counseling, then punishment	Parents are legally obliged to send their child to school

Source:

http://www.edupolicy.net/images/old/180_domonitoring_book.pdf

and http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/edu_dur_of_com_educ-education-duration-of-compulsory

