

# Education in Montenegro

## Context

Montenegro is a newly independent country, and the youngest member of the United Nations, having joined in June 2006. Two years after independence, it has made much progress toward improving its education system.

Montenegro's economy has experienced tremendous growth since 2000. The GDP growth rate at constant prices (%) – 1,1% (2001); 1,9% (2002), 2,5% (2003); 4,4% (2004); 4,2% (2005) and 8,6% (2006).<sup>1</sup> Its annual growth quadrupled from 3.1% in 2000 to 16.2% in 2006, indicating an optimistic upturn from its conflict ridden nineties. Today its GDP (PPP) per capita is \$3,860 USD.<sup>2</sup>

Despite its economic improvement, it faces many challenges to realising the Education for All (EFA) and MDG goals. According to the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, in 2003, about 12.2% of the general population was living in absolute poverty (£3.50 per day); more than 60% of Roma and almost 30% of children live below or close to the poverty line, economic growth is expected to halve this rate by the year 2010.<sup>3</sup> The unemployment rate stands at about 20%, with about 5% of young adults being considered 'educationally poor' and 11% of the general population, meaning that they are not attending school and/or never attended secondary school.<sup>4</sup> The percentage of "educationally poor" Roma is seven times higher at 77%.<sup>5</sup>

## Education Reform

Education improvement is a government priority in Montenegro. The following major education reforms have been initiated in pursuit of the EFA goals:

- Montenegro passed the 'Book of Changes of The Education System of Montenegro' in 2001, which is a progressive and comprehensive education reform calling for improved quality, access and equality of education.

- It extended compulsory education to nine years, starting at age six. The phasing in of this reform is set to be completed by 2012.
- It passed legislation declaring all children to have equal access to education: 'Regardless of the national affiliation, race, gender, language, religion, social background and other personal characteristics, all citizens of the Republic shall be equal in the exercising of the right of education.' (Article 9, General Law on Education).
- Montenegro established a National Forum for EFA, which is tasked with the responsibility of monitoring and advancing the countries progress toward achieving the EFA goals. It met for the first time in 2004.
- The MoES is carrying out the Montenegro Education Reform Project in partnership with the World Bank.
- It carried out several strategic documents on Roma education, inclusive education of children with disabilities, national strategy on youth, strategy on civic education, and studies to advance understanding of the challenges facing its schools, including a comprehensive review of needed reparations to school infrastructure.
- The Government of Montenegro adopted a 'Plan of Action for Children 2004-2010', defining key strategies in health, education, and child protection to alleviate child poverty and to meet the MDGs requirements through a rights-based approach that is based firmly on the CRC.



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## Box 1. Quick Facts about Education in Montenegro

	Montenegro
Total Population	620,142
Unemployment Rate as a % of Total Unemployment	20%
Percentage of GDP spent on Education	5,8% (MoE, 2007)
Net Attendance Ratio in Pre-Primary School (%)	29
Net Attendance Ratio in Primary School (%)	98
Net Attendance Ratio in Secondary School (%)	84

Source: UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.

- A new law has been adopted specifically addressing the rights and needs of children with disabilities.
- Montenegro developed an extensive civic education curriculum in an effort to address regional ethnic divisions and to build national cohesion.

Despite these positive changes, many challenges still remain in the areas of access, quality and equity.

### Access

Access to primary education in Montenegro is above average in South-eastern Europe and the CEE/CIS region (See Figure 1). The net attendance ratio (NAR) for primary school is 98%, which is almost ten percentage points higher than the regional average of 90%. The NAR for secondary school is 84% which is on par with the regional average of 83% and the sub-regional average of 82%. Access to pre-schools is not as widespread. Only 29% of 3-5 year olds are attending primary school, compared with an average of 41% in the region and 55% in the sub-region. This lagging indicates that pre-primary education is in need of attention.<sup>6</sup> Only about 1200 children remain out of school.<sup>7</sup>

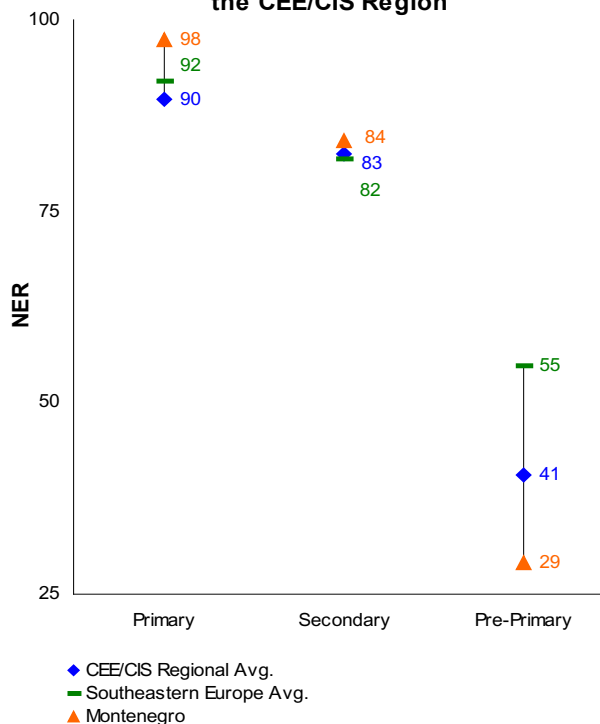
The government conducted a survey of school infrastructure in 2003 and found that eight million USD would be needed to make the necessary repairs on the country's 612 school buildings, most of which were built just after World War II.

### Equity

Few figures are available on the equity of enrolment and completion by various sub-national populations. However, certain inequities have been identified by educationists in Montenegro.

The MoES brought regulations within formal education for Albanian students class composition to be halved. Ethnic Albanians are often educated in separate classes not schools because the Constitution of Montenegro provides the right of all citizens to be educated in their mother tongue. However, this right is afforded only to Albanians. The curricula and materials in Albanian schools are reported to be of lower quality than Montenegrin schools, with out of date textbooks, poorly translated texts and a history curriculum that does not fairly represent all perspectives on the country's past. Until Montenegro was in State Union with Serbia, the textbooks for Albanian children were brought from Kosovo, almost as translation of Serbian textbooks version. With the reform of education, Albanian textbooks are being issued by the Institute for textbooks and teaching aid of Montenegro with support from external experts from Tirana (Albania) They are mainly translated from Montenegrin ones but have relevant contents on Albanian culture and tradition, nature and society as a subject, in line with the reformed curricula. Usually, this is linked to decentralisation of the system and possibility for each school to define its own component of the regular school programme.

**Figure 1. Net Attendance Ratios in Montenegro, Southeastern Europe and the CEE/CIS Region**



Of Montenegro's 13,000<sup>8</sup> Roma, only 7% of the Roma school age population has been enrolled in the school system — 85% of them in primary school, 8% in secondary school and 7% in tertiary education.<sup>9</sup> In Montenegro, the estimate is that less than 5% of Roma children have access to pre-school, about 20% of enrolled Roma students complete primary school, and there are only 31 students currently attending secondary education. (Source MoE, 2008.<sup>10</sup> 'One of the barriers for Roma attending schools is that they are educated in schools where the ethnic affiliation of the majority of the schoolmates is non-Roma. The issue of education in mother tongue for Roma children in Montenegro represents serious problem, since there are no Roma teachers available.

Additionally, 'although the Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro (Article 68) recognizes the right of the members of national and ethnic groups to be educated in their mother language, only the members of the Albanian minority can exercise this right. The members of other national minorities do not have the possibility to exercise such rights - students belonging to the Bosniak and Croatian national minorities do not have the possibility to study their own history and culture. This affects both learning outcomes and school completion. As for the Montenegro's diminishing refugee population, most of them have been absorbed into the school system.

## Learning Outcomes and Educational Quality

Montenegro was one of 17 countries in the CEE/CIS region that participated in the PISA 2006 assessment. It ranked 48<sup>th</sup> out of 57 countries. Its below-average performance indicated that learning outcomes in Montenegro lag behind those of its neighbours. In mathematics Montenegro scored second to last in the region, after Kyrgyzstan, with a score that was nearly 100 points behind the regional average on a scale from 0-500. In reading and science, Montenegro scored third to last after Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan, again with a score almost 100 points below the regional average.

Montenegro's school system shows evidence of inefficiency, which is expected in a system that produces such poor learning outcomes. Only 91.1% of students complete primary school, indicating that there could be a high rate of primary school drop-outs. However, 97.2% of students that enter grade one reach grade five within five years, which may indicate that many students drop out after grade five. 98% of students that complete primary school make the transition to secondary school. However, almost 70.8% of students that are enrolled in secondary school are enrolled in vocational schools. Yet the existing vocational education curricular programs are no longer in line with the labour market.

### Box 1. Civic Education in Montenegro

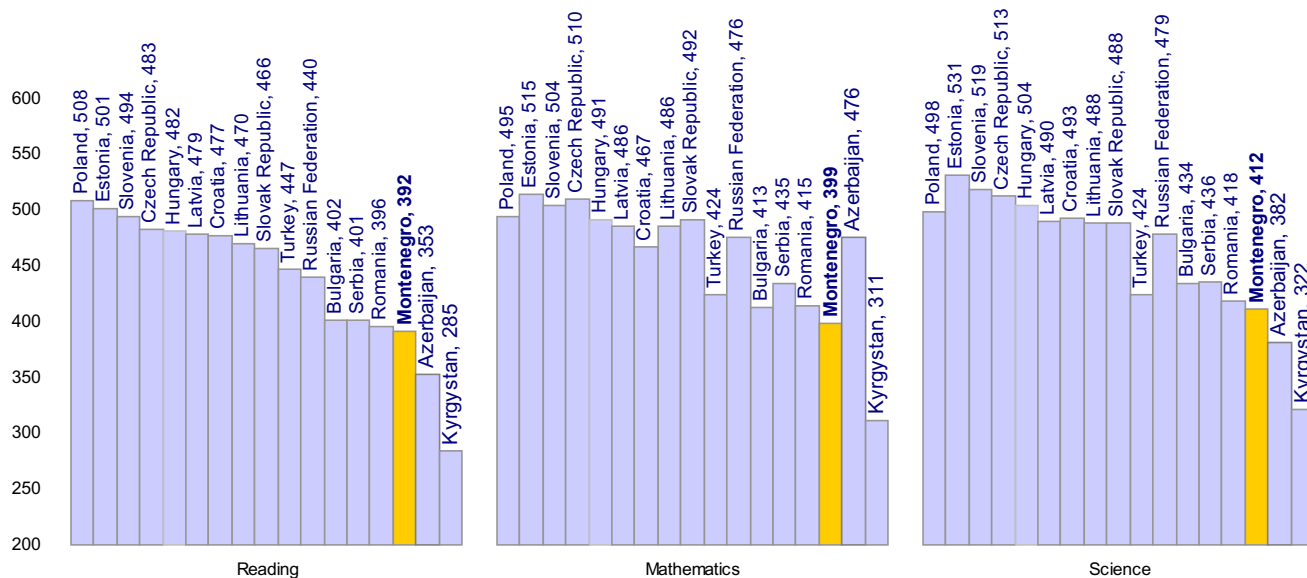
Governments across Europe are introducing civic education into their national curriculum. Montenegro has introduced Civic Education (CE) as a mandatory course throughout primary and secondary education. It defines CE as 'a set of practices and principles aimed at making young people and adults better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society.' The program addresses a wide array of topics, such as, human rights education, political education, education for peace and education for democracy, through different forms of education – formal, non-formal and informal.'

'To that effect, Civic Education (CE) is a separate subject in formal education – in primary and general secondary education; in primary school being an obligatory subject, and in general secondary schools the so-called obligatory elective subject. We deem particularly important to underline the extension of the objectives of these subjects: from knowledge about democracy and human rights towards the education for civil competencies, i.e. to develop skills and values which should act as a bridge. Summing up the discussion on the goals of education for democratic citizenship in school, we wish to give emphasis to the following aspects. In order to develop readiness of individuals to play a more active role in the society, in school students should:

- acquire information **about** their rights, responsibilities, opportunities and ways for action within a community;
- develop skills **for** observing social problems and their resolution through cooperation;
- develop newly acquired knowledge and skills, apart from school, also **in** their life. This general objective is further specified through each of the three components of civic action .

Source: Strategy for Civic Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Montenegro 2007-2010.

Figure 2: Performance of Montenegro on the PISA 2006 compared with Participating Countries in the CEE/CIS Region



## Education Financing

Just after independence, Montenegro spent about 7% of its GDP on education. The latest figure reported from the MOES (2008) is 5.8%. This rate was unsustainable on their current budget and so it has gone down. However, even this percentage is most likely an underestimate. This is because the official figure does not take into account informal spending on education. Despite the fact that education is mandated to be free, parents and community members end up contributing to education financing through the purchase of textbooks, supplies and private tutoring. Only the poorest families who are eligible for material assistance, but who are not displaced or refugee people or Roma, receive assistance in school supplies and textbooks. However, no official figures are available on their total.

## Education Priorities in Montenegro

UNICEF Education priorities in Montenegro are to:

- Advocate and support Child Friendly School standards development and implementation
- Improving enrolment, attendance rates and quality of education for all children especially for the excluded: Roma, children, with disability, poor, and children in institutions;
- Increasing the quality of and access to pre-primary school for all children, especially for the poor, Roma children and children with disabilities;
- Advocate for inclusive, quality education at all levels.
- Help improve learning outcomes.
- Develop a national education monitoring and evaluation system.

## Box 2. Active Learning in Montenegro

The Active Learning Project, piloted by UNICEF and the MoE, 'exerted an important influence on the reform process. The aims of the reforms in terms of teaching-learning processes and student outcomes incorporate those of the Active Learning project... The impact of the project goes beyond policy. A significant number of pedagogical advisers and inspectors have been trained in active learning, initiating a change in culture of the inspection and advisory services. Further, approximately 15% of all elementary teachers in the Republic of Serbia, and 56% in the Republic of Montenegro, have been fully trained by the project. If one includes those teachers who have received the first part of the Active Learning training package, then approximately 30% of all teachers have been trained by the project. Grade One teachers who have been through the Active Learning training are more receptive to change, are more favourable towards implementing reform measures (such as flexible scheduling and descriptive marking), and find the curricular reform training more applicable to their own context. There is also evidence that they are more successful in implementing the reforms. These suggest that the Active Learning (AL) training improves the return on investments in reform and increases the likelihood of its success.'

*Source: UNICEF Evaluation of Active Learning in Serbia and Montenegro*

- 1
- 2 World Bank 2006.
- 3 Serbia and Montenegro Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. 2002.
- 4 ISSP Household Survey.
- 5 World Bank, 2004, based on Montenegro 2003, ISSP Survey
- 6 MICS Montenegro 2005.
- 7 UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.
- 8 (Estimate). OSI. Monitoring Education for Roma. 2006.
- 9 Monitoring Education for Roma Children.
- 10 OSI. Monitoring Education for Roma. 2006.