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## **6. Education**

### **6. 1. Planned and implemented activities of the Government of RM in the reporting period**

In the previous analyzed and monitored period in the area of education, the scope of analyzed events did not embrace many activities. However, those that were included can be said to have really marked this area in the analyzed three months.

What can be noticed as a progress and what was mentioned in the previous report of the OHRID Institute as well, was providing the students with free-of-charge school books. In the secondary schools, where the students studied from scripts, things started to move in the right direction.

The Ministry of Education opened a competition for gathering offers for publishing school-books for the four year professional education. It is about 534 books that were missing in 14 vocations and it represents quite a big step in the area of education.

Regarding the redistribution of the free-of-charge school-books in the Republic of Macedonia, a new information system was presented which is actually a mechanism for electronic gathering of data and gives the exact number of books that every school in Macedonia needs. This measure shall reduce the problems regarding the necessary number of students and books that should be given to each school individually. The system has been created to ensure on-time and exact gathering of all the necessary data connected to the successful realization of the project for free-of-charge books.

In order to improve the communication and cooperation between the schools and the Ministry of Education and Science, among other things, a network has been established, particularly electronic mails through which the communication between the schools and the MES is established. This electronic communication shall serve for the removal of any kind of incoherence, unclear things, etc., which are possible to appear with the managers of the schools. This reform or novelty seems to come late. It should have been introduced at the very beginning of the distribution of the books, in order to increase the efficiency and the easy communication between the schools and the Ministry.

For 2010, the Government of RM allocated more financial means from the central budget for the needs of the science. The Ministry of Education and Science published the competitions for financing the science-research projects and for the annual programs for science-research activities of the public science institutions for 2010. In the budget for 2010, the Government allocated 25 millions of denars for financing the programs in the public science institutions and 20 millions of denars for financing projects for which the state and private universities can apply, as well as particular faculties, public science institutions, individual researchers and centers for excellence. In the budget of RM, for the first time, financial means are allocated which can cover a scientific project. For that aim, 600 000 of denars are projected annually, i.e. 1.200.000 of denars for two-year projects. There is increase in the means for the Competition of annual programs for

scientific-research activities of the public scientific institutions and instead of the 300.000 of denars granted so far, now 400.000 of denars are projected for one project.

It is recommended that the redistribution of those means should be necessary and the complete professionalism should be followed in that activity.

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Roma Education Fund from Budapest started the implementation of the project for the support of Roma students. Granting scholarships for 800 Roma secondary school students is projected for the first phase of the project-in a total amount of 2.200 of denars, while in the second phase they will be given additional help in the study-process by professional mentors and tutors with the aim of quick and efficient following of the classes. The project for Roma-support in education is worth 21 millions of denars, 15 millions out of which are provided by the Roma Educational Fund, while the Ministry of Education shall provide for the rest of the amount. The Roma-students, who will be given the scholarships, in the course of the nine school months shall receive a surplus 2.200 of denars. Also, through this project, the Ministry of Education and Science shall provide additional support for the Roma – students through mentoring and tutoring. It is a positive step of the Government of RM, which for the first time introduces a measure which insists to help Roma-students improve and invest their potential, and at the same time represents a positive motivation for continuation of their education.

According to the methodology of this report and the overall project, the following question does not fall into the scope of monitoring of events for it is not envisaged with the Program of the Government for 2008-2012. However, because of the great attention and importance of this issue and the effects it has, it is still necessary to be given a short analysis.

Namely, with the introduction of the decision for learning the Macedonian language starting from the first grade by the representatives of all ethnical communities in the country, particularly with the start of its implementation, many discussions and debates have been started between the political parties in the Republic of Macedonia, and between the citizens of the Albanian community in the Republic of Macedonia. According to this adopted decision, the students, besides learning the English and native language, should start learning the official language of the country they live in starting from the first grade. By the introduction of the official, i.e. the Macedonian language, the language barrier is expected to be diminished for a bigger mutual recognition, communication and internal integration of all members of the society. This initiative by the Ministry of Education and Science is not something new. The experience in more countries in Europe and the USA is that all of the children-representatives of the ethnical communities, when enrolling in the first grade, besides having the right to get education in their native language, are obliged to learn the official language of the country they live in.

According to the statistics at a European level, beginning with the first year of education, the children start learning two or three languages, which corresponds to the curriculum. Each country has different social order and conduct of the curriculum programs because each of them has a specific system of education. Moreover, the Republic of Macedonia is a rare country in which the children-representatives of the ethnical communities do not start learning Macedonian language in the first grade. What is crucial to be mentioned is that this decision is not a subject for education of

children and does not foresees lessons by a subject teacher, but the class teacher, with the aim of introduction of the basic terms of the language through games and songs. The learning of the Macedonian language should not represent an additional responsibility and difficulty for the children, but should be a daily learning through interactive classes, fun, games, songs, etc.

## **6.2. What remains to be implemented (not implemented yet or not yet finished) in the analyzed period**

The implementation of the project for external testing or standardized tests has been postponed again. The reason for its postponing is the non adoption of the amendments of the Law on Primary and Secondary Education. The project is an internal check of the success of the students. Actually, through the standardized tests the success of the teachers was planned to be tested. The external testing which cannot be realized in practice, foresees check of the knowledge of the students in order to assess the objective evaluation by the teachers. According to the Program of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, this project was planned to start its implementation in 2009, however it is evaluated that its implementation shall be postponed for one more year.

What has marked the previous period and was quite a lot discussed in public, is the conducted investigation on the redistribution of the European money by the European Agency for Educational Programs and Mobility.

Because of the doubts and accusations that the European money were redistributed according to family relations and among the members of the very executive board of the Agency, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia took measures for solving this scandal. Namely, in order to confirm or discharge the accusations and with the aim of a complete exclusion of the various speculations, the Government of RM undertook measures of revision and insight in the work and in the grants given by the Agency. The Agency is still under a review expecting the final results from the investigation to be presented. Because of the inconsistencies, the Executive Board of the National Agency was dismissed and new members were appointed in it. The work of the members of the Executive Board was evaluated as not ethical, and the need of undertaking further measures in this field will be decided right after the review. In the Law on Establishment of This Government Agency it says that the director, employees, members and the president of the Executive board shall be dismissed of their functions if they appear to be the beneficiaries of the financial means from the programs granted by the European Union. It is recommended the whole situation to be solved as quickly as possible, because it is not only about the Agency, but also the overall reputation of the Republic of Macedonia.

The dispersed studies were the topic of monitoring and analysis from the beginning of the projects and were included in the first report as well. At the beginning of the conduct of this activity, it encountered debates, critiques and different discussion, however the Government of RM continued their implementation. De-concentration of the studies is not conducted in the foreseen dynamics. There are still oversights in the

lectures of part of the dispersed faculties because of the inappropriateness of the space and the infrastructure, thus the whole administrative capacity is facing difficulties in the realization of the lectures.

### **6.3. Evaluation of the potential risks from (non)implementation or from (non) quality implementation of activities**

The Government of RM in the previous three months faced a great risk regarding the not ethical work in the European Agency for Educational Programs and Mobility. Namely, by the compromising information coming out in public regarding the work of this Agency, which among other things, is in the process of accreditation, the country was placed in an uncomfortable situation in front of the European Union. Although, prior to the end of the complete review of its work, it cannot be found out the actual truth in the sense whether there are legal or completely illegal activities in the Agency, it still puts negative impression on the management of the European money. The Republic of Macedonia must not allow these kind of speculations, and especially not wrong or bad management with the European money when at the same time it works on the reform process and its integration in the EU and NATO. That is a potential risk that can harm the Macedonian reputation in Brussels, and by doing that, decrease the support and trust for management with the European money.

The decision for learning the Macedonian language by the representatives of the ethnical communities in Macedonia starting from the first grade caused heavy debates, discussions and different kinds of polemics in the public between the political parties. Regarding this problem, the risks came out to the surface, and the boycott of the classes and the deepening of the ethnical difference are things that should be most carefully treated. Namely, if a previous in-depth study is not done prior to the introduction of these extensive reforms, these and other similar polemic discussions can occur in future with the risk for a future boycott of the classes.

The project of the Government "Computer for every child" is of a great importance for the students, and also for the progress of the Macedonian society and represents quite expensive and demanding project. The schools are equipped with computers and every student and teacher, according to the projections, should have a computer in front of them, which will facilitate the following of the classes. The most frequent questions are: Whether the computers are really a priority, whether the schools are completely in order, and this is the last necessary reform and whether the environment is prepared for that reform or is there a necessity for its preparation? Namely, the building and finishing the construction of schools, toilets, chairs, aid materials, furnace, electrical installation, the overall infrastructure, etc are a necessary preparation prior to the start of the reform, as well as a priority for sound education and sound environment with the aim of socialization of the students. A contradictory sight is

the non renovated schools and computerized classrooms. Greater attention should be paid to the priorities and well worked strategy of requirements, risks and benefits should be elaborated. The students are one of the most vulnerable groups of the society and all of the reforms taken in the domain of their socialization and progress should be carefully structured.

#### **6.4. Overall evaluation by the expert on implemented activities for the reporting period, with possible recommendations**

The increase in the budget for the needs of education and science is essentially important because by financing the projects, the long period of absence of finances in this area will be terminated. With these kinds of stimulations, the Republic of Macedonia shall encourage the scientific thought for the purpose of development of the country. More time and resources should be paid to the popularization and support of the scientific area. The additional resources of part of the budget for the science shall contribute for the education to become less closed in the margins of the universities, and to be generally accepted and to contribute to the overall progress of the country. The projects with which the scientific workers apply with ideas and programs stimulate competition, and thus the quality of the scientific staff. This project should be in the function of equal development of the universities and institutions in the country, and as well in the function of support of competition.

Regarding the adopted Decision on compulsory learning of the Macedonian language by the representatives of the ethnical communities in the Republic of Macedonia starting from the first grade, the general assessment is that there are benefits from that measure, but also that there prior to adopting this measure it is of essential importance to carefully examine the material and adopt a rational strategy. The multiple use of languages in the Republic of Macedonia is a comparative advantage for the creation of a competitive market inside and outside of the borders, but that should be set in a strategic and planned manner and should not succumb to the impact of the politics, which can lead to disturbing the inter-ethnic relations in the country. In the future it is recommended a detailed examination of the appropriate material and strategy to be done before making such reforms, which will assess the benefit and risk from them, thus decreasing the possibility for boycott and negative polemics regarding that problem. It is especially important when the problem includes only one specific group in the society-the students, who must not be used for political aims, which can cause great consequences on them and generally endanger the fragile multi-ethnic balance in the country.

Regarding the events in the European Agency for Educational Programs and Mobility, the Government of RM should undertake all of the necessary measures in order to protect the country from further manipulations with the European money. If the results show that there are serious oversights in the work of the Agency, it will be a great disadvantage and a hole in the overall reputation of RM regarding its EU integrations. All of the necessary

legal measures are recommended to be taken in order to prove the professionalism and capacity of the Macedonian administration for managing with the European money.

The project for granting scholarship to Roma children is evaluated as quite a positive step, taking into account the increased number of Roma students in secondary schools. This project invests in the quality of the educational system and in the education of the most marginalized group in the society.

The introduction of the information system for alleviating the communication between the managers of schools and the Ministry for Education and Science is a positive step. It is recommended the Government not to stop at this level and to invest in technology in all of the spheres of education. Although monitoring the new tendencies is recommended, a strategy and analysis of risks, benefits and difficulties that will be brought by the new technologies should be elaborated prior to that. These technological systems and novelties, which are already implemented and in function in the European countries, should be introduced in Macedonia as well. However, the whole environment should be prepared for that kind of development in the first place and the manner and space for their implementation should be identified. The capacity and the technical preparedness of the sector of education should be strengthened as well, for the application of those technologies and their transfer to the students.