**Evaluation Report**

**on the Management and Performance of the Grant Scheme**

**Aimed at the Improvement**

**of Inclusive Preschool Education Services**

**at Local Level**

**Subject of evaluation:** Project Component 3

– Supporting Young Children and Families

(3.2. Outreach to families from vulnerable groups)

Project: Inclusive Preschool Education and Care

Centre for Education Policy

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# List of abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Acronyms | Full title |
| CFU | Central Fiduciary Unit |
| CPZV | Know How Centre |
| ECEC Project | Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project |
| GAC | Grant Approval Committee |
| GOM | Grant Operations Manual |
| HC | Health Centre |
| IC | Intersectoral Committees |
| ICT | Information and communication technologies |
| IECEC | Inclusive early childhood education and care |
| LSG | Local self-government |
| MoESTD | Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NSMEDE | Novi Sad Intersectoral Network for Children |
| PE | Preschool education |
| PI | Preschool institution |
| PMU | Project Management Unit |
| POM | Project Operations Manual |
| PPP | Preparatory Preschool Program |
| RDPPS | Rasina District Pedagogical and Psychological Society |
| RS | The Republic of Serbia |
| ŠOSO | Milan Petrović Primary and Secondary Education School with Student Accommodation |
| SUMSPUS | Union of ECEC Medical Nurses and Nursery Teachers' Associations of Serbia |
| SWC | Social Work Centre |
| WB | World Bank |

# Summary

The subject of this Evaluation Report is the assessment of the results achieved in the project “Inclusive Preschool Education and Care” (namely, Component 3: Supporting young children and families, Sub-component 3.2. Outreach to children and families), and/or the review of the implementation and evaluation of seven local project in seven selected local self-government units (LSGs) that were awarded grants in Cycle One of the Grant Scheme. In addition to the progress made in the implementation of the approved local projects, the evaluation is focused on the review of procedures followed and steps taken in all phases of the Grant Scheme implementation.

The evaluation is performed on the sample of seven local projects (making up 35% of the total number of LSGs that were awarded grants in the Cycle One of the Grant Scheme) implemented in different communities (Aleksinac, Prokuplje, Merošina, Palilula (Belgrade), Varvarin, Novi Sad, and Kraljevo). Broader perspective is achieved by collecting experience from implementing entities of all 20 Cycle One local projects, against the total defined targets and evaluation tasks, to serve the purpose of creating relevant and universally applicable recommendations. The evaluation process involved 119 respondents (excluding the number of children involved): representatives of the broad range of local partner organisations and institutions, representatives of key project bodies, and end users – parents and children (due to the current pandemic, the children perspective was mostly taken into account indirectly, through the impression of parents).

The following were the mainstays of the evaluation process: orientation and reliance on the broader context of the project, specific goals and expected changes; taking into account the design of the Grant Scheme; triangulation of the proof sources; participation of different actors; the assessment of consistency between the results of monitoring project activities and the results of external evaluation; partnership; etc.

The evaluation of the Grant Scheme performance and operation was performed year and a half into the Cycle One local projects implementation (ending September 2020), which is a sufficient period for assessing the implementation quality against the overall design of the scheme envisaged by the major project document, as well as for providing recommendations.

**The evaluation results offer consistent set of projections of different groups of respondents on the key results of and challenges faced in the Grant Scheme implementation.**

**The relevance of local project is assessed highly positively**, bearing in mind the fact that local projects attempt to proactively and holistically meet specific needs in different communities for the improvement of inclusive preschool services. It is important to note here that all local intersectoral teams have made a significant breakthrough from the phase of problem identification and analyses towards operationalisation and successful implementation of the diverse range of activities aimed at providing holistic preschool services.

**The effectiveness of local projects is also assessed as positive**, since all the local projects have made progress towards attaining all four general objectives of intervention, but was limited by the impact of mostly these two key factors: the delay in transferring grant funds caused by complex procedures and requirements; and the external factor in the shape of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings point to the continual efforts invested by project representatives, LSGs and local intersectoral teams towards overcoming key challenges and carrying out project activities in line with the projected methods and the implementation plan.

**The sustainability of interventions is positively assessed and is predominantly based on:** improved professional experience and competencies of implementing entities; the effects of project activities; intensive promotion of the significance of early development and preschool education; financial means invested in improving spaces for the implementation of activities aimed at children and parents; and total improved means, mechanisms and channels of communication and cooperation between partner institutions/organisations and end users.

The total evaluation findings show that the **local projects have been successfully implemented in practice, and that the design of the Grant Scheme envisaged by the project document has been consistently followed.** A range of challenges were identified in this process, all of which were successfully responded to thanks to the intensive support by the Project Management Unit (PMU), their flexible approach and the possibility used to amend grant contracts. The following **key challenges** were identified: the process of opening designated bank accounts; transfer of funds (to the accounts of the implementing entities and between local partners); the level of jurisdiction in the cities (jurisdiction of the city authorities as compared to jurisdiction of the city boroughs); following the procurement procedures in line with World Bank requirements and local legislation; and the insufficient understanding of financial accounting and budgetary operations by the implementing entities.

During evaluation, no discrepancies were perceived in the transfer of funds envisaged by grant contracts and realised payments – **the perceived compatibility between the allocation of funds envisaged by grant contracts and realised payments forms a basis for verification of contracted activities, services provided, and funds spent.**

**After assessing the progress made towards the improvement of services at the local level in all four areas of intervention, the achievement of results was perceived in all sampled LSGs**, but with a different level of progress. As expected, the activities intended for parents and building parental competences posed greater challenge as compared to other general goals of local projects. Although first two quarters of implementation were marked by considerable discrepancies against the projected implementation plan (due to the above-mentioned factors), greater progress towards the projected goals has been achieved subsequently.

Generally speaking, **the share of the activities carried out greatly exceeds the share of the unrealised activities.**

It is vital to point out that in all evaluated local projects either **good practice examples were perceived** or their potential to turn into ones in the course of their implementation.

**Key recommendations** fall into two categories: 1) those related to the improvement of procedures and technical and financial requirements of the Grant Scheme; and 2) the recommendations for the improvement of the program aspects of local projects.

Bearing in mind the fact that **at the time when this evaluation process started**, all the identified challenges regarding following the procedures and steps envisaged in project documents had already been **addressed and resolved**, the following recommendations should be regarded as a **systematisation of challenges and resources for the improvement of the Grant Scheme in Cycle Two**, and also in the context of lessons learned for future reference in World Bank projects in this or any other area:

* **The process of dissemination of information on the Grant Scheme** should be improved by planning more comprehensive support towards building capacities and the practical use of training in all the projected segments. It is also recommended to hold periodical thematic online info sessions at the end of each quarter intended for all Cycle One LSGs in the following three key areas: (1) financial, procedural and technical issues; (2) the quality of financial and especially narrative reporting; and (3) the support towards further progress in the implementation of the program activities. Such systematic approach would reduce the workload on the PMU and enable horizontal learning and the exchange of experience between local intersectoral teams, bearing in mind that the evaluation findings point to quite similar range of challenges regardless of the community in which projects are implemented.
* **The grant application procedure** should also envisage the possibility of providing mentoring (or expert) support to LSGs in the process of drafting project proposals, so as to add to the quality of the local projects proposed according to all the evaluation criteria at the highest level.
* The largest number of the above-mentioned issues arose in the course of **managing the Grant Scheme**, resulting in the following recommendations:
* It is recommended to prepare a document with frequently asked questions or difficulties perceived in following procedures defined in GOM that different implementing entities could use as an additional support in case they need further clarification.
* It would be beneficial to future projects to prepare a detailed written instruction for opening designated accounts, with the list of steps each involved institution is to take, bearing in mind different procedures depending on the status of an institution/organisation.
* It is recommended that the procurement procedures be additionally simplified, especially for small procurement values and in small communities.
* The table for financial reporting should be improved and/or the implementing entities asked to enter data in the table for final reporting in phases, so as the implementing entities would have direct insight into their balance by item, and also to facilitate the review and summation of data in financial reports.
* The need has been identified for improving the content of narrative reports, so as they be more informative and comprehensive, by continually giving feedback. This would greatly contribute to better monitoring of results and recommending corrective measures.
* It is necessary to introduce in the narrative reports the requirements for the analysis of risks and their prevention plan, regardless of the current epidemiological situation, which only reaffirms the need for the implementation of this recommendation.
* The assessment of effectiveness of project activities should become a mandatory element in narrative reports (separate reports on the implemented project activities should also include “the assessment of impacts”).
* Since the established monitoring system in its core serves rather as the verification mechanism of the implemented activities and monitoring the numerical indicators of the output regarding the access of children and parents to PE instead of being necessarily developmental in character, it is recommended to envisage the provision of expert (e.g. mentoring) support in the course of project implementation as well; such support should include aid in the monitoring process for the duration of the project.

Bearing in mind the total evaluation findings, **the following recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the project activities and the sustainability of local projects were communicated:**

* Since the project activities in all LSGs were once again halted as of late November 2020, and bearing in mind the uncertainty of future epidemiological situation, the future support should focus on t**he development of alternative scenarios** for the realisation of project activities and the exchange of the proposed solutions between the implementing entities, as well as on the adjustment of the project activities implementation plans.
* Due to the prolonged duration of the coronavirus pandemic, it is recommended that the duration of local projects be **extended by six months.**
* In order to achieve further progress and to exchange experience and various good practice examples as regard the program activities, it is recommended that **periodical thematic horizontal exchanges between all local intersectoral teams, organised by PMU, be introduced** in the online format, since such organisation would not incur significant financial investment. If financial means are envisaged, it is recommended to develop and implement horizontal learning by means of mutual visits of local project teams and other “live” activities.
* In the further implementation of the project, more attention is to be paid to the **prevention of segregationist approach by including children from general population in project activities, and to the increased access for children and families**, including children with disabilities, as well as to offering greater support to and more activities for their families.
* In the course of further implementation of local projects, greater emphasis should be put on **ensuring visibility of achieved project results** and their dissemination in the local community. Increased visibility would positively affect the recommended access for children and families and add to the sustainability of project interventions.
* At the level of local intersectoral teams, it is necessary to introduce, or improve, the **process of joint analysis and reflection** of team members so as to assess the efficiency of project activities and their continuing improvement, as well as **sharing the experience with partner organisations and institutions** in order to improve the sustainability of project interventions.
* In certain communities, **the need has been identified for more equal engagement** of certain partner institutions and prioritisation of the planned but still unrealised activities. In the next period, special attention should be paid to the issue of sustainability of project interventions and the established mechanisms, means and channels of communications and cooperation. To that end, it is recommended that **intersectoral cooperation protocols be signed**, and also that the most important and the most effective project activities intended for vulnerable children and their families be included in **local strategic documents**, and also new common initiatives prepared so as to secure additional sources of financing.

# Introduction

*The Evaluation Report on the Management and Performance of the Grant Scheme Aimed at the Improvement of Inclusive Preschool Education Services at Local Level* was made within the Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project (ECEC) conducted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (from 2017 to 2022), with the aid of the World Bank loan, generally aimed at improving availability, quality and fairness of preschool education and care for every child from birth to the age of 6.5, particularly for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups. The report shows the evaluation results regarding one of the project components (evaluation subject), namely successful implementation of the Grant Scheme and progress evaluation in seven sampled local projects after one year and a half of the implementation.

**Chapter 1** describes a broader context of the project and shows the methodological framework in further detail.

**Chapter 2** is dedicated to the perspective and evaluations of key project bodies, as well as the representatives of the relevant Ministry – it contains key results, recommendations and lessons learned from the perspective of their scope of jurisdiction in the conceptual and implementation context of the Grant Scheme, i.e. local projects in relation to individual topics and aspects of the evaluation.

**Chapter 3** presents the evaluation results by individual local self-governments, i.e. local projects, in relation to the established goals and tasks of this evaluation, as well as the recommendations for improvement of both the procedural-financial-technical aspect and program activities. The evaluation findings are based on the triangulation of the proof sources collected by: analyzing the project documentation, analyzing the results obtained through research instruments and the results of the project activity observation (if applicable). Namely, the presented results refer to the evaluation of: (1) relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of individual projects, (2) implementation success in line with the established procedures, (3) degree of progress in realising project activities in relation to the four general goals established, while also taking into consideration the perspective of local intersectoral teams and end users, activity observation results etc.

**Chapter four** contains the general conclusion and summarized recommendations based on the evaluation findings, also shown in the summary of this report.

**The appendices are given at the end of the report** (separate documents due to their volume): The overview of the realised sample of respondents (I), Justification of evaluation findings and activity observation results (II), Further details about the perspective of the respondents from the key project bodies (III) and Set of research instruments (IV).

# Overview of the methodological framework

## Context description and evaluation subject

The Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project (the ECEC Project) is implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) between 2017 and 2022, with the aid of the World Bank (WB) loan, **generally aimed at improving availability, quality and fairness of preschool education and care (PE) for every child from birth to the age 6.5, particularly for children from socially and economically disadvantaged groups.** The general goal is approached through three project components: 1) increase of preschool access, 2) improvement of the quality of inclusive preschool education and care (IECEC) and 3) supporting young children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The project is characterized by its **compliance with the goals of the** **Strategy for Education Development in Serbia until 2020** and the activities in the accompanying Action Plan – project activities are directly aimed at realising strategic goals: increasing access, increasing quality, increasing efficiency, as well as improving the relevance of the multifunctional system of the society care for children and PE.

**Within the Project Component 3 (Sub-Component 3.2), EUR 1.8 million are designated for the Grant Scheme, intended for financing local projects aimed at improving IECEC.** Through the non-competitive public invitation issued by MoESTD, the grants were awarded to the selected local self-governments (LSGs), i.e. local projects, as a kind of support in improving the coordination and cooperation among the relevant actors in providing high-quality services to parents and children from birth to the age of 6.5, with the focus on the most vulnerable social groups. The local projects were selected on the basis of the eligibility index of municipalities[[1]](#footnote-1), so that all LSGs from the WB’s ranking list that meet the criteria could apply for grant with a local project proposal, in cooperation with relevant local institutions and organisations such as: preschool institutions (PI), health centres (HC), social work centres (SWC), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Red Cross, intersectoral committees (ISC) and the like. To that end, it is important to emphasize that the local self-governments were selected as key project entities regardless of the network of partners they had built with local intuitions and organisations.

The basic task of the local intersectoral project teams was to map the requirements and/or produce the analysis of the requirements in their own community in the field of IECEC and then to conceive and realise activities and measures aimed at overcoming barriers and challenges and achieving an improved approach, quality and equality of services in early childhood, particularly for children and families from vulnerable groups. In that respect, it is important to emphasize that the Grant Operations Manual (GOM), among other aspects and overall procedures for realising the Grant Scheme, also defines the acceptable project activities within all four general goals of intervention as shown below. In addition, the Project Operations Manual (POM) as an umbrella project document establishes the overall concept of the Project, including the conceptual solutions and the planned approach to the realisation of all Project components.

**The subject of the evaluation is to assess progress in implementing the local projects from Cycle One[[2]](#footnote-2),** as well as the operational review of the realised local projects within seven sampled LSGs after over one year of the project activity implementation. The evaluation is also focused on the procedures and steps in all the phases of realisation.

The local projects are focused on fo**ur general goals of intervention**:

1. Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups
2. Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups
3. Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills, as well as
4. Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups

Local project interventions, depending on the identified key specific local requirements, should respond to part of the wide spectre of the expected results, i.e. ensure the following **expected changes**:

* **Development of sustainable cooperation mechanisms** in providing necessary support to children and families from socially vulnerable groups in the field of PE at LSG level;
* **Raising the awareness of parents and guardians** of children from vulnerable social groups about the importance and necessity of encouragement in the early childhood period, healthcare, protection from stress and early learning of children from birth to the age of 6.5;
* **Raising the awareness of parents and guardians** of children from vulnerable social groups about the necessity and importance of using preschool services as well as increasing the motivation for the application for preschool programs;
* **Increasing the number of children** from vulnerable social groups, from their birth to the age of 6.5 who will receive appropriate care and encouragement within the family in the early development period;
* **Easier access** for children from vulnerable social groups to preschool services and programs as a result of: the change and/or better application of the criteria and procedures for including children in preschool programs; removing obstacles to their participation in preschool programs (e.g. providing transport, clothes, footwear etc.);
* **Creating preconditions** for children from vulnerable social groups to have an **easier access to higher levels of education** and subsequently to **better-paid jobs** as a result of improved encouragement in the early development period within the family and an increased access to preschool services;
* **Raising the awareness of parents and guardians** of children from vulnerable social groups about the benefits of their inclusion in child care, encouragement in the early childhood period, healthcare, and protection of children from stress from birth to the age of 6.5, as well as;
* **Development of more efficient mechanisms at local community level** for including children and their parents in the community life, an improved access to the contents promoting children’s growth and development and improved capacities for service provision.

## Overview of evaluation goals and tasks

The goals of local project evaluation are multiple: the evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability (1), identification of good practice examples (2) and articulation of the recommendations based on the findings, aimed at sustainability of realised interventions and their further successful application (3). The goals of the evaluation are operationalised through **three key tasks**:

1. Evaluate (review) of the implementation process of the Grant Scheme in relation to its design defined in the GOM, which involves the evaluation of:

* the process of information dissemination and identification of the area for improvement and/or further adjustment,
* the process of application and compliance with the procedures and
* overall processes of agreement management, including the implementation of the activities and procedures stipulated in the agreement on the award of grants, financial management procedures, procurement management, as well as the evaluation of reporting and the monitoring practices for the purpose of proposing the areas and processes that need to be adjusted or improved.

1. Analyze the process of service improvement at local level within all four intervention areas, as well as the relation between the planned and realised project activities and actual services provided to the users (parents and children) with the aim of identifying potential differences and discrepancies, including the causes and proposals of corrective measures.
2. Perceive discrepancies (if any) between the transfer of funds envisaged by grant contracts and realised payments, as well as the causes for potential discrepancies so as to ensure verification of contracted activities, services provided, and funds spent.

## Description of the approaches in the realisation of the evaluation process

The conceptual framework of the evaluation is based on the following principles applied in the evaluation process:

* **Orientation and reliance on the broader project context,** as well as the **specific goals and expected changes** within the Sub-Component 3.2 as the subject of the evaluation.
* **Taking into account the design of the Grant Scheme – phases, steps, procedures and financial requirements stipulated in the key project documents (GOM, POM)** aimed at further checking of their implementation success within practical frameworks.
* **Triangulation of the proof sources** – an evaluation approach implied the analysis of the overall project and financial documentation, the examination of the evaluations of all key actors in the project activities implementation, as well as the examination of experiences and evaluations of end users. The evaluation process also took into account the perspective and/or professional evaluations of the Project representatives and key bodies participating in the conceptualization and monitoring of grant realisation.
* **Participation** implies the inclusion of: key project representatives, taking into account the overall organisational structure of the project – project units and bodies, representatives of all key partner organisations and institutions, as well as end users, so as to ensure the understanding of different perspectives of the same challenges and formulate the recommendations for improvement. Due to the nature of this external evaluation, there was continued cooperation and communication with the project representatives (first of all, with the Program Coordinator and the Technical Assistant) who had a major role in providing support and monitoring the realisation of all local projects.
* **Assessment of consistency between the results of monitoring project activities and the results of external evaluation** implies taking into account and considering the concept of monitoring project activities and the results contained in narrative reports as an important source of data, whereas their compliance with the results of the external evaluation was also analyzed.
* **Partnership** – the evaluators of the Centre for Education Policy approached the representatives of local intersectoral teams from the perspective of the partner (and not reviewer) in order to create safe space for open communication and transparent evaluation aimed at perceiving the results and challenges in the realisation of complex project requirements.
* **Taking into account the specifics of individual LGSs** means that the evaluation process took into account the specifics of the given local projects arising from the specifics of the local environments, primarily the description of the problems the project is aimed at resolving and, in that respect, the planned project activities and achieved results.
* **Integrity and independence of evaluators.**

## Methods, techniques and instruments and overview of the manner of their application

The evaluation process involved the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods such as the content analysis, conducting interviews and the application of the check list for observing activities and the forms for summarizing the results.

**The content analysis** (desk research) included a thorough **review of the project documentation** made available by the Project, as well as the **analysis of additional proof sources** (all documents envisaged as sources/means of verification and submitted by the local project coordinators). The content analysis is an especially important evaluation activity with the twofold purpose – **it primarily supported the development of the methodology and research instruments and then provided additional important proof sources with the aim of responding to the defined research tasks.** The results obtained from the content analysis were further considered during the interviews conducted with the local project coordinators and intersectoral teams.

Interviewing was chosen as the most frequently applied research technique in qualitative research, particularly having in mind the fact that it constitutes an appropriate method of collecting a wide spectre of data and ensures a comprehensive analysis. Group interviews were also conducted since the target groups of respondents were connected with their professional roles and/or common experience.

In order to achieve the defined goals and tasks of the evaluation, the **research instruments** were developed (as attached) for different groups of respondents and/or topics:

1. Guide for a group interview with the representatives of the Project Management Unit,
2. Guide for a group interview with the representatives of the Grant Approval Committee,
3. Guide for a group interview with the representatives of the Central Fiduciary Unit,
4. Guide for a group interview with the main representative of the MoESTD,
5. Guide for a group interview with the project coordinator and the representative of the LSG,
6. Guide for a group interview with the local intersectoral team,
7. Guide for a group interview with the project representative in charge of financial matters,
8. Guide for a group interview with parents,
9. Check list for project activity observation, and
10. Reporting form based on the overall evaluation results.

The instruments were applied in line with the individual Work Plans as agreed with the local project coordinators. The initially planned **field research**, due to the worsened epidemiological situation (the COVID-19 pandemic) at the time of the realisation of the evaluation process, was replaced by the **performance of the evaluation activities** (conducting the interviews) **online, via the “Zoom” platform,** while the additional project documentation referring to the means of verification of the realised project activities (the analysis of which was initially planned for field performance) was submitted electronically. Moreover, before and after conducting the interviews with all target groups, there was additional communication with the project coordinators and, when necessary, with the representatives of the individual institutions and organisations. The field research was realised only in the City Municipality of Palilula (LSG Belgrade) and the envisaged consideration of the project activities for the purpose of assessment through the application of the check list, was realised by analyzing the video recordings and other submitted materials. Conducting interviews online was standardized in respect of the envisaged time length (about 6 hours). The field visit to the representatives of the project implemented in Palilula (LSG Belgrade) was realised in line with the two-day work plan for field visits. The evaluation process was realised by the researchers of the Centre for Education Policy.

## 1.5. Sample

### 1.5.1. Local self-government sampling

Out of the total of 20 local projects in 20 different LSGs, seven (35%) were sampled for the evaluation by applying the **sampling strategy** based on the following criteria:

* **Territorial distribution of LSGs** The sample included LSGs from all four regions[[3]](#footnote-3) in the Republic of Serbia (RS). In addition, the LSGs from each region are present in the sample in proportion to the number of the local projects in them during Cycle One of the Grant Scheme.
* **Size of LSGs by the number of inhabitants.** LSGs of different sizes were included, from those with a small number of inhabitants to the ones with a large number of inhabitants, such as the cities in the RS (or the city municipality in Belgrade).
* **Level of spending.** It was established from the documentation that the projects in some LSGs had larger spending of the funds in the same period, so the sampled projects have different degrees of progress. The differences are substantial, varying from 0.26% to 99.91%, whereas in all 20 LSGs the average spending of the funds was about 40% (at the moment of creating the sample, the average overview from June 2020 were available).
* **Socio-economic profile of LSGs[[4]](#footnote-4).** An important sampling criterion was ensuring the access to the LSGs with different degrees of development. The data on the basis of which LSG profiles are expressed refer to the budget revenues of the city/municipality, earnings, pensions, the growth rate of the total number of inhabitants, the rate of unemployment and the degree of education.
* **Inclusion of children in preschool education and care** When selecting LSGs, the data were taken into account regarding the proportion of the total number of children in the territory, the number of children included in PE programs and the number of children on standby lists for enrolment.
* **Number of children from vulnerable social groups.** As an additional criterion, the data were used about the presence of the families with the children from 3 to 5.5 years old, which receive a form of monetary social assistance, as well as about the children from the Roma national community, from birth to the age of 14.

Below is the tabular overview of all the LSGs which were awarded the grant in Cycle One by the regions, in the order regarding the eligibility index, as well as the overview of the data regarding additional sampling criteria going beyond the framework of the eligibility index.

**Table:** **LSG sample overview by all criteria**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Regional belonging** | **The list of all LSGs/Belgrade municipalities which were awarded the grant (the order according to the eligibility index)** | **Overview of the number of inhabitants**[[5]](#footnote-5) | **Realised**  **expenditure in % (June 2020)** | **Sampled LSGs** |
| **Šumadija and West Serbia** | Kragujevac | 176,699 | 29.97 | **Kraljevo**  **Varvarin** |
| Šabac | 110,148 | 81.30 |
| Kraljevo | 117,168 | 22.12 |
| Kruševac | 120,154 | 84.6 |
| Varvarin | 16,099 | 81.4 |
| **South and East Serbia** | Leskovac | 134,285 | 0.26 | **Aleksinac**  **Merošina**  **Prokuplje** |
| Smederevo | 102,288 | 35.90 |
| Aleksinac | 47,096 | 10.38 |
| Merošina | 12,836 | 83.69 |
| Vladičin Han | 18,738 | 69.90 |
| Prokuplje | 40,748 | 47.53 |
| Lebane | 19,416 | 1.07 |
| Vlasotince | 27,402 | 2.77 |
| **Vojvodina** | Novi Sad | 326,644 | 19.99 | **Novi Sad** |
| Šid | 31,053 | 99.91 |
| Sremska Mitrovica | 75,241 | 20.86 |
| Zrenjanin | 115,797 | 35.21 |
| **Belgrade** | Palilula | 184,488 | 3.40 | **Palilula** |
| Voždovac | 169,495 | 10.64 |
| Čukarica | 177,108 | 10.89 |

### 1.5.2. Target groups of respondents

The evaluation included 119 respondents (without the number of the children) who were divided in the following **target groups**:

* The representatives of the Project and key bodies – the Project Management Unit (PMU), the Grant Approval Committee (GAC), the Central Fiduciary Unit (CFU), as well as the main representatives of the MoESTD. The list of the respondents is attached hereto, while the **total number of the respondents is 13** (the number of different respondents, although some of them took part in several evaluation activities).
* **Local intersectoral teams –** project coordinators, key representatives of the LSGs and at least one representative of all other included partner organisations and institutions respectively. The list of the respondents is attached hereto, while the **total number of included representatives is 64**.
* End users – the target group of the respondents included the parents as well as the children (envisaged through project activity observation), but the realised sample was far smaller than the planned one, due to the pandemic. The list of the respondents is attached hereto, while the **number of the included parents is 42**. As for the children, four children in total took part in the direct activity observation in Palilula (LSG Belgrade), whereas more than 40 children took part in the activities analyzed on the basis of videos and other materials.

## Overview of key activities in the evaluation process and dynamics of their realisation

The table below gives an overview of the realisation of the evaluation process from the phase of methodology conceptualization to the creation of reports through the review of key activities. Individual plans of the evaluation process were created and realised for each of seven local projects.

**Table:** **Overview of activities and timeframe for the realisation of activities**

| **OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES** | **TIMEFRAME FOR THE REALISATION OF ACTIVITIES** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **October 2020 (weeks)** | | | | **November 2020**  **(weeks)** | | | | **December 2020**  **(weeks)** | | | | **January 2021**  **(weeks)** | | | |
| **I** | **II** | **III** | **IV** | **I** | **II** | **III** | **IV** | **I** | **II** | **III** | **IV** | **I** | **II** | **III** | **IV** |
| Analysis of the overall availability of the project documentation for the purpose of obtaining necessary insights and information for developing the methodological framework and creating research instruments. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Development of the proposals for the methodological framework for the evaluation and the preparation of research instruments |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Realisation of the consultation process with the representatives of the MoESTD and the Project |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Finalization of the overall set of instruments |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Analysis of the overall project documentation for 7 sampled LSGs in the function of preparing for field research |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Organisational-technical preparation of the realisation of project activities |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Realisation of evaluation activities online and realisation of one field visit |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conducting interviews with the representatives of the key project units and bodies |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Result analysis and interpretation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preparation of the evaluation report with the recommendations |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Submission of the report for the purpose of realising consultation activities with the MoESTD and the Project |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Working on the final version of the evaluation report and its submission |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

# Perspective of respondents from key project bodies

This chapter contains a short overview of the key findings, lessons learned and recommendations obtained within individual interviews with the representatives of the central project bodies – the Project Management Unit, the Grant Approval Committee, the Central Fiduciary Unit and the representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. A detailed overview of the overall findings is given in Appendix III. Their professional acting had a significant role in respect of the Grant Scheme realisation at the conceptual and implementation level, therefore constituting an exceptionally important segment of this evaluation. All the involved representatives of the project bodies (in relation to the precisely defined and specific scope of their jurisdiction) gave an important contribution to the completion of the evaluations received by the project activity holders (local intersectoral teams), the evaluation of established evaluation goals and tasks, as well as the creation of the recommendations contained in this evaluation report.

## Perspective and evaluations of the Project Management Unit

**Evaluation of compliance of the Grant Scheme implementation and requirements stipulated by the Grant Operations Manual.** So far the experiences in the realisation of the Grant Scheme show that they were implemented successfully and in line with the overall prescribed procedures, despite various initial challenges. According to the representatives of this unit, as confirmed by the evaluation findings, additional forms of support by PMU and intensive continued communication of the project coordinators at local level with the program coordinator and technical assistant have predominantly managed to remove the initial procedural-financial-technical barriers in the realisation of the local projects and to enable successful initiation of the project and realisation of project activities. The following **key challenges** in respect of the total design of the Grant Schemewere identified: the process of opening designated bank accounts; the level of jurisdiction in the cities; the implementation of the public procurement procedures in line with the requirements of the World Bank; and the insufficient understanding of financial accounting and budgetary operations. However, during the first two quarters, all the listed challenges were overcome thanks to the additional support and flexible approach, where the successful implementation of the Grant Scheme is also confirmed by the fact that there was no termination of the Contract.

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of local projects.** The representatives of PMU believe that, despite the initial challenges, additionally compounded by the effect of the external factor (the pandemic), **the expected results** in the project realisation so far have been achieved to a great extent and in the majority of the environments, with the financial support that is not evaluated as primary and particularly large. **The key results** mainly refer to: increasing inclusion of children from vulnerable groups, implementation of diversified programs, offer of various educational forms of support to parents, as well as refurbishment and putting into operation the existing premises owned by the LSGs for the realisation of different activities with children and parents. Moreover, it is particularly emphasized that participation in local projects, by the very nature of the matter, has led to new partnerships between various organisations and institutions at local level or to the improved forms, mechanisms and channels of cooperation between institutions and organisations which cooperated beforehand as well. On the other hand, it is pointed out that the key results regarding the realised activities are various, having in mind that they are directly connected to the identified specific requirements, but also that the projects within Cycle One were less oriented to supporting children with developmental disabilities and their families. **The key factors** affecting the **degree of progress in the realisation of project activities** are as follows: the epidemiological situation and, in that respect, the parents’ fear from involving their children and themselves in project activities after the state of emergency, delayed payments of the funds within the first tranche, as well as the motivation and professionalism of the project activity holders and the quality of the cooperation established at the project team level.

**Lessons learned and sustainability assessment.** Taking into account the overall experience in the implementation of the Grant Scheme, the following are the key lessons learned and recommendations from the interviewees:

* Future public invitations should be accompanied by a more intensive and extensive campaign and stronger building of capacities for application.
* More attention should initially have been dedicated to accounting-financial operations and reporting through more comprehensive training in order to improve insufficient capacities of the project representatives in a timely manner and decrease the intensity and extent of support which was continuously provided by the project coordinator and the technical assistant during the first quarters of the project realisation.
* Speaking of broader contextual factors, the predominant one is the change in the power at local level, which led to the slower realisation of necessary steps, and sometimes to their repetition; therefore in the future care should also be taken of the adequate moment for announcing an invitation for getting involved in the project in relation to this type of factors.
* Speaking of the program aspect of local projects, and due to the initial state in most environments where local projects are being realised, the overall design of the program part regarding diversity of activities is evaluated as ambitious and too demanding, primarily within the context of sustainability, due to the underdeveloped mechanisms of intersectoral cooperation at local level, without project support. The role, capacities and leadership action of PIs were considered as the most important and, in order to increase progress and sustainability of project interventions while taking into account the requirements at both local and system levels, the focus regarding sustainability should be directed towards half-day diversified programs, strengthening competencies for their development and realisation and ensuring additional space and its refurbishment for their realisation, considering their effectiveness. In order to achieve actual results regarding sustainability, the continuation of the cooperation in this respect between local self-governments and preschool institutions is considered to be achievable, expected and sustainable, as well as scientifically proved to be effective, while at the same time not too economically demanding.
* For the purpose of ensuring further support in the realisation of progress regarding the expected goals and results, the need has been identified for ensuring a well-conceived and structured process of horizontal learning and exchange of experiences among all included LSGs as a mechanism which has been insufficiently used in the realisation to date.

## Perspective and evaluations of the Grant Approval Committee

**Assessment of the evaluation process.** Based on the total results obtained within this interview, as well as total evaluation findings, it may be concluded that all the stipulated procedures were consistently realised during the process of project proposal evaluation. Important preconditions for the work of this Committee and ensuring quality of local projects were comprehensiveness of necessary information for realising the evaluator role and the application and adequacy of the overall stipulated procedures in the evaluation process. Both abovementioned evaluation aspects were positively evaluated by all the respondents and no need was identified for changes in procedural terms. In addition, the applied developmental character of evaluation was also positively evaluated as it implied the formulation of recommendations for improvement (and not only for scoring of the defined criteria), pair work in the evaluation of individual projects in order to contribute to the quality and objectivity of evaluation, as well as continued support and possibility of consulting the program coordinator.

**Quality of provided support in the project creation.** In this respect, positive assessments prevail, while it is recognized that there is room for improvement based on the experiences to date. The need for improvement primarily refers to: more extensive and comprehensive training (with a special emphasis on formulating indicators in line with SMART methodology and operationalisation of project activities) and ensuring mentoring support at the level of all the LGSs.

**Evaluation of project quality.** The opinions of the representatives of this Committee indicate that the original proposals for the majority of the projects demanded improvement in different aspects, but also that this process permanently improved the capacities of all the involved actors for the development of future projects. The need for improving the quality of projects was recognized, first of all, regarding: the mapping of needs and problem analysis based on given data, prevention of the segregated environment, more adequate operationalisation of diversified programs and other activities, as well as the monitoring plan.

**Lessons learned and recommendations.** As for the recommendations for ensuring quality of the realisation of project activities, mentoring support is considered necessary in the implementation process as well. Moreover, the significance is emphasized of organising the horizontal learning process and exchange at the level of all the LGSs, which has been absent so far. Speaking of sustainability, the need is recognized to make communication channels and cooperation mechanisms between partner institutions more specific at local level, and based on the project results to date, as well as to formalize them as the final result of the project by signing a Memorandum of cooperation and incorporation of the most relevant and effective activities in LSG strategic documents.

## Perspective and evaluations of the Central Fiduciary Unit

**Evaluation of adequacy of financial implementation of the Grant Scheme – identification of key challenges.** The key problem emphasized by the representatives of this body refers to the lack of orderliness in submitting quarterly reports, which was reflected in the reports submitted by the CFU to the World Bank. Furthermore, it was pointed out that some implementing partners did not completely observe the stipulated procurement procedures, i.e. they acted according to the national Law on Public Procurement. These irregularities were removed by making annexes to the signed contracts and including the clauses of the World Bank. In addition, the representatives of the CFU emphasize that the capacities of the holders of financial affairs within the Grant Scheme are insufficient. However, this situation was overcome in the process thanks to the CFU support, primarily when it came to opening designated bank accounts, as well as creating the document “Instruction for the Submission of Financial Statements”.

**Evaluation of compliance of planned and realised project activities from the financial aspect.** According to the data collected by the CFU so far, on the basis of the quarterly reports, 54% of the transferred funds were justified. The submitted reports evidently show that the pandemic has affected the original spending plans and/or slowed down the realisation. Moreover, visible differences were identified among LGSs, as well as substantial delay in transferring funds when it comes to the cities. At the very beginning, costs were predefined as acceptable and unacceptable, so unacceptable costs were impossible because work is being performed according to the approved budget. No forgery of the activities and documents was identified. It is also important to note that financial management is controlled to a large extent by the treasury card, and that all documents regarding the procurement are submitted, examined and regularly monitored by the PMU, so no irregularities were observed.

**Lessons learned and recommendations.** Based on the experience to date, the representatives of CFU recommendations distinguish the following lessons learned and recommendations:

* In the future it is necessary to envisage duly more extensive training for accounting-financial operations and ensure the preparation of the “Instruction for Financial Reporting” at the very beginning of the project.
* At the time when the Grant Operations Manual was written, it was not recognized that different subjects needed different payments of the funds that would follow the realisation dynamics (for larger procurements) – in that respect it is necessary to use the possibility of making annexes to the contract.
* The room for improvement was also recognized in respect of the reporting forms. It is recommended to organise Excel reports differently so as to ensure proper connection and a precise picture of the level of spent funds, as well as the automation of all options, in order to increase efficiency and reduce the possibility of making mistakes. In that context, it was recommended to consider the possibility of introducing some monitoring tools such as Google Sheets or Excel Online.
* Having in mind the importance of the timely submission of the reports to the CFU, advanced Excel training is recommended for the employees in the LSGs.
* In the context of the unspent funds at the level of the project sub-component, it was recommended to consider the purpose of the funds for the procurement of UNICEF software for mapping and monitoring the requirements at the LSG level.
* Moreover, it was also recommended to allot additional funds to those local self-governments achieving the best results so that they could expand their activities.

## Perspective and evaluations of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

**Evaluation of the quality of the MoESTD–Project cooperation.** The cooperation and communication between the key project bodies, the representatives of Sub-Component 3.2. and the MoESTD itself was evaluated as positive, and it is also pointed out that it was continuously realised, from the phase of the Grant Scheme conceptualization to the implementation of the local projects. Furthermore, the monitoring process was regularly and successfully realised with all the actors, in particular with the PMU, and within the PMU, in particular intensively with the program coordinator and the project director, while the adequate level of information enabled harmonized joint interventions at the beginning and in the realisation of local projects to date. Therefore, the changes regarding the possibility of timely effect and the scope of jurisdiction of the MoESTD are not considered as necessary.

**Evaluation of the effectiveness of local projects.** The concept of local projects is evaluated as correct and sufficiently “broad” to include a spectre of various requirements and specifics of individual local self-governments.

The generally identified **key benefits** of the overall Sub-Component 3.2 for the development of the social care and preschool education and care system are: support to children and families from vulnerable groups, as well as increased availability of PE, keeping parents better informed, as well as the availability of PE through inclusion in different activities for children and parents, which at the same time constitutes general goals of all the projects. It is concluded that, according to the MoESTD assessments, the key goals of local projects are successfully realised.

The key identified challenges from the MoESTD perspective are empowering local self-governments and partner organisations to create and realise high-quality and efficient projects, as well as to become sensitive enough to the topic of inclusion in the area of preschool education and care in order to develop and improve the initiated activities further and make them sustainable.

**The horizontal learning system** is recognized as the most efficient in respect of the dissemination of good practice examples, but there is need for support in its realisation, as this mechanism has not been used so far. Namely, it would be **desirable to organise a conference** that would present good practice examples and enable the establishment of cooperation and further exchange among local self-governments.

**Sustainability assessment.** It was assessed that project intervention sustainability will, first of all, depend on expert (project management) and financial capacities and the possibilities of the local self-governments themselves because some of them have proved not to have sufficient experience or appropriate human resources either for creating or realising the project. In that respect, some local intersectoral teams were, apart from the training, also provided mentoring support, as well as support by the PMU itself (the program coordinator and the scheme grant assistant). This form of informal education is assessed to be able to improve permanently the capacities of the local units where the local projects are realised. Moreover, it is stated that sustainability is closely connected to the removal of administrative difficulties and the simplification of the procedures that demand changes at the system level and exceed the possibilities of this project.

**Recommendations.** The key expert advice and/or recommendation stated for further realisation of project activities, as well as activities within Cycle Two of the Grant Scheme, is the **promotion of good practice examples and ensuring exchange among local self-governments and local intersectoral teams, and mentoring support among LSGs so that the activities of certain LSGs can be improved through horizontal learning.** In addition, it is recommended to organise a visit to local self-governments of the project as well as the decision-makers themselves.

# 3. Key evaluation findings regarding local projects

Below is the summary overview of evaluation finding for individual local projects in relation to evaluation goals and tasks, **based on the triangulation** of collected data and systematized in the same manner for all local projects. **At the beginning**, in order to contextualize the evaluation results, the **key qualitative findings** are shown(evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability) and **quantitative data** for the first four quarters of the realisation.

**The second part is the evaluation of the realisation of the aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme** (compliance with important project documents, e.g. GOM). For each aspect, success of the realisation was evaluated within practical frameworks – evaluation levels were developed, whereas green colour shows a desired situation, blue colour shows a situation considered as adequate, but also recognizing the room for improvement, and red colour marks the evaluation of the aspect which definitely needs improvement, while yellow colour is used if the evaluation of the aspect is not applicable, as in the table below. This part also contains the **key challenges identified in procedural-technical-financial terms and the recommendations for their overcoming.**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION (choose one)** |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **An adequate and highly functional team was set up** |
| **An adequate team was set up which faces minor challenges in its work** |
| **The structure of the team does not correspond to the project goals and the team functions with difficulties** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Realised** |
| **Partly realised** |
| **Unrealised** |
| **Not applicable (LSG belongs to Group IV)** |

**The third part** shows the evaluation results in program terms – progress analysis in the realisation of project activities: progress in relation to the established goals, evaluation of the realisation of activities in relation to the plan, presentation of the parents’ perspective, activity observation results, identification of good practice examples etc.

Every presentation of the findings for individual projects ends with the **recommendations** for further improvement and sustainability of the project based on the overall evaluation findings.

The order of the presentations of individual evaluation reports follows the order of the realisation of evaluation activities.

## 3.1. Aleksinac - Project “Svi ZaJedno”

### 3.1.1. Evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability and key quantitative data

The project was evaluated as **highly relevant** to the building and improvement of the LSG capacities for provision of upgraded services at local level because it a**ddresses important local problems regarding the access of children** from rural regions, as well as of Roma and poor families to PE services, and it **brings a number of benefits**. Increased inclusion of children is planned as an effect of different activities such as forming mixed-age groups, diversification of PE programs by initiating additional services (Creative Children Club), educating and motivating families through workshops and field visits, with a special focus on the participation of fathers, etc. To the partner organisations, the project represents a new professional experience and an opportunity to work in a different manner with the users who are their target group (e.g. direct contact through field visits), as well as a possibility of taking a proactive and holistic approach to problem resolution (through the mapping activity and joint cooperation in the field). The project realisation led to all the actors getting an insight into the importance of field visits for informing families from vulnerable groups about the possibilities and advantages of including children in PE.

**Efficiency** of realisation is satisfactory according to the number of included children and the number of performed activities, but it was aggravated by the problems in relation to opening bank accounts and harmonizing public procurement procedures. Those difficulties were overcome and now the only external factor adversely affecting efficiency is the pandemic-caused situation. No alternatives have been elaborated in case it is impossible to realise activities in line with the plan on a long-term basis.

Project sustainability is based on the invested funds in the PI and the realised cooperation of the partners. Moreover, work with families is seen as an investment for future generations because it is expected to raise the awareness about the importance of PE. Although the LSG representatives in the project are engaged and committed, it is necessary to ensure institutional continuity for the purpose of project sustainability.

**Key data and results in figures:**

**5** networked partner organisations – PI “Lane”, Aleksinac Social Work Centre, Aleksinac Health Centre, Association for Creativity Development and Roma Association “Human”

**5** informal partners: Security Council, Cultural and Art Centre, Little Acting School, Town Theatre “Theatre 91” and Amateur theatre

**110** included **parents** (73 female and 37 male family members)

**115 children** included in half-day and different flexible (diversified) programs

**14** planned and **8** realised activities

**RSD 4,490,000.00** – grant value, out of which the amount of **RSD** **1,057,547.30** was spent (24% of the total budget)

### 3.1.2. Evaluation of the compliance of project implementation with the Grant Scheme design

**General Conclusion.** The project “Svi ZaJedno” is conceived and realised in line with the requirements stipulated in the GOM and it includes all relevant implementing subjects. Some improvements are desirable for the purpose of further improvement of the project realisation.

**The key challenges in procedural, technical and financial terms** are: difficulties related to opening accounts in the Treasury Administration, which caused a substantial delay in the implementation of activities, the pandemic, the harmonization of national and project procedures, unequal capacities and competences of the partners for the realisation of procedural-technical and financial activities, insufficient visibility of activities (the pandemic). Deficiencies were observed in the project proposal (the framework for monitoring the realisation and elaboration of sustainability). The absence of the realisation of activities and their realisation to a smaller extent due to the pandemic also caused lower project presence in the media and visibility.

The following are the **key recommendations in procedural, technical and financial terms**:

* Although the challenges are overcome at the moment, it is necessary to **strengthen the capacities of the partners through more comprehensive training for procedural-technical and financial requirements** in order to facilitate reporting, procurement procedure, monitoring the realisation of activities etc. Individual financial reports of the partners do not undergo detailed examination by the financial coordinator, so it is advised that the partners’ reports should be examined in detail before being sent because not all the partners have the same capacities for financial management.
* Preparing documents with frequently asked questions (or difficulties) and answers to them observed in the implementation of the procedures defined by the GOM would facilitate functioning.
* Although the implementing entities completed the procedure of opening designated accounts with the Treasury Administration, it would be beneficial to future projects to prepare **a detailed written instruction for opening designated accounts, with the list of steps each involved institution/organisation is to take, bearing in mind different procedures for different institutions/organisations**.
* The table for financial reporting should be improved or the implementing entities should be asked to enter data in the table for final reporting in phases, so as to enable monitoring of the financial status of their projects by individual items at any time.
* It is desirable to increase the presence of the project information (including contact persons) on web portals and social media of all the partners, first of all of PI “Lane” as an institution where the key project activities are realised.

The following table gives an overview of the summarized results of the evaluated success in the implementation of individual requirements stipulated in the GOM, i.e. the evaluations of individual aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme. **The appendices provide the justification of the evaluation.**

**Table:** **Summarized results of aspect evaluation – Aleksinac**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION**[[6]](#footnote-6) |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **An adequate team was set up which faces minor challenges in its work** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Not applicable** |
| Existence of overall LSG capacities for successful implementation of the Grant Scheme | **Capacities need to be built further** |
| Quality of the information process – assessment of information availability and comprehensiveness during the application process | **Partly positive** |
| Quality of provided support in the process of project application/proposal creation | **Positive** |
| Degree of challenge in project proposal creation for LSG itself | **The project proposal creation process was partly challenging** |
| Adherence to procedures in the process of evaluation and selection of project proposals | **The procedures were adhered to with minor deficiencies** |
| The general evaluation of the project proposal quality (the quality of the problem description, harmonization of all key elements in the project proposal form, the quality and comprehensiveness of the planned activities | **The project proposal demands improvement in key segments** |
| Concluding the contractual arrangement | **Proceeded smoothly and in line with the procedures** |
| Providing technical support in the grant management procedure as stipulated in the Grant Operations Manual | **Support was provided but is not evaluated as sufficient** |
| The procurement procedures carried out by the implementing entities are realised in line with the procedures and the plan. | **Partly** |
| Financial management and reporting is carried out in accordance with the procedures and the planned dynamics | **Partly** |
| Reporting on the realisation of project activities is timely and high quality | **All reports were submitted but they are insufficiently informative** |
| Existence of examples of public presentation/announcement of project activities and good practice examples to general public | **There are some examples; such examples are continuously supplemented and they are comprehensive and informative** |
| The monitoring process of project activities is carried out continuously and constitutes a good basis for project activities improvement and evaluation | **Partly** |
| The presence of the challenges potentially leading to the termination of the Contract | **There were no challenges of such type** |

### 3.1.3. Progress analysis of service improvement at local level

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of program activities.** Progress was made within all four goals of intervention, although it is not fully in line with the plan, due to the listed challenges. Six out of 14 activities were not realised.

**Table:** **Progress evaluation in relation to four general goals – Aleksinac**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General goal** | **Progress evaluation** |
| **Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Accomplishing the goal began by mapping children and families by SWC, which is an important activity enabling regular monitoring of the families’ interests and difficulties in access to PE. Field visits to the families were useful for the project team so as to perceive better the needs of the target group and offer options that may suit the families in different situations. Including in mixed groups began very successfully by including a larger number of children than planned, but it was aggravated by the pandemic, interruptions in the work of the institution and the measures prescribed, so that currently there is no possibility for all interested children to attend the PI. The Creative Children Club began working at the end of September 2020. This club realises short two-hour programs three times a week and include both educational and entertaining activities and, based on the samples of plans and video materials, the concept of this activity can be positively assessed. Due to the current epidemiological situation, the number of the children attending the club is lower than planned, and due to the isolation of the teacher/implementer, the activities in the club were completely suspended mid-November 2020. Joint workshops for children and parents, intended as an activity contributing to this specific goal, have not taken place (the epidemiological situation). The activities aimed at informing broader public about the project have been successfully realised. |
| **Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | The activities planned within this goal match the previous ones, but the main aim was primarily to give a broader offer of various inclusive activities and participation of children and parents, from trips, sports day, performances etc. Some of the planned activities have been realised successfully, e.g. free-of-charge sports day and theatre performance, while the related costs have been covered (e.g. transport). The parents point out that they appreciate the fact that the children from rural environment have the opportunity to socialize and have cultural activities which are otherwise not so easily accessible, but with a lower level of inclusion of children and parents than planned, because of the obligatory observation of the epidemiological measures. The team partly overcame the interruption in the activities by referring to the actual events organised by the LSGs and cultural institutions. |
| **Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills** | The project team set up a field team consisting of the representative of the HC and SWC respectively and the pedagogical assistant. They visited the families and spoke both about the current topics concerning them and the importance of education, in particular of early inclusion. Workshops were also planned for the parents, but during the period covered by this report none of them could be held because of the epidemiological situation (the project team states that one workshop was held for two groups of parents by the HC doctors, but it will be recorded in the Fifth quarterly report). The introduced measures have also led to the lower level of contacts with the parents when they bring their children to the PI or the Creative Club. In the course of the project, one parents’ meeting was held with the attendance of the parents whose children are included in mixed groups. The project is planning more workshops both for the parents from vulnerable groups and the joint ones with the parents from general population. Joint workshops are planned for the parents and the children. Great care is taken to include fathers who are usually less active in the cooperation with the PI and involved in looking after younger children. Currently, among the families involved, the fathers have responded and the project manages to motivate them. This means that, once new workshops begin and the existing ones continue working, the families will be able to apply the acquired skills because the fathers will be prepared too. However, there is a concern of the partners that the planned number of the fathers will not be included because it is challenging to have a steady number of the fathers who are continuously worked with. In the period with no workshops held, the persons from the PI, HC and SWC are available to the parents for advisory work. The members of the team know the families well and trust has been established that can be crucial to the project effects sustainability. |
| **Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups** | The project does not stipulate any specific activities of professional improvement of the institutions and organisations in the LSGs, but all partner institutions point out that working on the project helps them to perform regular work. An important aspect emphasized by them is the perception of the families in a different manner, and preventive and holistic action. The possibility of cooperation between the institutions and non-governmental organisations increases the possibility of the project to reach a larger number of families’ and of expanding human capacities at the moment when it is not viable to employ more people. The PI was supported by other partners in its field access to the families so that now the teachers can have a better insight into the circumstances a child is growing up and adjust support accordingly. |

**User satisfaction – parent perspective.** The interviewed parents had a limited experience with the project activities. Most of them took their children to the theatre performance and the sports day, while two children attended the Creative Club. Since there were no workshops for the parents in the period covered by this evaluation, and the parents did not take part in the workshops subsequently organised by the HC outside the reporting period, we could not get any feedback about that activity. Those parents were not part of the field visits except when making the base. The parents point out that they appreciate the fact that, thanks to the project, they have a wider choice of activities for the children in the rural environment, and they emphasize that their children are very satisfied. Moreover, the parents included in this interview state that such activities should also take place now, in line with the measures, and that there should be more of them. The parents could not formulate any specific topics they would like to address through the workshops.

**Activity observation results.** Project activity observation was impossible due to the current epidemiological situation. Instead of it, the evaluators were submitted the documentation for the activity of the Creative Children Club, based on which the check list was applied for observation (video recordings, photographs and the report from the workshops of the Creative Children Club for October 2020). An interview was conducted with the teacher/program implementer of the PI “Lane”.

The type of the observed activity, its description as well as the observation results are given in the appendices and show that all the defined quality indicators have been fully realised. In addition, based on the submitted documentation it may be concluded that the activities are realised successfully and in line with the envisaged goals. On the other hand, it is necessary to make further efforts in order to increase the inclusion of children so as to achieve the defined indicator.

**A good practice example.** A good practice example that has been identified is exactly the concept of the Creative Children Club which enables the children attending the regular preschool program to acquire their first experience of formal education and to participate in entertainment and developmental on a daily basis. For the children from rural environments, without a large number of children of the same age, this club also represents an opportunity for socialization, while the parents can learn new types of activities for spending quality time with their children. Since the children are assigned the tasks they can do at home as well, the parents are able to monitor how their children do the tasks and to help them, which is important for proper development. The club also organises workshops intended to activate children both cognitively and physically, through games and entertainment, and each of them is dedicated to a specific topic, e.g. relationships to others, familiarizing with the kindergarten, learning the seasons of the year etc. Every day also includes music and games in order to encourage proper physical development. The parents have a very positive opinion about this service and appreciate it for several reasons, from the preparation of the children for school to learning new things they can do with their children.

### 3.1.4. Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability

The following recommendations are identified as a result of evaluation findings:

It is necessary to work further on creating the inclusive environment, i.e. emphasize the participation of both children and parents from general population in all activities.

It is necessary to continue the mapping of children and families for the purpose of regular monitoring of the families’ interest and difficulties in their access to PE, whereas mapping should also include the identification of the reasons for non-attendance and dropouts within each project activity.

It is necessary to design, plan and apply alternative models of implementing activities so that the pandemic does not completely suspend the realisation and decrease the parents’ motivation, while leaving the children deprived (e.g. more models of realising the Creative Club and the workshops and being constantly in contact with the families). The capacities should be organised within each organisation so as to enable finding a substitute if the person in charge is unable to realise the activities.

The manner in which the team wanted to overcome the delay in the activities through referring to the existing events organised by the LSGs and cultural institutions is a good way of providing at least some content to the children for a period of time. However, it is necessary to plan in more detail the monitoring of the participation of the parents and the children in those events too – particularly it should be taken into account that each event must also be in line with the project goals and available to the children, i.e. if necessary, the project should also in that case provide transport or a person in charge of taking the children if their parents would like to but are unable to do it themselves.

It is necessary to make further efforts in order to increase the inclusion of the children so as to achieve the defined result indicator in the course of the project. Since the Creative Club has a somewhat free work program, it should be designed in such a way as to have some contents that are similar to those of inclusive activities, and then expand the groups or offer more sessions to increase the number of the included children.

There is still communication in the conditions changed by the pandemic, but it should be arranged in such a way as to ensure a formal communication channel and regular contacts with the families.

* It is recommended to monitor the effects of the activities and not only of the realisation itself, as well as to make adjustments based on the evaluation of effects and experiences to date.

It is necessary to monitor the families’ motivation and to analyze periodically the reasons for not including the children (except for the capacities) or the declining number, so as to adjust the PI offer better. This segment of monitoring, as well as general monitoring and documenting the project results could be improved by correcting the project matrix with the goals, results and indicators, i.e. the preparation of a special protocol for monitoring and evaluation at the level of the project itself. Furthermore, it is recommended that the reports of all individual partners should also contain the information related to the evaluation of effectiveness of specific activities they are in charge of.

The project successfully initiated the informative activities aimed at informing broader public about the project. However, in the following period it is necessary to disseminate the information further by including all the partners in the project promotion, first of all the PI “Lane” as the institution where the greatest part of project activities is realised.

All the partners should be given the opportunity to improve further in the areas where they currently lack capacities. In the project context, it primarily refers to strengthening the capacities for monitoring the project realisation, adjusting the activities based on the activity effects evaluation, as well as improving competencies for project reporting.

Project sustainability should be insured by inter-institutional agreements that would exceed the length of the project or otherwise formalize the cooperation of the institutions at local level, primarily the LGSs, PI, HC and SWC. In that way, the realisation would not depend on individuals, but could continue in case the engaged persons are replaced.

Although the LSG representatives in the project are engaged and committed, it is necessary to ensure institutional continuity in LSGs for the purpose of project sustainability, as well as to include project goals and activities in regular activities and local strategic documents, particularly having in mind that the team members are involved in other initiatives (the local action plan for Roma and the Mobile team for inclusion of Roma) so connection and better coordination should be encouraged at local Level. LGSs should, together with the partners, also design the way in which end users of the project could be a resource in the following years, after the completion of the project.

Based on the observations from the project proposals, the following is essential for future project proposals: to harmonize specific project goals with general goals of the Grant Scheme, identify all end users, set the indicators more precisely and clearly, and elaborate the plan for project sustainability.

## 3.2. Prokuplje – Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project

### 3.2.1. Evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability and key quantitative data

**Project relevance** is high – the quality of life, access to education, opportunities for learning and development, and access to other services have been improved in the community for the families in two village settlements. Having in mind the large number of village environments where children have no opportunity for educational activities, expanding the capacities of the PI “Neven” was of great significance. Renovation of the premises where now work with children is possible has enabled the participation of the children in the PE system and increased the availability of other services in the community (such as the services provided by SWC and HC) for the families from two villages. In addition, the project realisation has brought great satisfaction to the families in the territory of Gornja Stražava and Mala Plana, which are now changing some family practices and habits as well – the children bring new ides to their homes, express greater curiosity, invite their parents to participate in various activities at home etc. Apart from the parents’ satisfaction and large interest, work with children has contributed to the improvement of different skills among children, the adoption of desirable patterns of behaviour, socialization and interaction with peers. All the interviewees emphasizes that the project significance lies in the fact that now educational services are available to the parents and accordingly they will be better prepared and more motivated for the continuation of their children’s education. The parents particularly emphasize the improvement of different skills among children for which they could not even assume to have an effect, because prior to the introduction of these programs they used to think that the kindergarten served for “taking care of” the children and not for their education. It is important to note that the project is also significant from the aspect of employability of young people – for the teachers engaged for workshops in two villages, this is the very first employment, through which they will acquire necessary professional experience.

**Efficiency** of the project realisation is high according to the number of realised activities (eight out of 10 planned activities), but it was limited due to the pandemic-induced situation (which particularly affected the activities with the parents), the differences between the existing needs for such programs and the achieved inclusion, and low frequency of the activities with the children (two hours twice a week).

**Sustainability** was partly ensured since the refurbished facilities and obtained working material constitute basic preconditions for continuing the implementation of preschool programs in two villages after the completion of the project. Sustainability further depends on the LGS capacities to provide funds for continuing the realisation of the program (fees and transport for the teachers, additional funds for the acquisition of consumables, costs of the mobile teams etc.).

**Key data and results in figures:**

**4** networked partner organisations/institutions – PI “Neven”, “Toplica” Health Centre, Prokuplje Social Work Centre, NGO “Inclusion Today”

**62** **parents** and **43 children** included in different project activities

**10** planned and **8** realised activities

**RSD** **4,652,600.00**– grant value, out of which the amount of **RSD 1,155,405.58** was spent (25% of the total grant value)

### 3.2.2. Evaluation of the compliance of project implementation with the Grant Scheme design

**General Conclusion.** The project realisation proceeds in line with the overall design envisaged in the main project document GOM). Although there was no failure in observance of the stipulated procedures, challenges in their realisation were identified. No sufficient system support was provided after the replacement of the team and before the beginning of the project realisation in the form of training. PMU provided *d hoc* support whenever it was necessary, but such approach cannot be efficient because response ensues only when the problems arise. In the LGS there is a small number of competent people for project management and grant administration, so it is necessary to ensure the improvement of the team capacities in advance. The pandemic-induced situation limited the possibilities for live meetings, but there is an impression that the project team needs periodical coordination meetings with PMU. The intersectoral team has not fully started functioning – although initially it was set up and its first meetings and activities were performed, neither visits to the families nor the mobile parenting school have been fully realised (the reasons: a large number of the team members being in isolation, increasing engagement of the HC and SWC representatives due to the pandemic etc.).

**The** **key recommendations in procedural, technical and financial terms** are as follows:

* **The public procurement procedure involved steps which are difficult to implement** in small environments, particularly for specific services – three bids are not always viable because there are not three suppliers at local level; if the bids are asked from the suppliers outside the given municipality, the price substantially increases, which does not fit in with the planned budget. Moreover, the documentation that has to be filled in by the bidders is lengthy and often complicated, particularly for those encountering it for the first time. That is why many potential bidders decide not to send their bids because the bidding itself entails plenty of efforts and time, while the price they could charge is most often insufficient in comparison to the effort entailed by the bidding. In addition, for some services there are not more than one or two suppliers at local level.
* The financial reporting forms aggravate cost monitoring from quarter to quarter – each quarterly report does not sum up the costs incurred in the previous quarter with the costs incurred in the reporting quarter, so it is not always easy to make a conclusion about the remaining funds from quarterly reports.
* Inadequate division of tasks among the partners has been identified, i.e. the coordinators are overloaded with work, which may adversely affect progress in performing the activities.

The following are **key recommendations in procedural, technical and financial terms**:

* In line with the current situation, it is necessary to incorporate a section in narrative reports which refers to the risk analysis and the plan of preventing risks or responding to them – the pandemic demands adjusting the activities or devising new ones, but it cannot be learned from the reports (e.g. if it is impossible to realise mobile parenting schools, it is possible to make some informative or educational materials available to parents).
* Regular and more comprehensive training for financial management and reporting or info sessions would be of great importance to the smooth realisation of the project from the very beginning.
* It is recommended to monitor the effects of the activities uniformly and periodically, at the user level, through the standardization of the reports of teachers and workshoppers, as well as from mobile schools once they begin functioning.
* It is necessary to introduce precise requirements regarding division of tasks within the intersectoral team, whereas it is desirable to put one person in charge of all public procurement within the project, while the financial coordinator should be in charge of all the partners in terms of advising and budget monitoring. It would be good for the team member in charge of public procurement and the team member in charge of coordination to be employed in the LGS or PI as public services because it would positively affect the project sustainability.

The following table gives an overview of the summarized results of the evaluated success in the implementation of individual requirements stipulated in the GOM, i.e. the evaluations of individual aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme. **The appendices provide the justification of the evaluation.**

**Table:** **Summarized results of aspect evaluation – Prokuplje**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION**[[7]](#footnote-7) |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **An adequate team was set up which faces minor challenges in its work** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Realised** |
| Existence of overall LSG capacities for successful implementation of the Grant Scheme | **Capacities are rather limited and have an unfavourable effect on the project realisation** |
| Quality of the information process – assessment of information availability and comprehensiveness during the application process | **Positive** |
| Quality of provided support in the process of project application/proposal creation | **Positive** |
| Degree of challenge in project proposal creation for LSG itself | **The project proposal creation process was partly challenging** |
| Adherence to procedures in the process of evaluation and selection of project proposals | **The procedures were fully adhered to** |
| The general evaluation of the project proposal quality (the quality of the problem description, harmonization of all key elements in the project proposal form, the quality and comprehensiveness of the planned activities | **The project proposal meets the criteria** |
| Concluding the contractual arrangement | **The arising challenges were successfully overcome and the procedures were adhered to** |
| Providing technical support in the grant management procedure as stipulated in the Grant Operations Manual | **Support was provided but is not evaluated as sufficient** |
| The procurement procedures carried out by the implementing entities are realised in line with the procedures and the plan. | **Partly** |
| Financial management and reporting is carried out in accordance with the procedures and the planned dynamics | **Yes** |
| Reporting on the realisation of project activities is timely and high quality | **All reports were submitted but they are insufficiently informative** |
| Existence of examples of public presentation/announcement of project activities and good practice examples to general public | **There is a small number of examples and they are partly comprehensive and informative** |
| The monitoring process of project activities is carried out continuously and constitutes a good basis for project activities improvement and evaluation | **Partly** |
| The presence of the challenges potentially leading to the termination of the Contract | **There were no challenges of such type** |

### 3.2.3. Progress analysis of service improvement at local level

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of program activities.** The project was somewhat slowed down by the pandemic in the territory of the RS. Recently the workshops for children and some workshops for parents have begun functioning regularly, but the situation has worsened again in this respect. The planned refurbishment and acquisition of clothes and didactic materials have been realised according to the plan. Out of the four specific goals of the project, most activities were planned and therefore realised within the goals *Fairness* (workshops for children and parents) and *Strengthening LGS capacities* (adaptation, equipping the facilities, work materials) and then also *Supporting families* (mobile schools, visits). The activities should have been classified differently in relation to the goals, since because of this classification the goal was consequently not achieved. Inclusion – although 43 children from two village settlements were included in PE through the project. Two out of total 10 activities were not realised.

**Table:** **Progress evaluation in relation to four general goals – Prokuplje**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General goal** | **Progress evaluation** |
| **Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Within this goal, the project planned only advertising and/or TV programs, but none of it was realised. However, inclusion was increased – 48 children were included who did not attend preschool diversified programs before. |
| **Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | The achievement of this goal proceeds according to the plan – in the absence of inclusion in PE, two workshops are indisputably important to the children like the preparation for the Preparatory Preschool Program (PPP). Availability is increased, but only for the children from two villages, while other villages are too far for the children without logistic support to be able to attend workshops. It is also impossible to make a larger number of groups because there are neither enough teachers nor means for organising groups more frequently. The workshops for children are well designed and the parents and teachers emphasize the visible change in the children’s openness and willingness to socialize, as well as in various skills such as language skills, correct pronunciation, correct manner of pencil holding, expressing curiosity etc. The children repeat with their parents at home what they do in the workshops, so that the parents can also learn new types of activities and apply them when there are no workshops. |
| **Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills** | Strengthening parenting skills is planned through several activities (workshops, mobile schools, field visits) and they are well designed and can help parents to solve various dilemmas and learn new skills. The pandemic-induced situation prevented mobile schools and field visits, while workshops began functioning again in September. The parents who participate are satisfied, but it is usually the same group and the activities are not extended to other families. The project also managed to include a number of fathers, although they are still insufficiently present in comparison to mothers. There were no specifically designed activities aimed at including a larger number of fathers. During the pandemic, the intersectoral team was available to the families on the telephone. |
| **Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups** | Strengthening LSG capacities for preschool education refers primarily to the refurbishment of the PI “Neven” facilities and the realisation of the partnership between institutions and organisations. No education or professional training was planned for the employees, which is also an aspect that would strengthen the LSG. |

**User satisfaction – parent perspective.** The parents are satisfied with the fact that their children have friends of the same age, which would be difficult to achieve without the project because the villages are scattered and there are not many children living near their place of residence. In addition, the parents report that their children have adopted many skills and work habits, and have expressed increasing curiosity so that now they have various initiatives as to how to spend family time in a creative and entertaining manner. All the interviewed parents are very satisfied and point out that it would be very important to have more activities so that the children would not lose continuity. They state that the children tell them what they did in the kindergarten while the teachers regularly send them pictures and notes about the children, which also gives them ideas about work at home. Bringing and taking the children away is not a problem to the parents, and if the workshop for the parents is organised after the one with the children, they will be glad to stay. They would like to have more workshops for them and they emphasize that important topics are the preparation of children for school, socialization, as well as safe and purposeful use of information-communication technologies (ICT). It is a great dilemma for them how to facilitate the use of ICT to their children for school in the future, but also to prevent their children from spending too much time at the computer.

**Activity observation results.** Activity observation was not possible having in mind the pandemic-induced emergency, but the reports of the workshoppers, the photographs and video recordings of the activities examined during the evaluation process confirm insights about satisfaction and motivation of both children and parents.

**Identification of good practice examples.** Based on the overall evaluation findings it may be concluded that all the performed activities and achieved results have made substantial progress in the community and made effects regarding children and families. However, there are no outstanding practices that exceed to a large extent the envisaged results and expectations or those that can be described as unique in comparison to other evaluated LSGs.

### 3.2.4. Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability

Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability are as follows:

* In the following phase, project planning should be based on the assessment **of the LSG capacities to increase the inclusion of children**, taking into account children from other and more remote village settlements, since the needs of the inhabitants of Prokuplje, particularly those from rural regions, are much larger in comparison to end users who have not been included in the project so far.
* Regarding the project planning process, it is necessary to redefine the way of selecting and classifying activities and their indicators in relation to the goals in order to harmonize the goals, activities and indicators, which would also lead to more objective evaluation of the realisation.
* **It is recommended to improve the coordination within the team, as well as to distribute more evenly the responsibilities and gradual assuming of responsibility by the LSGs.** In this phase, the NGO is chiefly responsible for too many activities and there is the impression that the LSG is not strengthening its capacities in line with the needs of the population. Regarding the project coordination and engagement of the LSG representatives, it is recommended to have meetings so that the team members who come from the LSG would become familiar with the project documentation and project obligations, in order to reduce the risk of potential requirements that were not initially planned by the project and arising because of the replacement of the team members from the LGS. There should be better coordination at regular meetings of the whole team as well, which would contribute to more efficient and clearer delegation of responsibilities within the project, e.g. if the employees in the LSG assumed part of the activities (finance and public procurement) as well as to relieving the coordinators from their work overload.
* It is necessary to increase the LGS engagement, both in program terms through the abovementioned engagement in increasing the inclusion of children, and in administrative-financial terms (e.g. involvement ion the public procurement process).
* It is necessary to **improve the LSG capacities** for participating in the project, which is possible to achieve by organising training or other forms of professional education of the employees in the LSG.
* It is essential **to adjust the activities** so as to improve the project realisation and make the activities more flexible for including parents. It is also necessary to develop informative and educational materials, establish and maintain regular structured telephone communication, organise educational activities for parents in safe premises and with covering travel costs. It is also necessary to adjust the activities in terms of including a larger number of fathers.
* **Project sustainability is questioned for several reasons.** The project is not sufficiently visible in the community and, because of the change of the city authorities, there is a permanent concern as to how it will be accepted. The persons currently working on the project do not have full-time employment in local institutions and the question arises as to the manner in which continuity of the activities will be ensured after the completion of the project. There will certainly be permanent effects in the families involved in the work regarding the strengthening of their skills for educational and creative work with children, but expanding their inclusion is important for sustainability. It is recommended to include services planned in the project as regular items in the LSG budget.
* Further adjustment of diversified programs to the families’ needs is recommended, e.g. a longer-term everyday program for a larger number of and families (not only two-hour workshops for children twice a week).
* Visibility of the project should be improved, including the design and realisation of other promotional activities apart from TV programs, as well as the design and realisation of disseminating information about the project results.
* It is necessary to improve the quality of the narrative reporting process, i.e. internal monitoring of the project realisation through the preparation and collection of internal reports on the realisation of activities, video recordings, photographs etc. Currently, only the teachers prepare these internal reports, but it is also necessary to improve the quality of the reports (to include an overview of the effects of the activities performed for the children). The quality of the narrative reports should also be improved by reporting about all the undertaken activities (including those that were not initially planned but overcome the challenges preventing the realisation of the activities).

## 3.3. Novi Sad - Project “Together in inclusion – for the wellbeing of Novi Sad children”

### 3.3.1. Evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability and key quantitative data

**Project relevance** is highly assessed, particularly having in mind the needs of a large number of families and children in Veliki Rit settlement. All the envisaged activities are assessed as important for the achievement of the project goals. The key advantage of this project, as emphasized by all the project partners, is the intersectoral cooperation among relevant institutions in the area of early development and inclusion in PE, with the aim of supporting children and families from vulnerable groups. Although in 2014 Novi Sad Intersectoral Network for Children (NSMEDE) was set up[[8]](#footnote-8) which, apart from the project partners, also involves other relevant non-governmental organisations and government institutions in the City of Novi Sad, this is the first project that involves key institutions and organisations as formal partners on the same task. The project enables including children from early age in the PE system, thus making the basis for further successful inclusion in the school system and for the importance of education being understood by parents and children. In that respect, as the SWC representatives also indicate, of particular importance is the provided additional support in the form of individual consulting with the children’s families and continued support in ensuring the enrolment of the children in PIs, as well as resolving family difficulties that may affect the child’s development. Project relevance is also reflected in the fact emphasized by the project activities holders – that the project was written on the basis of the requirements assessed during the evaluation of other projects which were previously realised in this area at the city level.

When **efficiency** is concerned, there are huge challenges deriving from the inactivity of PI (as the main holder of project activities), as well as from the complex division of jurisdiction within the City of Novi Sad, and because of it the key project activities were not performed at all during the first year and a half of the project realisation. The actually performed activities (field visits conducted by field workers of the Centre for Production of Knowledge and Skills) were at one moment questioned having in mind that (although planned as part of this project) they are financed from the funds of other ongoing projects in which the Centre for Production of Knowledge and Skills (CPZV) is involved, but which are no longer funded by that sponsor. Nevertheless, CPZV managed to overcome this challenge. In addition, due to the pandemic, some project activities were slower (the preparation of the Intersectoral Protocol, the number of meetings of the network) or completely excluded (using the Reading Corner in the Health Centre), which could have been overcome (e.g. by performing the activities of preparation of the Intersectoral Protocol online or by relocating the Reading Corner to other premises).

**Project sustainability** is viable, but it demands planning the funds of the City Administration for Social and Child Protection and/or other sponsors so as to ensure the continuity of the key project activities after the completion of the project (e.g. the activities of supporting families in the field, the Parenting School, the additional program in PIs etc. need additional financial funds, while the project results, such as the Intersectoral Protocol and the Reading Corner have huge sustainability potential). The current elaboration of sustainability at the project team level can be considered as particularly positive as the result of the cumulative experience that the services intended for children and parents, from children’s birth to their enrolment in school, should be improved at the level of the City of Novi Sad. According to the Project Coordinator, the project sustainability will be ensured by incorporating the activities in the Local Action Plan for improvement of the status of Roma, which is prepared in cooperation with the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the RS Government and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. Contribution to project sustainability will also be made by the successfully established cooperation with all the project partners to which the realisation of project activities is not novel. The conclusion is that sustainability depends on the continuation of good cooperation and coordination of all the actors, and on providing financial funds for realising the activities.

### 

**Key data and results in figures:**

**6** networked institutions/organisations – City Administration for Social and Child Protection, Preschool institution “Our Joy”, Milan Petrović Primary and Secondary Education School with Student Accommodation (ŠOSO), Novi Sad Social Work Centre, Novi Sad Health Centre, Know How Centre

**1** informal partner – Novi Sad Intersectoral Network for Children

**195 parents** were included in different activities

**92 children** were included in project activities (26 enrolled in PI, 66 participated in early developmental stimulation activities through field visits; no children were involved in the realisation of the program “Growing together – Po ritemi bashk” because its activities have not started yet)

**13** planned and **8** realised project activities

**RSD 4,256,594.00** – grant value, out of which the amount of **RSD** **689,303.00** was spent (16% of the total grant value)

### 3.3.2. Evaluation of the compliance of project implementation with the Grant Scheme design

**General Conclusion.** The project of the City of Novi Sad is harmonized and implemented in line with the overall requirements stipulated in the GOM. In the implementation, the challenges were identified and shown below which primarily refer to the procedural-technical-financial aspect and are reflected on the realisation of the overall activities.

**The key challenges in procedural, technical and financial terms are as follows:** PI “Happy Childhood”, the chief institution holding the project (the entire program for children should be realised within the PI that is also the recipient of the largest part of the funds), has no previous experience with projects. The training about the preparation of project proposals was attended by the pedagogical assistant who was not involved in its writing. In addition, the City Administration for Education, as the institution which is superior to the PI, is not involved in the project. At the very beginning a challenge arose about the signing of the Contract – the PI claimed that it had no authority to sign the Contract, but that it needed the consent of the City Administration for Education (although the PMU claimed that this information is only partially true). The procedure of the Contract signing with the PI lasted very long despite the initiatives by the PMU to resolve this problem. According to the PI representative, the process of signing the Contract lasted too long because there was no one within the City Administration for Education responsible for the project. At the moment when the Contract was finally signed, the PI began the procedure of opening a designated account, which was also subject to the consent of the City Administration for Education (not included in the project either). The procedure was not finished until 21 February 2020. At the level of the City of Novi Sad, on 1 March 2020 the work of all electronic actions was suspended due to a hacker attack; Novi Sad then entered the procedure of adopting the final account and during that procedure it was impossible to transfer the funds to the PI. The final account was adopted in October, but another obstacle appeared – namely, the City Administration for Finance replied that the PI had to have the funds in its budget. The PMU was informed about this, along with the proposal that CPZV should transfer the funds to the PI (the PI would realise the planned activities, but they would be administered by CPZV). The PI and CPZV are planning to **sign an agreement by December 2020 enabling the transfer of the funds between these two partners**.

**Key recommendations for improvement.** Based on the identified challenges, the recommendations refer to the support that is necessary to individual institutions:

* It was necessary to include a larger number of the project representatives, with the obligatory participation of those in charge of financial-accounting and legal-administrative affairs, and to ensure horizontal learning through transferring the knowledge gained at training with other employees at the level of individual institutions and organisations.
* A rule should be envisaged and adopted that, at the level of local self-governments, apart from the institutions in charge of program activities, the project needs to include their superior institutions so as to ensure efficient project realisation.
* Greater care should be dedicated to procedural-technical difficulties caused by the complex division of jurisdiction in the initiation and realisation of the project before its application and the definition of the plan for their overcoming aimed at their prevention and adequate response.

The following table gives an overview of the summarized results of the evaluated success in the implementation of individual requirements stipulated in the GOM, i.e. the evaluations of individual aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme. **The appendices provide the justification of the evaluation.**

**Table:** **Summarized results of aspect evaluation – Novi Sad**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION**[[9]](#footnote-9) |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **Participation of all relevant institutions is insufficient and therefore it functions with difficulties** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Realised** |
| Existence of overall LSG capacities for successful implementation of the Grant Scheme | **Capacities need to be built further** |
| Quality of the information process – assessment of information availability and comprehensiveness during the application process | **Partly positive** |
| Quality of provided support in the process of project application/proposal creation | **Positive** |
| Degree of challenge in project proposal creation for LSG itself | **The project proposal creation process was partly challenging** |
| Adherence to procedures in the process of evaluation and selection of project proposals | **The procedures were adhered to with minor deficiencies** |
| The general evaluation of the project proposal quality (the quality of the problem description, harmonization of all key elements in the project proposal form, the quality and comprehensiveness of the planned activities | **The project proposal meets the criteria** |
| Concluding the contractual arrangement | **The arising challenges were successfully overcome and the procedures were adhered to** |
| Providing technical support in the grant management procedure as stipulated in the Grant Operations Manual | **Support was provided but is not evaluated as sufficient** |
| The procurement procedures carried out by the implementing entities are realised in line with the procedures and the plan. | **Yes** |
| Financial management and reporting is carried out in accordance with the procedures and the planned dynamics | **Partly** |
| Reporting on the realisation of project activities is timely and high quality | **All reports were submitted but they are insufficiently informative** |
| Existence of examples of public presentation/announcement of project activities and good practice examples to general public | **There is a small number of examples and they are partly comprehensive and informative** |
| The monitoring process of project activities is carried out continuously and constitutes a good basis for project activities improvement and evaluation | **Yes** |
| The presence of the challenges potentially leading to the termination of the Contract | **The arising challenges were successfully overcome** |

### 3.3.3. Progress analysis of service improvement at local level

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of program activities.** Based on the overall evaluation findings, it is concluded that the progress was realised regarding all the goals in respect of which the activities began to be realised. The total number of the planned activities in the first four quarters was 13, 5 of which were not realised for different reasons, the most dominant being delay in the funds transfer and the situation caused by the pandemic. It is also important to note that the **project activities regarding the total scope, quality and frequency of realisation are among the most demanding ones** in relation to the total sample of the projects as the subject of this evaluation, which is also partly the result of the larger number of the included partner institutions and organisations and the existing motivation and experience at the project team level from the phase of the project proposal creation until now.

**Table:** **Progress evaluation in relation to four general goals – Novi Sad**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General goal** | **Progress evaluation** |
| **Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | The key PE activities which the PI is responsible for have not been realised, which largely reduces the overall progress made in the project. The activities realised so far are those realised by CPZV and SWC. The parents emphasize this activity as successful, appreciating greatly speaking to the volunteers and the obtained information. By getting insight into the narrative reports, the volunteers regularly spoke to the parents about the importance of educating and enrolling the children in the PI. SWC provided legal and consultative help to the families in their exercise of the rights in the scope of social protection and connection with other institutions. By getting insight into the narrative reports and by speaking to the SWC representative and the users (parents), this activity has proved to be very important and useful to the parents (e.g. reporting family violence, support and legal advice about not losing the right to social assistance, connecting with the pedagogical assistant, support to uneducated and illiterate parents to exercise their rights to parental allowance etc.). The conclusion is that the activities realised by SWC (legal and consultative help) are adequate, that they achieve the desired results and that their implementation should be continued, whereas the same refers to the activity of CPZV (field work aimed at informing the parents) which are very efficient because the parents can get relevant information in the informal environment or to inform the volunteers about the challenges they face, so that the volunteers can transfer this information to the project partners, primarily to CPZV as one of the project coordinators. The activities increasingly keep the parents from Roma settlements informed about enrolling the children in PE and they support them in overcoming multiple problems encountered by this group of parents. |
| **Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | The field work activities were realised by the volunteers who provide support to the families in enrolling the children in the kindergarten for the purpose of increasing the inclusion of children from 3 to 5.5 years old in PE. Within this activity, 27 children were mapped for enrolment in PE, while 7 of them were for the PPP. The families were supported in the preparation of the enrolment documentation for their children while SWC gave the recommendation for the enrolment of the children from Roma settlements. After the submission of the documentation, a small number of children (2) was enrolled in the PI, but after increasing the enrolment quota in the City of Novi Sad, 26 children were enrolled. CPZV also organised the activity in the community at the beginning of the project, when the parents and their children visited the Festival of Children’s Rights – the number of the participants in this activity was small (2 mothers and 10 children). The main project activities that need to be realised by the PI and ŠOSO have not been realised: the activities of the additional program “Growing together” for the children not involved in PE, the workshop “Play through Movement and Body”, which is part of this additional program, and joint workshops for children and parents. Moreover, the activity that has not been realised so far and is also affected by the problems existing in procedural-technical and financial terms with the PI is the development of individual transition plans for the children when entering the PI. Volunteers and PI representatives should also be involved in this activity. Although the Reading Corner was equipped in the HC Prevention Department in Klisa, it was not opened and used due to the epidemiological situation. Since the project envisaged including 300 children and 300 parents in this activity, it is not clear enough who the users will be and how the realisation of this activity will be monitored. It is proposed to consider the relocation of the Reading Corner to the premises accessible to the target group listed in the project. According to the abovementioned, we can conclude that no progress has been made within this goal because the key activities are not realised. What was realised is support in enrolling 26 children in the PI. |
| **Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills** | The field visits were realised for the purpose of supporting the development of the children living in the informal settlement and for educating and motivating the parents to involve their children in PE. The conclusion is that the realised activities suit the established goals and that the users are satisfied with the services. The activities of working with the children also include the parents who observe the volunteers’ work with the children and get involved in the realisation of the activities, thus improving their parenting competencies. Another activity realised within the project is the Parenting School (SWC) whose aim is to improve parenting competencies. Based on all the findings, the conclusion is that the realised activities suit the established goals and improve parenting competencies. |
| **Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups** | It is planned to prepare the intersectoral protocol for informing and educating parents until the enrolment of their children in the PE and the preparation for the children’s enrolling primary school, as well as to apply and monitor the protocol, as well as to hold regular meetings of NSMEDE. Except for NSMEDE meetings, no other activities were realised due to the pandemic although they could have been realised (e.g. through online meetings). The partners began collecting materials for the preparation of the protocol, but they were prevented from continuing the work by the epidemiological situation. What appears to be a potential challenge is overlapping with another project (Lego project coordinated by Centre Harmony), which is also aimed at working on protocols. In the following reporting period, the Project Coordinator on behalf of CPZV will sent a request to the PMU to consider the alternative, i.e., instead of the protocol, to prepare a document that will refer to a different specific topic so as to avoid the overlapping of the activities. The conclusion is that no progress has been made within this goal. In the following period, the project coordinators are expected to define proposals for reviewing this project activity. Furthermore, a separate topic is the visibility of intersectoral efforts in the improvement of IECEC in the local community, and the activities aimed at increasing visibility are primarily directed towards advertising through social media, most frequently by hiring CPZV, as well as by sending information through the NSMEDE mailing list. The project coordinators emphasize that they take every opportunity (gatherings, meetings etc.) to mention this project and the achieved results. |

**User satisfaction – parent perspective.** The users of the project activities have very positive experiences – they are satisfied with all the activities they participated in and state that these activities are very important to them, particularly because they get the opportunity to share challenges they encounter and because there is readiness to resolve the identified challenges (field work and interviews with the volunteers, as well as SWC representatives). The field visits by the volunteers proved to be very useful activities, and one mother states that she finds it important for the children to get an opportunity to play, to learn something new and be exposed to different and various educational and entertaining contents in comparison to those existing in their own settlement. Another mother and user of this activity says that she is illiterate and that she greatly appreciated the volunteers’ work with the children. The families point out that they find speaking to the volunteers quite pleasant and motivating for enrolling their children in PE and encouraging the development of their children. The activities also affect the parents’ motivation and attitudes about the importance of education and that by gaining education their children may ensure a better life for themselves. One couple of parents enrolled the school for adults. The parents observe the progress among their children, e.g. the children are able to name colours, to count, to list the seasons of the year etc. One father says that his child wants to continue doing the tasks even after the departure of the volunteers, also adding that his child likes going to the kindergarten and returned happy, often speaking about the things done and learned there. What the parents distinguish as one of the great advantages is the support in enrolling the children in the kindergarten (collection of documentation, advice) and the fact that SWC gave recommendations for the children’s enrolment. One mother reports about the problems encountered by her child who has a speech impediment; the SWC representatives helped her to engage a speech therapist to work with her child.

Although the NGO representative has confirmed the positive findings presented by the parents, at the same time she also points out that the project users are uncritical; according to her, they live in extreme poverty and have complex family situations and needs. Based on her experience, their feedback is always positive although they have greater needs and requests which cannot be always and fully addressed.

The parents distinguish as a particular challenge the absence of adequate premises in the informal settlement where children could do their homework with the support of the person able to help them because there is a large number of illiterate parents. These premises could also be used for children’s play. The parents think that such premises would be very useful because in that case their children would not have to go for support to the Shelter for children and young people or to SWC, since these places are far from their settlement.

**Activity observation results.** The project activities were not observed due to the worsening epidemiological situation in November 2020. For the purpose of more comprehensive presentation of the achieved results within the project, the program documentation was analyzed in detail, as well as the reports on the realisation concerning the Parenting School and the field work of the volunteers. The findings of this evaluation confirm that planning and programming these activities is of very good quality, while the successful implementation and user satisfaction are also confirmed by the Realisation Reports.

**Identification of good practice examples.** A good practice example is primarily the team that works on this project and whose work, in a manner of speaking, represents the formalization of the NSMEDE initiative from 2014. Namely, NSMEDE consists of the representatives of all the relevant institutions at the level of the City of Novi Sad related to the provision of services to children, i.e. all the representatives of the intersectoral team participating in the project. In other words, the activities related to intersectoral cooperation and the abovementioned network (NSMEDE) represent a good practice example since they imply the preparation of the intersectoral protocol (among LSG, HC, SWC, PI, NGO and ŠOSO) aimed at informing and educating parents about the enrolment in the PI. In the future, this network may be a body which will coordinate activities and projects at the level of the City of Novi Sad regarding inclusive education. This attitude is also shared by the intersectoral team. Moreover, the program concept of the project, along with the removal of identified challenges in the realisation of the activities, and based on the evaluation results, has the potential to be identified as a good practice example upon the completion of the project (although it was not possible to observe activities, the analyses of the program documentation for the activities and the reports on its realisation, as well as end users’ satisfaction constitute the basis for such assessment).

### 3.3.4. Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability

The following recommendations are identified:

* With no delay an Agreement should be signed between the PI and CPZV in order to start realising the main project activities.
* For the purpose of improving the project coordination and implementation, it is recommended to include formally the representatives of the City Administration for Education and the City Administration for Finance so as to prevent future challenges arising from the system of jurisdiction and responsibilities. In that respect, it is necessary to improve the quality of support given to the PI by the above-listed city institutions.
* It is necessary to improve the capacities of the PI as the main holder of project activities, since this institution has no experience in project management and implementation.
* It is necessary to improve the process of horizontal exchange and information both in the institutions and organisations which are members of the intersectoral team (so as to prevent the lack of information in case of replacement of the project staff) and in the institutions superior to the members but not part of the team, so as to improve the project efficiency as well. The importance of intersectoral cooperation has been recognized (education, social protection and healthcare) and should be further built.
* In order to improve the project coordination and implementation in specific aggravating conditions, it is recommended to make up a work plan in crisis situations so that all activities envisaged by the project should be realised continuously or adjusted in line with the situation while maintaining all the established goals.
* It is recommended to establish coordination with other organisations in the territory of the City of Novi Sad that, through other projects, realise similar or identical activities, so as to make the measures and support complementary. Such coordination may be realised through NSMEDE as a structure that gathers all the relevant actors.
* It is necessary to consider the possibility of offering CPZV additional administrative support since the signing of the abovementioned Agreement results in new and unplanned obligations and financial responsibilities for which no human resources were allocated initially and therefore it poses a potential challenge to CPZV.
* Since the challenges with the PI are expected to be resolved by the end of the year, it is recommended to revise the realisation plan of the PI activities so that the planned number of users is maintained as defined by the project document.
* It is necessary to consider other premises where the Reading Corner could be relocated; currently the Reading Corner is equipped and located in the HC premises (e.g. in the premises of the Shelter or SWC).
* It is necessary to take into consideration other premises where it would be possible to realise the workshops for children and parents which ŠOSO “Milan Petrović” is responsible for.
* It is necessary: to improve the preparation process of narrative reports so that they refer exclusively to the reporting period and the activities envisaged by the Project; to include all the challenges encountered by the project, from the major to the minor ones, and show alternative solutions, as well as to specify precisely the method of reporting about the number of the participants in the activities.
* It is necessary to consider the possibility of the activities within the Parenting School realised by SWC becoming part of the regular activities.
* It is necessary to consider the possibility of the additional program “Growing Together” to become part of the regular PI program.
* It is necessary to consider the possibility of signing the strategic partnership between NSMEDE and the City of Novi Sad with the aim of long-term provision of support to families from vulnerable groups (either through the activities of CPZV or other non-governmental organisations).
* It is necessary to ensure continued inclusion of children from informal Roma settlements in the PI program, along with support provided by SWC (recommendation for enrolling children in the PI).
* It is necessary to improve the project visibility by increasing the amount of information shared with the community about the course of the project implementation and the achieved results.

## 3.4. Palilula (Belgrade) – Project “Let’s grow together”

### 3.4.1. Evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability and key quantitative data

**The relevance** of this project is evaluated highly positively. The project constitutes an adequate targeted intervention devised through partner action and response to the requirements of the Municipality of Palilula in Belgrade, where there is a high percentage of children not included in PE programs. The project targets as direct users the families and children (in total 400) from the non-hygienic settlements of “Mali Leskovac” and “Jabučki Rit”, where the inclusion of children is at the lowest level. To the members of the project team, the project realisation is a new professional experience which contributes to their professional development, as well as advanced forms and mechanisms of cooperation within partner institutions and organisations. Another value is the development of different ways of cooperation with families and children, which resulted in better mutual understanding, elimination of prejudice and building of the relationship of trust as the basic precondition for achieving the expected project results. The parents themselves state that their children gladly attend the half-day program “Rastilište”, that at home they often speak about what they did and learned, and that there is evident progress in their knowledge, behaviour and hygiene habits. Moreover, the project activities realised in the settlements were assessed by the parents as a new and interesting experience in which they gladly took part in (as proved by the project reports and the photos from the field visits).

Although the project realisation **efficiency** could be largely endangered by the substantial delay in the payment of the funds for the realisation of the activities due to the procedural problems which were eventually solved, the PI as the chief institution initially relied on its own resources and began realising the activities. The dynamics of activity realisation and inclusion of children and parents were disturbed primarily due to the external factor (the pandemic), (in particular from November onwards, due to the worsening epidemiological situation and the increasing fear among the parents). Proactive acting of the holders of project activities produced results in this respect too – the realisation of the activities during summer months was redirected outdoors within the kindergarten and the settlements. They visited the settlements once again after the state of emergency in order to motivate the parents to allow their children to participate and thus ensure the continuation of the project activities. There is still no further operationalisation of alternative solutions to the realisation of project activities due to the coronavirus-induced pandemic during winter months.

The project **sustainability** may be questioned if the Secretariat for Education and Child Protection or the Municipality of Palilula (independently or with the aid of sponsors) fail to create basic preconditions and sources of financing for the continuation of the realisation of the key project activities. Moreover, project sustainability depends on institutional continuity. The project envisages formalization of cooperation by signing the Cooperation Contract between all partner institutions and organisations, which may be considered as the basic precondition for sustainability of the project interventions.

**Key data and results in figures:**

**4** networked institutions/organisations – PI “Boško Buha”, Municipality of Palilula, City Social Work Centre, Union of ECEC Medical Nurses and Nursery Teachers' Associations of Serbia

**1** informal partner: Health Centre

**235 parents** were included in different activities (186 mothers and 49 fathers)

**199 children** were included in the realisation of half-day diversified program “Rastilište”

**13** planned and **12** realised project activities

**RSD** **5,963,793.00** – grant value, out of which the amount of **RSD 607,422.00** was spent, or **10%** of the total grant value

### 3.4.2. Evaluation of the compliance of project implementation with the Grant Scheme design

**General Conclusion.** The Project “Let’s Grow Together” was conceptualized and implemented in line with the overall design envisaged by the GOM, but the realisation of all the requirements was not timely due to the procedural challenges. The resolution of arising problems called for the additional support of the Project, the proactive acting of the local intersectoral team and, first of all, intensive communication and cooperation between MoESTD and the Secretariat for Child and Health Protection, so that all the problems that arose and could also lead to the non-performance of the project were resolved in the process, thus enabling the realisation of project activities.

**The key challenges in procedural, technical and financial terms:** concluding the contractual arrangement, timely transfer of the financial funds, the original project proposal demanded substantial improvements, as well as the dynamics of the payment of the funds that does not follow the project-defined requirements.

**Key recommendations for improvement.** Based on the overall assessments shown in the table below, therecommendations for improving further project realisation in procedural-technical-financial terms refer to the following:

* It is necessary to ensure a more systematic and formalized cooperation and exchange of information at the level of the entire project team and to implement more consistently the monitoring activities while creating and applying the envisaged instruments and devising corrective activities based on the obtained results.
* It is necessary to increase the presence of the project information (including contact persons) on web portals and social media of all the partners.
* The table for financial reporting should be improved or the implementing entities should be asked to enter data in the table for final reporting in phases, so as to enable monitoring of the financial status of their projects by individual items.

The necessary costs for the realisation of activities and the payment of the funds were not harmonized in the planning, so it should ensure that the dynamics of payments follows the defined requirements, and that the funds invested by the municipality should be used for the type of procurement defined by the project. Moreover, the project representatives believe that the funds intended for the project team’s meetings could partly be redirected for other purposes (e.g. acquisition of children’s clothes, educational materials etc.), so this possibility should be considered.

The following table gives an overview of the summarized results of the evaluated success in the implementation of individual requirements stipulated in the GOM, i.e. the evaluations of individual aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme. **The appendices provide the justification of the evaluation.**

**Table:** **Summarized results of aspect evaluation – Palilula**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION**[[10]](#footnote-10) |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **An adequate team was set up which faces minor challenges in its work** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Realised** |
| Existence of overall LSG capacities for successful implementation of the Grant Scheme | **Capacities need to be built further** |
| Quality of the information process – assessment of information availability and comprehensiveness during the application process | **Positive** |
| Quality of provided support in the process of project application/proposal creation | **Positive** |
| Degree of challenge in project proposal creation for LSG itself | **The project proposal creation process was partly challenging** |
| Adherence to procedures in the process of evaluation and selection of project proposals | **The procedures were fully adhered to** |
| The general evaluation of the project proposal quality (the quality of the problem description, harmonization of all key elements in the project proposal form, the quality and comprehensiveness of the planned activities | **The project proposal meets the criteria** |
| Concluding the contractual arrangement | **The arising challenges were successfully overcome** |
| Providing technical support in the grant management procedure as stipulated in the Grant Operations Manual | **Support was provided and evaluated as adequate** |
| The procurement procedures carried out by the implementing entities are realised in line with the procedures and the plan. | **Partly** |
| Financial management and reporting is carried out in accordance with the procedures and the planned dynamics | **Partly** |
| Reporting on the realisation of project activities is timely and high quality | **All reports were submitted but they are insufficiently informative** |
| Existence of examples of public presentation/announcement of project activities and good practice examples to general public | **There is a small number of examples and they are partly comprehensive and informative** |
| The monitoring process of project activities is carried out continuously and constitutes a good basis for project activities improvement and evaluation | **Partly** |
| The presence of the challenges potentially leading to the termination of the Contract | **The arising challenges were successfully overcome** |

### 3.4.3. Progress analysis of service improvement at local level

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of program activities.** Within all the general goals, progress was made with the modified dynamics in relation to the activity realisation plan due to initial procedural challenges and the influence of the external factor caused by the pandemic. As the holders of project activities themselves emphasize, the largest progress was made in the area of improving fairness. Total project activities and achieved results are evaluated as a step forward in relation to the established professional practice of all partners, contributing to the wellbeing of children and families, the acceptance of the kindergarten environment, as well as empowering the competences primarily of the PI employees. The only activity which was not realised refers to the arrangement of the external space in line with the plan.

**Table:** **Progress evaluation in relation to four general goals – Palilula (Belgrade)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General goal** | **Progress evaluation** |
| **Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Progress was made in different activities, as very important can be considered the initial activity related to the mapping of requirements. All the representatives of the intersectoral team participated in that activity, and then the focus groups organised in both settlements with the aim of identifying the families’ requirements and obstacles in including their children in the PE programs. The realisation of all the activities in the settlements was contributed by the involvement of the representative of Palilula (Roma coordinator) who was already well accepted by the families, as well as the involvement of the leaders of both settlements, particularly in Jabučki rit. Good acceptance of the teachers by Roma communities and realisation of direct contact by visiting the settlements were assessed by the project team as the key success factor and precondition for realising cooperation. The conclusion is that the work should be improved on informing the parents about the application procedure and exercise of the right to free-of-charge PE services (although these activities were realised). Promotional materials were prepared about the importance and possibility of enrolling the PI and the project was presented and promoted at the Education Fair. Initially 20 children were enrolled in the diversified program “Rastilište” in the facility “Tinkerbell” (Karaburma) and, within the same program, 17 children were enrolled in the facility “Spring” (Jabučki Rit), so that the number of included children in the fourth quarter reached 199. Moreover, the estimated number of children regularly attending this program is 40. In order to achieve continuity in children’s attendance, the teachers contact some parents one day in advance to remind them of the scheduled time, which has proved to be the practice that produces results. “Open Door Days” were held and interviews were conducted for the parents on two occasions in order to assess the manner in which the parents experienced the kindergarten environment and the choice of destinations to be visited by the children. After the state of emergency, the project representatives visited the families once again so as to ensure the children’s attendance and inform the parents about preventive measures, rules and procedures in the children’s attendance in the kindergarten, which contributed to increased inclusion. The project representatives also state that one child with developmental disabilities was enrolled in the regular program of the PI “Boško Buha”, which is considered as an important example to other families. |
| **Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Development and continued realisation of the half-day diversified program “Rastilište”, as well as the number of included children, confirm the results regarding the achievement of this goal. The parents and teachers are quite satisfied with the progress children are making, and they point out that the children gladly attend the kindergarten. There are also evident positive steps forward in the improvement of different skills among the children, their adoption of desirable behaviour patterns, socialization and interaction with their peers. In addition, the parents say that they have good-quality communication with the teachers and that they get advice and new findings about their children, stating that both the parents and children would like to attend this program more often. Enabling this activity was preceded by the cooperation, i.e. the established network of support and communication among PI-SWC-LSG-HC in order to facilitate access to services necessary for enrolling children and providing support to families, while SWC had a significant influence in this respect. The total number of realised sessions within the program was 46 and the dynamics of realisation was modified in comparison to the plan due to the delayed beginning of the project and to the pandemic. The key approach to the realisation of diversified programs is to rely on the children’s experiences and needs, so that the topics and planned activities were frequently changed. All the children were continuously provided with snacks during their stay in the kindergarten. A trip to Avala and visits to the Aquarium and Kalemegdan etc. were organised for the children, while the reports and photographs, the teachers within the interview, the parents and the children (included in activity observation) acknowledge that the abovementioned was interesting to the children and an experience unavailable beforehand. The number of the children included in all the activities was lower than the planned one because of the parents’ fear and the epidemiological situation, although part of the workshops were organised in the settlement, while the workshop topics were adjusted to the current situation and the families were given disinfectants and masks. |
| **Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills** | All the activities within this goal were realised dominantly within the settlements themselves and were well accepted by the included families (as proved by the minutes and photographs from the visits). The holders of project activities state that these workshops in the yards of Roma houses were an additional professional experience to them and that they are quite satisfied with the created relationship and quality of the communication with the families. Although these activities were delayed, they were realised almost in line with the plan, but with a smaller number of parents, particularly fathers. It is important to note that the envisaged topics were adjusted to the current situation and parents’ interests and that not all of them were oriented directly towards improving the parents’ competencies regarding the children’s upbringing and development. In the course of the project realisation, so far 8 workshops have been held for the parents and they referred to the following topics: including fathers in child care and parenthood, children’s hygiene and care and styles of upbringing. Hygiene packages were prepared and distributed after the workshops. |
| **Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups** | Within this goal, the project-envisaged activities were not operationalised to a sufficient degree. Based on all the conducted interviews, it may be concluded that all the partners are informed about the project activities and that cooperation with the families is realised with mutual consultations, the joint framework and exchange of experiences after the performed activities. Involving the representatives of the Municipality on behalf of the Team for Inclusion of Roma significantly contributed to the success of the project activities. Cooperation with SWC and HC is improved primarily in respect of the communication channels and resulted in the improvement of the current cooperation forms and mechanisms which used to be of predominantly formal and protocol character. |

**User satisfaction – parent perspective.** All the respondents point out that they are very satisfied by the fact that their children are included ion half-day programs and that they would also like such programs to be organised more frequently, as well as that their children have the opportunity to attend the kindergarten with other children and free of charge. The parents state they both they and the children are satisfied with the teachers’ work and that the children often speak about the kindergarten activities, that progress is visible in the children’s hygiene habits, behaviour and increased curiosity, and that the children have also adopted new knowledge and made new friendships. As for the activities for the parents, the parents state that they were interesting, while some of the also participated in similar activities in the settlement in the past. They say that they appreciated the fact that “someone asked them something and helped them with enrolling their children in the kindergarten”, while two mothers say that they found particularly interesting the workshops within which they spoke about the styles of upbringing and communication. The leader of one of the settlements has also taken part in the interview. He states that the included parents accepted the activities very well, that importantly the activities were spoken about in the settlement and the families receive encouragement and support in including their children in PE. He also says that his own grandson took part in the organised trips, which was a very interesting and new experience to him. A girl whose brother is included in the diversified program and who brings him to the kindergarten, points out that her brother is very happy about going to the kindergarten and often talks to her about everything. Moreover, she would like to have had the opportunity to attend the kindergarten. The parents could not identify any additional topics they would like to talk about within the workshops. The overall answers indicate that the parents perceive the kindergarten environment as encouraging and safe, and that the obstacles affecting the parents’ response have been mainly eliminated. On the other hand, the parents’ answers indicate that it is still necessary to work on informing them about the ways and procedures necessary for enrolling their children in the PI.

**Activity observation results.** Project activity observation referred to the realisation of the half-day diversified program “Rastilište” in which, due to the epidemiological situation, only four children from the settlement “Mali Leskovac” participated, due to the epidemiological situation. Observation took place for one hour while the overall observation results are given in the appendices. All the evaluation criteria defined for observation are realised at the highest level, while observation itself and the interviews with the children and the teacher during and after the activity indicate that the children gladly attend this program, that they are accustomed and well adapted to the kindergarten environment and that they take active part ion all the activities.

**Identification of good practice examples.** Both central activities of this project – field visits to Roma families and realisation of the half-day diversified program – have the potential to become good practice examples. To that end, special care should be dedicated to further conceptualization of the diversified program based on the experiences so far, through comprehensive documentation and realisation of the reflexive analysis process of the activity holders, having in mind the necessity and importance of introducing this kind of programs in the regular offer of the PI “Boško Buha” after the completion of the project.

### 3.4.4. Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability

Recommendations for the continuity and sustainability of the project, activities and effects are as follows:

* In the following period, it is recommended to include and connect the children from Roma families with other children with the aim of creating an inclusive environment and preventing a segregated environment.
* In addition, it is necessary to adjust the activities to various needs of the children (e.g. children with developmental disabilities).
* If the pandemic-induced situation continues, it is necessary to redefine the project activities plan and devise alternative ways of communication with the parents and children, while taking into account those that have had good results so far, and devising additional ones in order to ensure greater compliance between the planned and the actual number of included children and parents.
* Regarding the dominant role of the PI, it is necessary to consider upgrading project activities by identifying the needs for further targeted involvement of psychologists, pedagogues and speech therapists in the advisory work with children and families.
* It is necessary to specify and intensify the role of SWC in the following period, as well as to dedicate greater attention to informing and providing support in terms of the method and procedures for enrolling children in PI with the support of this partner.
* It is necessary to improve the capacities of human resources within the Municipality of Palilula (it may be applied to the city level too) in order to involve them more efficiently in the project, but also in other projects in the area of education.
* It is necessary to consider the possibility of informal involvement of the partners that are not part of the project, but have experience and expertise which may improve the achievement of results (NGOs and Roma health coordinator).
* For the purpose of improving the monitoring process of the number of users (children and families) included in the project, the recommendation is to connect the data of all the relevant institutions which are members of the intersectoral team.
* Although the quality of coordination and cooperation was positively assessed, the recommendation is to establish continued systematic and organised exchange of experiences and information between the members of the local intersectoral team in order to perceive the results and continued improvement of project activities (particularly having in mind that the initial training was not attended by all the members of the intersectoral team).
* Information coordination and exchange should be improved in the area of financial management and reporting, having in mind the challenges encountered b the partners and the fact that the partners are not informed about the amount of the spent funds.
* Generally speaking, the monitoring process should be intensified in order to perceive the effects so that the adjustment of the project activities is not only situational, but based on the evaluation of effects and experiences so far. It is recommended to record the activities with the aim of their joint analysis at the institution level so that the gained experiences in working with the families and children (particularly within the diversified program) can be jointly analyzed and further improved during the project, as well as to transfer them more easily to other employees at the PI level if conditions are fulfilled for its continuation after the completion of the project.
* Project sustainability should be ensured through inter-institutional agreements which exceed the length of the project. In addition, it is necessary to devise a joint attitude and initiative for ensuring necessary funds for the continued realisation of diversified programs within the regular offer of the PI “Boško Buha”, while including the children from other settlements as well, in line with the requirements at the level of the Municipality of Palilula and based on the overall results achieved within this project.
* The partnership established at local level should imply the joint initiative for incorporating key activities and ensuring financial funds in the Local Action Plan for children, the Local Action Plan for improving the position of Roma and other strategic documents at the level of the Municipality of Palilula, with the support of the Secretariat for Child and Health Protection.
* Although all narrative reports were submitted, it is necessary to raises the degree of their information for the purpose of getting a more comprehensive picture of the progress in relation to the established goals.
* As far as the project proposal is concerned, the need was identified for further improvements – specific description of problems and a higher degree of compliance with other structural elements of the project proposal; specific description of the workshop contents and the diversified program itself, as well as the plan of monitoring and evaluating project activities.
* It is necessary to work further on the promotion of the achieved results as envisaged within the project component three through improving the visibility of the project and the project results.

## 3.5. Varvarin – Project “The future of Serbia grows in kindergartens”

### 3.5.1. Evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability and key quantitative data

**The relevance** of this project is assessed highly positively. There is a great need for diversified programs and including students from vulnerable groups in PE, while the project adequately addresses these needs. By adapting the facilities and opening two preschool groups in two village settlements, the number of the children included in PE was increased. The coordinator and the LSG representative emphasize that through the project the families needs are addressed that have not been addressed before, that there is a positive atmosphere created in relation to PE, that the children are helped in developing social, motor and cognitive skills, for which otherwise they would not have the opportunity if there were no kindergarten groups in these villages. Namely, the children generally spend their time with grandparents when their parents are at work, or only with one parent who is unemployed. Moreover, greater availability of other services in the community is ensured (such as HC and SWC) to families from rural regions – advice and services from the area of healthcare and social protection are available through the project. The additional value of the project is also reflected in the strengthening of competences of new teachers since this is their first experience and in their work they are supported by the main teacher as their mentor.

The project **efficiency** is also high. In relation to this evaluation dimension, it should be pointed out that the LSG as the holder of the project, invests further resources which were not envisaged by the project and which make the project effects even greater (e.g. the funds provided by the LSG for the teachers’ fees). Efficiency is satisfactory in the segment of the activities with the parents as well, having in mind that, regardless of the measures preventing the full-scope realisation of the activities with the parents, the adjusted activities are being realised, e.g. advisory work with the parents on the telephone. In the following period the project realisation should be intensified in the segment of the activities with the parents, which have been impossible to realise fully due to the pandemic.

Project **sustainability** has great chances and the LSG expresses its willingness to extend the project to other village settlements as well. Sustainability is reflected in the LSG’s willingness to continue providing the teachers’ fees in two village kindergarten groups and in the fact that the facilities have been adapted and equipped, so no further investments in the premises are expected. The LSG is willing to continue asking for funds from other sponsors in order to achieve these goals.

**Key data and results in figures:**

**7** networked institutions/organisations – Municipality of Varvarin, PI “Our Joy”, Health Centre “Vlastimir Godić”, Social Work Centre, Rasina District Pedagogical and Psychological Society, Primary School “Jovan Kursula”, Daycare for children, young people and adults with developmental disabilities

**23 parents** wereincluded in different activities

61 children included in two diversified programs – “Come all of you – Evenamidje savore po dujto” and “Green Thursday – Zeleno četvrtko”

**24** planned and **20** realised project activities

**RSD** **4,500,000** – grant value, out of which the amount of **RSD 1,831,784.41** was spent, or 41% of the total grant value

### 3.5.2. Evaluation of the compliance of project implementation with the Grant Scheme design

**General Conclusion.** The Municipality of Varvarin as the project holder in cooperation with the intersectoral team overcomes challenges and the project is being realised towards the achievement of the established goals.

**The key challenges in procedural, technical and financial terms:**

* The absence of mechanisms for informing and providing support to the applicants and project implementers (single training/info-session is insufficient to enable the team for the preparation of the project proposal, particularly in the municipalities where writing the project application is a novelty); the information about mentoring support was received from the PMU while it was not mentioned in the initial training etc. In addition, the PMU seems to have work overload and is unable to address every requirement for support coming from the project holders. As a matter of fact, although the PMU is at disposal more than it should be expected, all the project holders cannot rely only on these two persons for all their questions and difficulties. Furthermore, the narrative reports are insufficiently informative to enable the perception of everything that has been done in the field.
* The procedures in the GOM are not explained clearly enough (e.g. in Section 6.3, the listed responsible persons and bodies are not sufficiently precise or harmonized with the national procedures).
* The demanding procedures of public procurement in certain situations – it is not always possible to obtain three bids because there are not so many suppliers at local level or in the region. Furthermore, the documentation that has to be filled in by the suppliers is too lengthy so that they decide not to submit their bids and/or accept the procurement.
* The narrative reporting forms do not stress that it is possible and desirable to report on the activities realised in a modified form in comparison to the planned ones (Varvarin reports fail to present all the activities realised in the adjusted form or to a smaller degree due to the pandemic).

The following are the **key recommendations in procedural, technical and financial terms**:

* More frequent training/info-sessions during the project realisation,
* Improvement/clarification of the procedures in the GOM (primarily Section 6.3)
* Simplification of public procurement procedures and documentation,
* Incorporation of a section in reporting forms which would describe activities modified or adjusted to the pandemic and other challenges encountered in the project realisation, and
* It is also necessary to take into account feedback to narrative reports in order to improve the realisation of the activities, enable better-quality monitoring of the activities and evaluation of the project effects.

The following table gives an overview of the summarized results of the evaluated success in the implementation of individual requirements stipulated in the GOM, i.e. the evaluations of individual aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme. **The appendices provide the justification of the evaluation.**

**Table:** **Summarized results of aspect evaluation – Varvarin**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION**[[11]](#footnote-11) |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **An adequate and highly functional team was set up** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Realised** |
| Existence of overall LSG capacities for successful implementation of the Grant Scheme | **Capacities need to be built further** |
| Quality of the information process – assessment of information availability and comprehensiveness during the application process | **Partly positive** |
| Quality of provided support in the process of project application/proposal creation | **Positive** |
| Degree of challenge in project proposal creation for LSG itself | **The project proposal creation process was very challenging** |
| Adherence to procedures in the process of evaluation and selection of project proposals | **The procedures were fully adhered to** |
| The general evaluation of the project proposal quality (the quality of the problem description, harmonization of all key elements in the project proposal form, the quality and comprehensiveness of the planned activities | **The project proposal meets the criteria** |
| Concluding the contractual arrangement | **Proceeded smoothly and in line with the procedures** |
| Providing technical support in the grant management procedure as stipulated in the Grant Operations Manual | **Support was provided but is not evaluated as sufficient** |
| The procurement procedures carried out by the implementing entities are realised in line with the procedures and the plan. | **Yes** |
| Financial management and reporting is carried out in accordance with the procedures and the planned dynamics | **Yes** |
| Reporting on the realisation of project activities is timely and high quality | **All reports were submitted but they are insufficiently informative** |
| Existence of examples of public presentation/announcement of project activities and good practice examples to general public | **There are some examples; such examples are continuously supplemented and they are comprehensive and informative** |
| The monitoring process of project activities is carried out continuously and constitutes a good basis for project activities improvement and evaluation | **Partly** |
| The presence of the challenges potentially leading to the termination of the Contract | **There were no challenges of such type** |

### 3.5.3. Progress analysis of service improvement at local level

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of program activities.** The project was realised in line with the plan by March 2020, when the state of emergency was declared due to the pandemic. The necessary procurement was conducted, the facilities were adapted, and the activities were performed with the children and parents, as well as the activities of strengthening the project visibility etc. A potential risk to the successful realisation of the project arose when the school institution in Varvarin, which was supposed to accommodate a kindergarten group, was closed for renovation, thus becoming unavailable for project activities. Nevertheless, the project successfully overcame this risk and found the premises in the village of Bačina. There it opened a kindergarten group, which eventually led to greater inclusion, i.e. enrolment of a larger number of children in the kindergarten in comparison to the initially expected number.

In March the activities were suspended for a period of time (May/June 2020), and then resumed in the planned or adjusted form and scope. The activities with the children – kindergarten attendance – continued after the state of emergency and proceeded until the repeated worsening of the epidemiological situation at the moment when this evaluation was made. The activities undergoing the largest modifications were those that included the parents and realised by the Rasina District Pedagogical and Psychological Society (RDPPS), taking into account the measures preventing the infection spread which were continuously present and targeted the educational system (e.g. prohibition of the parents’ access to the educational institution premises; prohibition of assembly, recommended social distance etc.). It is important to note that the project proposal classifies activities under only three general goals, so that according to the project proposal there are no activities aimed at increasing inclusion. However, the achieved results indicate that work is being successfully done on increasing inclusion. In addition, it can be concluded that the project is also achieving unplanned positive results as shown in the table below.

**Table:** **Progress evaluation in relation to four general goals – Varvarin**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General goal** | **Progress evaluation** |
| **Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Although no activities were planned within this goal, it can be concluded that inclusion was improved by the enrolment of 52 children in two new kindergarten groups in the villages of Obrež and Bačina and by regular program attendance. As of September 2020, 42 children were enrolled because 10 of them joined the PPP. In the beginning, there were 9 children enrolled in Varvarin. |
| **Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Fairness was accomplished by providing access to PE to the children from vulnerable groups (the villages of Obrež and Bačina) which would otherwise be impossible without this project (due to the marginalized position in relation to the children from the urban environment in Varvarin, the children would have no opportunity to socialize in the peer group or to develop skills and gain knowledge necessary for their successful continuation of education. Preparation and realisation of diversified programs, adaptation and refurbishment of the facilities and acquisition of work materials were performed or are being performed, continuously contributing to promoting fairness and equal opportunities for learning and development. The teachers and parents report about the children’s evident progress they are more outgoing, less shy, in a better mood, more curious and more frequently initiating the activities in the family, have a better pronunciation etc. |
| **Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills** | The planned activities are as follows: website development for PI “Our Joy”, panel discussions for parents, parenting schools within the Centre for Early Development, making flyers in the Roma language, acquisition of technical devices (laptop, overhead projector, printer, screen etc.), gift packages etc. This group of activities underwent greatest changes. Namely, out of the planned 6 panel discussions, only two were held for the parents in Obrež and Varvarin, which were attended by the total of 23 parents (9 in Varvarin and 14 in Obrež). The parenting schools within the Centre for Early Development were organised only once in Obrež and Varvarin, at the same time when the panel discussions for the parents were held (the pandemic). Nevertheless, the defectologist in the Centre for Early Development was continuously available to the parents on the phone, and the advisory work is being performed throughout the length of the project. The teachers constantly communicate with the parents – informing them about the activities with the children and their accomplishments, giving advice and proposing activities at home. The parents report the better-quality time spent together because their children initiate different activities on their own, the activities they want to lead, they do homework together etc. The parents state that, despite the initial scepticism that enrolling their children in the kindergarten was passing childcare responsibilities on to others, now find that both the children and parents have multiple benefits. |
| **Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups** | Out of three planned panel discussions for the representatives of local organisations and institutions, one was actually organised and attended by the representatives of the LSG, PI, SWC, HC, the primary school, regional departments and RDPPS. Setting up the intersectoral team is considered to strengthen the LGS capacities and, among other things, this team made proposals to the local headquarters for emergencies about what to provide as support to the children from vulnerable groups within the system and the project. The LSG capacities were strengthened for the preparation (with mentoring support, PMU’s support, initial training) and realisation of the project in the area of PE. A visit to the City of Zrenjanin was organised with the aim of familiarizing the partners with good practice examples in the work of the PI and the preparation of a data base about preschool children. |

**User satisfaction – parent perspective.** The parents first report that their children have adopted many skills and work habits, and have become more curious so that now they have various initiatives as to how to spend family time in a creative and entertaining manner. They state that the children tell them what they did in the kindergarten while the teachers regularly send them pictures and notes about the children, which also gives them ideas about work at home. Moreover, the parents report that the children teach their own siblings through the activities they did in the kindergarten. One mother states that it is also a great advantage that the children acquire certain habits (e.g. when they get up, have meals, play or wash hands etc.). The children manifest a more developed exploration spirit and they are particularly interested in the activities within the program “Green Thursday” where they learn about ecology through play. A particularly important result is the fact that the parents now claim that they feel no “guilty conscience” about their children attending the kindergarten. One mother emphasizes that in the beginning she had a dilemma about whether it was fine for her child to attend the kindergarten although she did not work and had enough time to take care of the child – thanks to the project, she has realised that the child can learn much more in the kindergarten than at home. However, she points out that the child would not attend the kindergarten if it had to be paid.

**Activity observation results.** Due to the epidemiological situation it was not possible to observe the activities realised within the project. In line with the local protection measures, entering the PI was prohibited to everybody, even to the parents bringing their children. **The analysis of the photographs, reports and products shows that all these sources of information speak about great importance and positive effects of the activities, which can also be concluded from the interviews with the teachers and parents.**

The analysis was made of the teachers’ preparation for realising diversified programs “Come all of you” and “Green Thursday” in Obrež and Bačina so as to get insight about whether the activity is harmonized with the project goals, adequate, relevant etc. The conclusions were also made on the basis of the interviews, primarily those with the parents whose children attend the program. The teachers document their preparation for working with the children by filling in the daily outline model that contains: the name of the daily activity, the teacher’s task, the children’s task, the adults’ task, form of work, didactic instruments and materials necessary for performing the activity. Some of the realised activities are: the activities of speech development (e.g. migratory birds, talking about them, reciting poems and talking about others, talking about animals, animals in nursery rhymes), motor development, creativity development (painting, making masks), development of ecological awareness, using recycled materials in children’s workshops, talking about different occupations etc.

After the realised activities, the teacher fills in the self-evaluation list and evaluates the relation between the teacher’s expectations and intentions regarding the events in the group and the real course and results/effects of the realisation of a specific educational activity. An integral part of this evaluation is the teacher’s information about that could be done differently in educational situations. Planning and self-evaluation instruments have been developed within the activities of diversified programs preparation (DPP).

Based on the insight into the abovementioned teachers’ documentation, there is an impression that the activities are diverse, adjusted to the children and in line with the children’s interests and needs. According to the teachers, based on the insight into the self-evaluation and interviews with the parents, the children gladly attend the PI and there is also the evident transfer of knowledge gained at home.

**A good practice example.** As a good practice example, successful **cooperation of all the partners in the project can be emphasized, which was additionally supported by the signing of the cooperation protocol that defines the activities of the intersectoral team.** The evaluation results show that within the project there is a competent and committed coordinator who follows the realisation of all the activities and represents support to all the partners. In addition, both developed diversified programs have special value and potential to become a good practice example.

### 3.5.4. Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability

The recommendations are as follows:

* In the following period it is necessary to assess the children’s needs for being supported by speech therapists, psychologist and defectologists, and to find a way to involve once again the defectologist from the Daycare and the psychologist, pedagogue and speech therapist from the Pedagogical and Psychological Society in the work with the children.
* It is necessary to ensure the conditions for the preschool programs to stay in the village settlements because their relocation would incur transport costs to the parents, which would adversely affect the children’s inclusion. The programs should also remain free-of-charge.
* It is necessary to intensify the work with the parents – panel discussions, parenting schools – and thus increase availability of SWC and HC services to these parents because in this manner the parents’ motivation and willingness is increased regarding the use of the system services and also including other children in PE.
* It is necessary to provide the funds for the teachers’ fees and work materials in the regular local budget.
* It is necessary to search for additional funds to expand the programs to other villages and neighbouring municipalities because there is an evident need for it according to the constant interest of other LSGs or local communities in the introduction of the programs in their territory (Ćićevac, Ražanj, Drenovac).
* As for the project coordination, the recommendation is to distribute more clearly the roles between the coordinator and the financial expert, since the coordinator is currently performing the activities that belong to both positions, while the person supposed to be the financial expert actually performs the advisory function.
* As for the support to the intersectoral team, it is recommended, in line with the team’s expressed requirements, to devise other mechanisms of providing support (e.g. short training or info-sessions), which would ensure continuity in providing support, but also achieve better inclusion of the persons who join later due to the changes in human resources.
* It is necessary to improve the process of program and financial planning and narrative reporting, having in mind the existing challenge in planning and spending necessary funds in the first tranche; moreover, the narrative reports did not contain the description of the adjusted or modified activities.
* Finally, although some monitoring activities are performed in the project, it is necessary to improve the monitoring process of the realisation of activities, particularly by using the monitoring framework as the integral part of the project application.

## 3.6. Kraljevo – Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project

### 3.6.1. Evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability and key quantitative data

**Project relevance** is assessed highly positively since it provides support and specific services to children and families from village regions in a long period of time, which has been evaluated by all the intersectoral team members and the users (the children’s parents). For the PI, the project is important because it improves availability and provides the free-of-charge program for a large number of children from rural regions who could not attend the PE program because of living too far or the fact that the program had to be paid. For SWC, the importance of the project is reflected in ensuring the engagement of additional persons (NGOs) who can realise prevention activities (e.g. by talking to the parents from vulnerable groups about the vaccination topic) since the employees cannot accomplish them due to the work overload and such support is provided on a long-term basis. The NGO representative emphasizes that the project provided technical equipment, thus facilitating and improving the work, but that the project also ensured intensive cooperation with the PI. The employees of the Centre for Local Services point out that the project is of additional value to them as a reference for their internal licensing process. The Project Centre emphasizes the strengthening of intersectoral cooperation at the city level and finds that, thanks to the project, the City of Kraljevo is better prepared for getting involved in other projects with similar topics.

**Effectiveness** has been positively assessed, and there are outstanding results achieved in relation to the children included in the half-day program in Samaila and the parents supported by the NGO in getting informed, in collecting documentation and finally in enrolling their children in PE. There is no improvement of the parents’ competencies which should take place within the SWC workshops.

As for **sustainability**, the projects funds the work of the workshop program implementers (teachers, field visits, workshops for parents) and in that respect, the project sustainability depends on further financial support, primarily of the City of Kraljevo. On the other hand, the equipped facilities and the acquired technical equipment for the needs of the NGO and CWS will have their use value after the project as well. The respondents think that the project realisation will initiate the opening of other mixed groups in other rural regions of Kraljevo.

**Key data and results in figures:**

**4** networked institutions/organisations – PI “Olga Jovičić Rita”, Kraljevo City Centre for Local Services, Social Work Centre, NGO “Hand of Friendship”

**71 parents** were involved in different activities (20 parents were involved in the realisation of periodical flexible programs intended for the children from remote rural regions (drama workshops) and 51 parents were supported by Roma NGOs in enrolling their children to PE.

**151 children** were involved in different activities (30 children were enrolled in 2 newly-established mixed groups, 102 children participated in the theatre performance while 19 children were enrolled in the PPP thanks to the NGO support).

**8** planned and **5** realised project activities

**RSD 5,861,616.00**– grant value, out of which the amount of **RSD 555,294.51** was spent (11% of the total grant value)

### 3.6.2. Evaluation of the compliance of project implementation with the Grant Scheme design

**General Conclusion.** The evaluators’ general conclusion is that the project is in line with the GOM and that adequate preconditions have been fulfilled for successful project implementation. The fact that is particularly emphasized is that the Project Centre is involved in the project on behalf of the LSG as an important resource administrating the project and managing financial and narrative reporting, which implies collection and harmonization of individual partners’ reports. The initial challenges and delayed beginning in the realisation of the activities (the lengthy process of project review affecting subsequent signing of the contract, and challenges of opening accounts) coincided with the beginning of the pandemic, so that the realisation of the activities deviated largely from the planned dynamics. However, the realisation of the key activity within the project, i.e. opening mixed groups began successfully as soon as there were conditions for it.

**The key challenges in procedural, technical and financial terms:** the preparation process of project proposals, which was reviewed twice (because of the opinion that there was no sufficient intersectoral cooperation and because of the requested amount for financing) was too long and the Contract was signed later than in the other LSGs from Cycle One of the Grant Scheme, while the funds stipulated by the Contract were paid as late as the end of November 2019. After signing the Contract, the challenges also arose in relation with the opening of designated subaccounts (in SWC and NGO), but they were successfully overcome. The delay also affected the beginning of the project activities.

**Key recommendations for improvement are as follows:**

* Improvement of the process of opening designated accounts – namely, based on the experience of this and other implementing units, it is recommended to prepare a short manual for opening designated accounts which would include all specifics of both government institutions and non-governmental organisations (e.g. if institutions are within the unique state budget system, or part of the public finance management system, and if they already have the opened designated account).
* Although project reporting is realised according to the stipulated dynamics, the quality of the narrative reports may be improved.
* There is also room for improving project proposals referring to the role played by one of the partners in the project (the Centre for Local Services of the City of Kraljevo), as well as the definition of the activities with more substantial intersectoral networking (e.g. introduce field visits to the families conducted by the representatives of several sectors instead of only NGO being in charge of it).

The following table gives an overview of the summarized results of the evaluated success in the implementation of individual requirements stipulated in the GOM, i.e. the evaluations of individual aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme. **The appendices provide the justification of the evaluation.**

**Table:** **Summarized results of aspect evaluation – Kraljevo**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION**[[12]](#footnote-12) |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **An adequate and highly functional team was set up** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Realised** |
| Existence of overall LSG capacities for successful implementation of the Grant Scheme | **Capacities are fully present** |
| Quality of the information process – assessment of information availability and comprehensiveness during the application process | **Positive** |
| Quality of provided support in the process of project application/proposal creation | **Positive** |
| Degree of challenge in project proposal creation for LSG itself | **The project proposal creation process was partly challenging** |
| Adherence to procedures in the process of evaluation and selection of project proposals | **The procedures were adhered to with minor deficiencies** |
| The general evaluation of the project proposal quality (the quality of the problem description, harmonization of all key elements in the project proposal form, the quality and comprehensiveness of the planned activities | **The project proposal meets the criteria** |
| Concluding the contractual arrangement | **The arising challenges were successfully overcome and the procedures were adhered to** |
| Providing technical support in the grant management procedure as stipulated in the Grant Operations Manual | **Support was provided and evaluated as adequate** |
| The procurement procedures carried out by the implementing entities are realised in line with the procedures and the plan. | **Yes** |
| Financial management and reporting is carried out in accordance with the procedures and the planned dynamics | **Yes** |
| Reporting on the realisation of project activities is timely and high quality | **All reports were submitted but they are insufficiently informative** |
| Existence of examples of public presentation/announcement of project activities and good practice examples to general public | **There are some examples; such examples are continuously supplemented and they are comprehensive and informative** |
| The monitoring process of project activities is carried out continuously and constitutes a good basis for project activities improvement and evaluation | **Yes** |
| The presence of the challenges potentially leading to the termination of the Contract | **There were no challenges of such type** |

### 3.6.3. Progress analysis of service improvement at local level

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of program activities.** The project has made the greatest progress in the activities regarding the inclusion of the children in PE programs despite the delays and postponements. The qualitative progress evaluation within each goal is shown in the table below.

**Table:** **Progress evaluation in relation to four general goals – Kraljevo**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General goal** | **Progress evaluation** |
| **Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Within this goal the greatest progress is observed – the free-of-charge everyday program was realised on a half-day basis. Two mixed educational groups were formed in the settlement of Samaila and they are officially attended by 30 children, which is below the planned number (the pandemic). The children have regularly attended the program since its opening (21 September 2020) and good-quality service has been provided to the children and parents in that respect. As for periodical flexible programs intended for the children from rural regions, only one performance took place, but with a large number of participants (over 100 children and 20 parents), while other performances were postponed (the pandemic). The evaluators’ conclusion is that during summer months there was room for realising other workshops as well. In that respect, smaller progress was made in this activity. Field visits to the families are continuously realised by the NGO and they involve informing the parents about the enrolment in PE programs, assistance in collecting necessary documentation and mediation in the enrolment process or providing support in going to the vaccination. In cooperation with the PI, the document about the method of electronic enrolment in the kindergartens and PPP was translated into the Roma language. Significant progress was made in this activity having in mind that 27 Roma families have been involved in the NGO activities, and also that thanks to such support 19 children have been enrolled in PPP. |
| **Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | In relation to this specific goal, it is important to note that there is something illogical in the project proposal. Namely, although this specific goal is given in the summary of the project proposal, the same document does not list specific activities in relation to it, while some activities listed under other project goals could be classified within this specific goal (e.g. realisation of half-day programs for two mixed groups in rural parts of the city of Kraljevo contributes to achieving equal opportunities for learning and development of children from vulnerable social groups). The expected results do not define the outcome while the budget does not allocate the funds for the achievement of this goal. Because of the abovementioned, it is impossible to give a qualitative evaluation of progress within this goal. |
| **Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills** | No progress has been made within this goal since the only envisaged activity (2.1. – informative interactive workshops for strengthening the parents’ competencies) was not realised by SWC. The reason given for it is the initial delay, impossibility of equipping the premises to be used for that purpose (due to the epidemiological situation – the state of emergency, and then emergency at the level of the City of Kraljevo). Once there were conditions in a short period during summer months, the workshops were not held because of the assessed low motivation and insufficient interest of the parents in attending the workshops. However, it is praiseworthy that, according to SWC, the workshop programs have been prepared and they may be realised quickly as soon as there are favourable epidemiological conditions. |
| **Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups** | Moderate progress has been made within this goal, since a local intersectoral team was set up and the plan is to expand it primarily with the introduction of another NGO. Apart from the very existence of this team, no other activities related to the intersectoral team were realised (signing the memorandum of cooperation and activity 3.2. Preparation of the annual operational work plan), although they were planned for the first year and a half of the project implementation. Progress was made in relation to the equipping of individual institutions – equipping the facilities in Samaila for the sake of the work of the mixed groups (activity 3.3.) and equipping the SWC premises for the realisation of the workshops for the parents (activity 3.3.). |

**User satisfaction – parent perspective.** From the viewpoint of the parents whose children attend mixed groups and Roma families included in the support activities of Roma NGOs, the project is quite important and great progress has been made. The parents of the children attending the half-day program in Samaila are quite satisfied with the progress made by their children and notice that the children have adopted new skills, habits and knowledge. Their satisfaction is also reflected in the fact that the parents are happy to donate toys to the kindergarten. They notice that the children gladly attend the kindergarten, get easily adapted and their inclusion has also led to the parents talking to one another about the topics of parenthood and upbringing. What could be improved is the children’s safety while they are outdoors – namely, apart from the facility designed and equipped for two mixed groups, there is not a yard that could be used by the children, so the nearby churchyard is used for that purpose, but the road from the facility to the church is not secured. As for the parents from Roma families, they also point out their appreciation for the support from the Roma NGO, that their children are included in PE and that the information provided by the Roma NGO, including assistance in collecting documentation, is of great significance. In line with the abovementioned, the evaluators have concluded that the project is very useful and that substantial progress has been made in achieving the project goals regarding the improvement of availability of preschool services to children from vulnerable social and supporting families in including their children in PE.

**Activity observation results.** Project activity observation was impossible due to the current epidemiological situation. The evaluators were submitted the documentation for the activities that are being realised in two newly-established mixed educational groups in the settlement of Samaila (the videos and photographs from the workshops held in October and November, as well as the reports about the work of the teachers/activity implementers for October and November 2020), on the basis of which the instrument Check List was filled in to the greatest possible extent. Moreover, an additional interview was conducted with the teachers in the preschool institution and the activity implementers in the mixed groups.

The evaluators’ conclusion is that the activities are adequate, the users are satisfied (both the children, according to the parents, and also the parents and teachers), while the children gain new knowledge and skills important for early development. Good effects are also acknowledged by the initiative of the City to open another mixed group in the village of Lađevci. All the evaluation criteria were assessed as fully realised and a more detailed overview is given in Appendix II.

**Identification of good practice examples.** Although the activities are assessed as well placed, more comprehensive observation and further realisation are necessary in order to identify good practice examples, whereas the diversified program has full potential to become such example. What is important to emphasize is that the project not only ensures the PE program but it also includes the children from vulnerable groups, i.e. the children from rural regions, and in that manner their early development is improved. What can definitely be recognized as a good practice example is involvement of the City of Kraljevo not only through its membership in the intersectoral team and participation of the City Councillor for Education, but also through involvement of the Project Centre which, in line with its jurisdiction, is in charge of administrative project management and provision of support to all the members of the intersectoral team in the process of reporting and documenting of the activities, as well as the processes of procurement and contract preparation. This institution is an important resource that improves the quality of the project implementation and can be a good practice example to other local self-governments in this project. In addition, this also contributes to the project sustainability.

### 3.6.4. Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability

The recommendations are as follows:

* It is necessary to promptly begin the realisation of the planned activities in relation to the strengthening of the capacities of the organisations and institutions in the LGSs for providing support to children and families from vulnerable social groups, i.e. activities of the formal establishment of the intersectoral team through signing the Memorandum of Understanding and the preparation of the operational plan.
* For the purpose of the project sustainability, it is recommended to define the financial plan at the city level that would include the financing of mixed groups after the completion of the project as well.
* It is necessary to define the process of identifying the necessity for mixed groups being formed by the City as a form of preventive action in relation to the needs of the population from rural regions.
* Although the City Councillor for education is involved ion the team, for the purpose of the project effectiveness and relevance it is recommended that the team should include all the relevant representatives of executive power (City Councillors for child care, family care and institutions), which will also contribute to better intersectoral cooperation.
* It is necessary to improve the infrastructure, i.e. the surroundings of the facilities in Samaila in order to upgrade the safety of the children attending the half-day program.
* It is necessary to consider using the funds that have not been used for the work of two teachers (due to the delay) either for extending the length of this activity (and therefore of the project) or for supplementing their fees in order to realise the full-day program for the children. Apart from that, unused funds could also be repurposed for ensuring the outdoor space where the children from the mixed groups could safely spend their time.
* It is necessary to elaborate jointly additional activities with an intersectoral component, e.g. that the visits to the families organised by the NGO also include the representatives of SWC and the Centre for Local Services of the City of Kraljevo.
* It is necessary to consider the possibility of redefining and/or defining the activities that could be performed by the Centre for Local Services as the only institution included in the project but does not realise any activity (it was initially envisaged, but the review of the project proposal omitted the activity which this partner was supposed to perform). Active engagement of the Centre for Local Services as part of the LSG would contribute to sustainability and better coordination among all the partners.
* It is necessary to elaborate alternative manners of realising planned activities if the epidemiological situation does not improve (e.g. realisation of drama workshops outdoors).
* Having in mind the needs expressed by the parents and the leaders of the mixed groups, after the realisation of the project and within its sustainability it is necessary to plan a full-day program instead of the half-day one.
* It is necessary to involve the city representatives more intensively in the project promotion, particularly in the area of cooperation with the MoESTD, with the effects which have been achieved and future plans deriving from the project.
* It is necessary to improve the narrative reporting process since the reports were written: 1) cumulatively i.e. the narrative reports are not prepared only for a certain period but there is evident repetition of the activities realised in the previous periods, and 2) the reports do not state the total number of the parents and children involved in the project activities, which is a requirement from the amended instruction for narrative reporting.
* MoESTD should support the efforts of Kraljevo in relation to the planning the formation of another mixed group (Lađevci) for the purpose of sustainability (consultations, advisory support).
* MoESTD should support the preparation of the city development plan to 2030 (e.g. recommendations of the MoESTD experts for the activities in the area of IECEC), which will have a particularly positive effect on the project sustainability and resolution of the future funding of services through the city budget.

## 3**.7.** **Merošina – Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care Project in Merošina**

### 3.7.1. Evaluation of relevance, efficiency and sustainability and key quantitative data

The project is assessed as highly relevant since with its overall design it makes a valuable contribution to the improvement of quality and holistic services and it addresses continued presence and complex problems at local level, primarily regarding access of children from rural and scattered regions, Roma and poor families to the PE services. Here it is important to note that the Municipality of Merošina belongs to category IV according to the degree of development. The project stipulates including 200 children who have not been included in PE so far, as well as 300 parents. The achievement of the envisaged goals and expected results is planned as an effect of several groups of activities: equipping the existing facilities within six different environments (Merošina, Jug Bogdanovac, Balajnac, Donja Rasovača, Azbresnica and Oblačina), realisation of thematic workshops with children and parents, establishment and functioning of the mobile parenting school, as well as organising house visits aimed at advising and encouraging children’s early development. The project benefits have also been recognized by the project activity holders, as well as by its direct users. The cooperation realised between partner organisations and institutions ensures a proactive and holistic approach to resolving the existing problems, as well as upgrading the approaches realised through regular practice of the majority of the involved organisations and institutions and other projects they have participated in so far. In addition, inclusion in the project has also led to the expansion of the existing professional experiences of the project activity implementers.

**Efficiency** of the project realisation was reduced because of the problems regarding the delay in the payment of the funds, opening accounts and observation of the public procurement procedures. The listed difficulties were successfully overcome within first two quarters, but efficiency of the project realisation was additionally reduced by the external pandemic-induced factor, whereas no alternative solutions to activity realisation were elaborated and the realisation of all of the envisaged groups did not commence.

The key foundations for the **project sustainability** are the improved spatial conditions, the established partner cooperation, working with the families on raising awareness about the importance of PE, as well as long-term effects expected in that respect. On the other hand, sustainability of the achieved results demands institutional continuity and formalization of the cooperation among the partners, incorporation of key activities in local strategic documents intended for supporting children and young people etc.

**Key data and results in figures:**

**4** networked institutions/organisations – PI “Poletarac”, Health Centre, Social Work Centre, NGO “Inclusion Today”

**53 parents and 63 children** included in different project activities

**7** planned and **5** realised project activities

**RSD 4,781,000.00 –** grant value,the amount of **RSD 2,248,971.80**, or 47% of the total budget was spent

### 3.7.2. Evaluation of the compliance of project implementation with the Grant Scheme design

**General Conclusion.** The realisation of the local project in Merošina is in compliance with the overall stipulated requirements and procedures. Certain challenges in that respect referred primarily to the initial phases of the project realisation. Although some requirements and procedures are assessed as too demanding, their successful implementation within practical frameworks indicates their feasibility. The overall evaluation findings show the necessity of certain improvements for the purpose of further successful implementation of program activities (primarily in the area of more systematic realisation of the monitoring process and effectiveness evaluation of project activities) and achievement of the envisaged results in line with the targeted number of end users. As for the financial aspect, there is compliance between the contractually stipulated and paid funds, while the conditions for the payment of tranche II have also been ensured. Furthermore, it is important to note that the project representatives positively assess the relation between the invested funds and the achieved results, stating that they would also recommend to other municipalities (particularly those within the group of less developed ones) getting involved in a project of this type.

**The key challenges in procedural, technical and financial terms:** delay in the transfer of the funds, opening accounts and observation of the requirements deriving from the public procurement procedures. These challenges were overcome while their effect on the beginning of the project activity realisation was mostly compensated for in further project realisation.

**Key recommendations for improvement:**

* It is recommended to prepare brief written instructions summing up challenges and manners of their overcoming in respect of opening designated accounts/sub-accounts.
* It is necessary to consider potential ways of simplifying public procurement procedures and necessary documentation or increasing flexibility, particularly when smaller environments such as Merošina are concerned.
* The narrative reporting forms should stipulate additional requests regarding the description of the activities that have been modified or adjusted to the pandemic and other challenges, and also improving the comprehensiveness of the narrative report content by taking into account feedback, so as to make them more informative, enable better-quality monitoring of the activities and evaluation of the project effects.

The following table gives an overview of the summarized results of the evaluated success in the implementation of individual requirements stipulated in the GOM, i.e. the evaluations of individual aspects relevant to successful implementation of the Grant Scheme. **The appendices provide the justification of the evaluation.**

**Table:** **Summarized results of aspect evaluation – Merošina**

| **EVALUATION OF THE REALISATION OF THE ASPECTS RELEVANT TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANT SCHEME** | |
| --- | --- |
| **EVALUATION ASPECT** | **EVALUATION**[[13]](#footnote-13) |
| The degree of the challenge posed by setting up an adequate intersectoral local team – inclusion and participation of relevant partner organisations/institutions and the quality assessment of coordination and cooperation | **An adequate team was set up which faces minor challenges in its work** |
| Ability of LGS to subsidize or co-finance the Grant Scheme with 5-10% | **Not applicable** |
| Existence of overall LSG capacities for successful implementation of the Grant Scheme | **Capacities need to be built further** |
| Quality of the information process – assessment of information availability and comprehensiveness during the application process | **Partly positive** |
| Quality of provided support in the process of project application/proposal creation | **Positive** |
| Degree of challenge in project proposal creation for LSG itself | **The project proposal creation process was partly challenging** |
| Adherence to procedures in the process of evaluation and selection of project proposals | **The procedures were fully adhered to** |
| The general evaluation of the project proposal quality (the quality of the problem description, harmonization of all key elements in the project proposal form, the quality and comprehensiveness of the planned activities | **The project proposal meets the criteria** |
| Concluding the contractual arrangement | **Proceeded smoothly and in line with the procedures** |
| Providing technical support in the grant management procedure as stipulated in the Grant Operations Manual | **Support was provided and evaluated**  **as adequate** |
| The procurement procedures carried out by the implementing entities are realised in line with the procedures and the plan. | **Yes** |
| Financial management and reporting is carried out in accordance with the procedures and the planned dynamics | **Yes** |
| Reporting on the realisation of project activities is timely and high quality | **All narrative reports were submitted and they were of high quality** |
| Existence of examples of public presentation/announcement of project activities and good practice examples to general public | **There is a small number of examples and they are partly comprehensive and informative** |
| The monitoring process of project activities is carried out continuously and constitutes a good basis for project activities improvement and evaluation | **Partly** |
| The presence of the challenges potentially leading to the termination of the Contract | **The arising challenges were successfully overcome** |

### 3.7.3. Progress analysis of service improvement at local level

**Progress evaluation in the realisation of program activities.** Progress in the realisation of program activities is not in compliance with the activity realisation plan due to the delay in transferring financial funds (the funds were transferred to the NGO account in January 2020) as well as the unforeseen external factor (the pandemic).As the project representatives state, it took some time to win the parents’ trust and develop their interest in getting involved in the project, and that is why the targeted number of parents and children, as well as the number of the environments where project activities are realised, is considered to be too ambitious. On the other hand, it at the same time points to the significance of realising overall project activities. Having in mind repeated worsening of the epidemiological situation at the moment of making this evaluation, as well as the two-year project period, it is necessary to devise alternative solutions if the realisation of all activities is impossible (primarily, mobile parenting schools and the team for house visits which have not been realised so far).

**Table:** **Progress evaluation in relation to four general goals – Merošina**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **General goal** | **Progress evaluation** |
| **Improved approach to preschool institutions for children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Inclusion in the project constitutes continued efforts of the PI to increase the inclusion of the children in line with the requirements. Before the beginning of the project, the PI established the work of 6 groups of half-day program in order to address the families’ needs, and this project envisages further increase in the number of children from vulnerable groups by the targeted 20%. In relation to the planned number of 200 children, 63 children have been involved, mostly in a regular manner, in project activities in 6 environments so far. According to the parents, including their children was a very important and useful experience and they would like their children to be able to attend workshops and the kindergarten more frequently. Moreover, the parents point out that in different villages there is also a number of children with disabilities who would like to be included in PE, but no facilities provide adequate conditions. In that respect, it is planned to ensure conditions for placing the access ramp at the PI level and with the LSG support, which was also encouraged by this project realisation. As a result of the proactive approach of the PI and LSG, within other initiatives, a van was provided to support children and parents in their access to PE services, because the settlements within the municipality are scattered. The van was also provided for the purpose of realising the project activities. The project activity holders think that overall activities have contributed most to the achievement of this goal, although there is concern that the targeted number of children will not be reached. |
| **Promoting fairness and equal opportunities for the education and development of children from socially and economically vulnerable groups** | Although certain progress was made within this goal, it is the result of the activity realisation only within the third and fourth quarters. These activities refer to the workshops organised for children (22) and parents (22) with different topics. The contribution to this, just as the previous goal, was made by the workshops regarding the importance of PE and informing the parents about the manner of enrolment and procedures of application and exercise of the right to free-of-charge services within the PE system. The reports on the realisation of overall activities with the children, as well as the evaluations of the parents and teachers show the children’s satisfaction, their gaining of new knowledge and development of positive changes in the children’s behaviour and socialization, as well as acceptance of the kindergarten environment as particularly important, interesting and encouraging. Therefore it may be concluded that the selected model of learning through play, which is centred on the symbolic child’s play, achieves expected effects in cognitive, social and emotional areas, but also in the area of motivation, and they positively affect the overall personality development of the included children. In the further project it is necessary to intensify the realisation of these activities and increase inclusion of children. |
| **Providing support to families in the improvement of parenting skills** | Greatest deviations from the activity plan exist within this goal. The realised activities refer to the thematic workshops with the parents within the PI. These workshops covered a broad spectre of topics in relation to upbringing and styles of upbringing, communication, children’s adaptation to the kindergarten environment, conflict resolution, family relations, importance of children’s play, importance of reading with children, newborn care and nursing etc. The concept is that the workshops have an introductory lecturing part with the room left for exchanging problems, experiences, potential solutions etc. among participants through a guided discussion. The parents who participated in the interviews say that they found the workshops interesting, and they distinguish as particularly useful those workshops dealing with styles of upbringing and communication. The activities that remained unrealised but can be considered particularly important for the achievement of the expected results refer to: the functioning of the established mobile parenting team and the team for house visits (they failed to be realised due to the pandemic and, to that end, work overload of the HC representatives), as well as the realisation of TV programs intended for the families of the children from their birth to the age of 6.5, with a special emphasis on the families from deprived and vulnerable social groups, with the topics of the importance of early development and promotion of children’s inclusion in the kindergarten as the best place for their growing up. |
| **Strengthening institutional and organisational capacities at local level for providing services to children and families from vulnerable groups** | The achieved strengthening of capacities of the involved institutions and organisations is based on the established cooperation, new professional experiences and improved mechanisms and channels of communication, as well as the offer of more diverse and new forms of activities for children and parents, which was contributed by the engagement of all the partners, as well as support in the project realisation by the PI Director and the HC Director. Moreover, the spatial capacities were improved in different environments, and it was particularly important to refurbish the premises within the school facilities which were neglected, and to resolve the problem of the sanitary installations and toilets. Better conditions for working with the children and parents were ensured efficiently and in line with the plan, and only in the realisation of these activities there were no visible deviations from the plan. Other forms of activities were not envisaged by the project at all. Here it is very important to note that in this environment there is lack of highly qualified and experienced staff for realising project activities of this type, so the additional professional experience of the project activity holders may be considered significant for the achievement of this goal. |

**User satisfaction – parent perspective.** The overall answers of the parents point to their satisfaction with project activities, as well as their understanding of the importance of children’s early development and enrolment in kindergartens. According to them, their children gladly go to the kindergarten and evidently show greater curiosity and desire to continue dealing with the activities at home and involving their younger siblings, along with positive changes in their behaviour and gaining new knowledge. As an additional benefit they emphasize the fact that the children have made new friendships. Furthermore, the parents say that they are satisfied with the attitude of the teachers and workshoppers and that the children often mention them and it is thanks to them that the children like attending the workshops. The parents’ answers also indicate their appreciation for getting feedback from the teachers about the children’s behaviour and progress, whereas the teachers also point to their children’s talents they were not aware of previously. Some interviewees state that, based on the overall experiences so far, they would like to enrol all their children in the kindergarten. One mother says that “she used to think it was better for her to take care of the child since she was not employed”, and the other one states that “she will try to enrol her child in the kindergarten because, based on her assessment, it would be better for the child to attend the kindergarten than to be looked after by the grandparents. As for the workshops they participated in, they find all the topics interesting, and as a particularly useful experience they distinguish new knowledge or improved knowledge in relation to upbringing styles and importance of communication, as well as the opportunity to exchange experiences about the problems in upbringing the children encountered by other parents as well. Some interviewees state that they exchanged certain findings from the workshops with other adult members of their families and with their friends. Several mothers say that they have tried different forms of communication and realised the importance of patience while recognizing positive changes in their relationship with the children. All the parents positively assess the improved conditions in the kindergartens, but also point to the need for their further improvement and the acquisition of new and more diverse didactic materials and toys. It is important to note that the interviewees expressed a positive opinion about being involved in the activities which have not been realised yet and refer to the mobile parenting school and house visits of the teams, adding that they would like to take part in them.

**Activity observation results.** There was no activity observation due to the epidemiological situation, while there no recording of the activities has been practised in the project realisation so far. The examined work plans of the teachers and workshoppers and the reports from the workshops with the parents and children, as well as the photographs and children’s products indicate that the workshops were effective because the children were ensured a proactive approach in the learning process through models of learning through play. In addition, it may be concluded that the workshops had a positive effect on the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development. The reports from the workshops with the parents show a broad spectre of the realised topics (they referred to: importance of children’s play and reading with children, proper communication, positive parenting skills without punishment, importance of the kindergarten for the children’s growth and development, children’s hygiene and nutrition, newborn care etc.) and the parents’ active participation and established relationship of trust. The evaluations made on the basis of the documentation analysis were also confirmed within the interviews with the project activity holders and parents.

**Identification of good practice examples.** The conceptualization itself and the experiences of the project activity holders and end users indicate that the program of learning through play, which positions symbolic play as a central activity, contributes to cognitive, social, emotional and motivational progress of the children, thus ensuring the children’s proactive attitude to learning. Having in mind that the implementers’ reports and the parents’ statements also indicate that the parents spontaneously adopt and try to apply some elements at home, the program has the potential to become a good practice example. On the other hand, since other key activities within this project have not been realised, no significant step forward is perceived in relation to the overall examples of project activities in other environments, although the actually realised ones were programmed in a high-quality manner and successfully applied.

### 3.7.4. Recommendations for project improvement and sustainability

Recommendations for the continuity and sustainability of the project, activities and effects are as follows:

* In the following period it is recommended to continue connecting the children from vulnerable groups with other children in order to create a more inclusive environment, as well as to put a greater emphasis on ensuring support and conditions of including children with developmental disabilities in line with the needs stated by some parents.
* It is necessary to assess in a timely manner the possibility of starting the realisation of the mobile parenting school and organising house visits for the purpose of advising related to children’s early development and encouragement of early development, with a special focus on supporting the families with children with developmental disabilities, and intensive realisation of these activities. More attention should be dedicated to the programming and operationalisation process of these activities. In case the realisation of these activities is assessed as still impossible, it is necessary to devise other activities in which HC and SWC would participate and which would contribute to the achievement of the expected results. Here it is important to have in mind that the realisation of these activities was possible in other environments, at least to a certain extent, so the representatives of this project can address the representatives of other projects for the purpose of exchanging experiences.
* If the pandemic-induced situation continues, it is necessary to redefine the project activities plan and devise alternative ways of communication with the parents and children in order to ensure greater compliance between the planned and the actual number of included children and parents, particularly having in mind the two-year project period.
* It is recommended to monitor the effects of the activities and not only of the realisation itself, as well as to make adjustments based on the evaluation of effects and experiences to date.
* The project sustainability should be ensured through an intersectoral agreement (cooperation protocol) which would exceed the length of the project. In addition, it is necessary to devise a joint approach and initiative for ensuring necessary personnel, financial and other conditions for continued realisation of the most effective and relevant activities after the completion of the project.
* Moreover, it is recommended that all the partner institutions and organisations should devise and undertake the joint initiative for incorporating key and most effective activities in the Local Action Plan for children, the Local Action Plan for improving the position of Roma and other strategic documents at the level of the municipality, for the purpose of ensuring sustainability.
* It is necessary to improve the narrative reporting process since, although it includes all the forms and envisaged structural elements, the information contained does not offer a comprehensive picture of the realised activities, their success, key challenges and, to that end, necessary adjustments.

# 4. General Conclusion and Recommendations

The total evaluated output shows that the performance of partners in local intersectoral teams in the course of the implementation of local projects has brought about various expected changes, in line with the specific needs of children and families from the most vulnerable social groups. All the local intersectoral teams have made a breakthrough from the phase of problem identification and analyses towards operationalisation and successful implementation of the diverse range of activities aimed at providing holistic preschool services. The value of the total output in the course of projects implementation so far should be considered in the context of the baseline situation in the area of social care for children and preschool education (SCCPE) subsystem, which is still characterised by the lack of conceptual and legal infrastructure that would lead to higher functionality and accurate definition of mechanisms and clear guidelines, which would lead to better coordination of different sectors of the system. In that respect, it is important to mention that the implemented local project have contributed to strengthening the capacities and professional competencies of local self-government (LSGs) and their partner organisations and institutions, and to the improvement of the existing communication and cooperation channels and mechanisms, which can be seen as especially significant for the sustainability of project interventions. To this effect, it is important to stress highly positive assessment of the relevance of local projects subjected to the evaluation, as well as the identification of good practice examples in certain communities both in the fields of establishing good communication and cooperation methods and mechanisms within local teams, and in the field of realisation of program activities.

The projections of representatives of the ECEC project team and the local intersectoral teams are in harmony when it comes to the key results and challenges in the implementation of local projects, in line with the overall design of the Grant Scheme stipulated in the key project document – the Grant Operations Manual (GOM).

Two key factors led to the reduction of local projects implementation effectiveness. The first factor has to do with the speed of implementation of certain key technical and financial procedures. In that respect, the following key challenges were identified: the process of opening designated bank accounts; the deposition of financial means to the accounts; the level of jurisdiction in the cities; following the procurement procedures in line with the requirements of the World Bank; and the insufficient understanding of financial accounting and budgetary operations by the implementing entities. Opening of designated bank accounts and the delay of money transfer to those accounts (i.e. deposition of the approved grant sums to the implementing entities’ designated accounts) were further aggravated by the external factor in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic, which negatively affected the achievement of results both in terms of the estimated timeline and the expected overall progress.

Although the overall design of the Grant Scheme has been considered complex (before all by the representatives of LSGs and local intersectoral teams), the experiences so far has been that its successful and consistent implementation, although delayed and belated in certain LSGs, is possible and achievable. The challenges arising during its implementation could not have been identified at the moment of designing this comprehensive, generally well-conceived, and positively assessed document, nor later on, by implementing entities. Moreover, in a broader context, it is important to note that this is the first project supported by the World Bank in which the Central Fiduciary Unit (CFU) involved operates as a separate implementing entity from the Project Management Unit (PMU) established by the relevant ministry. **Despite the identified challenges, evaluation results point to the successful response to challenges in all the communities, before all owing to active and wholehearted support by the PMU, the exceptional professionalism and effort of Grant Coordinator and Grant Assistant, their flexible approach and the use of contract amendment mechanism.**

Identification of challenges and issues and the systematic approach to overcoming and settling them is perceived as an important resource for further implementation of the project (before all, in Grant Scheme Cycle Two), as well as for the future World Bank projects dealing with the same or different matters.

Although at the moment of completing this evaluation report the said challenges were successfully responded to, the following is recommended as regards the identified potential for improvement of the already successfully applied solutions:

* Although the **information dissemination process** within the Grant Scheme is mostly positively assessed, primarily thanks to the continual additional support of the PMU (especially the Grant Coordinator and the Grant Assistant) and the preparation of the additional written instructions, there is still room for its improvement at the conceptual level. Namely, the initial training in all projected segments should be more comprehensive. It is also recommended to hold periodical thematic online info sessions at the end of each quarter intended for all First Cycle LSGs in the following three key areas – financial, procedural and technical issues; the quality of financial and especially narrative reporting; and the support towards further progress in the implementation of the program activities. Such systematic approach would reduce the workload on the PMU, and enable horizontal learning and the exchange of experience between local intersectoral teams, bearing in mind that the evaluation findings point to quite similar range of challenges regardless of the community in which projects are implemented.
* Projected procedures in the **application, evaluation and approval** process regarding local projects were performed in line with the overall requirements stipulated in project documents and/or the Grant Operations Manual. The Grant Approval Committee (GAC) greatly contributed to the quality of the proposed and approved local projects and in that respect, all the steps were properly taken and procedures followed. On the other hand, evaluation findings show that only five LSGs followed the recommendation to hire a mentor in the course of project proposal preparation, although such cooperation greatly added to the quality of their project proposals according to all defined criteria. The evaluation results correspond to the projections made by GAC and show that in the course of project proposals preparation the local teams were met with the following challenging segment: the need for more specific and operational definition of issues based on precise quantitative and qualitative data, the definition of indicators in line with the SMART methodology, the development of proper framework for monitoring and identifying risks and recognising solutions regarding the sustainability of the project intervention.
* The largest number of the above-mentioned issues arose in the course of **managing the Grant Scheme**, resulting in the following recommendations:
* In addition to the already prepared written instructions for financial reporting, it is recommended to prepare a document with frequently asked questions or difficulties perceived in following procedures defined in GOM that different implementing entities could use as further support.
* Although the implementing entities managed to complete the procedure of opening designated accounts with the Treasury Administration, it would be beneficial to future projects to prepare a detailed written instruction for opening designated accounts, with the list of steps each involved institution is to take, bearing in mind different procedures for different institutions/organisations.
* It is recommended that the procurement procedures be additionally simplified, especially for small procurement values and in small communities.
* The table for financial reporting should be improved or the implementing entities should be asked to enter data in the table for final reporting in phases, so as to enable monitoring of the financial status of their projects by individual items.
* As an answer to the current situation, it is necessary to introduce in the narrative reports the requirements for the analysis of risks and their prevention plan, as well as for the projection of the effectiveness of project activities. Also, the need has been identified for the improvement of the quality of content of the narrative report, to make the reports more informative and comprehensive, by continually giving feedback. This would greatly contribute to better monitoring of results and recommending corrective measures.
* The established monitoring system in its core serves rather as the verification mechanism of the implemented activities and monitoring the numerical indicators of the output regarding the access of children and parents to PE instead of being necessarily developmental in character. Moreover, It is also important to point out that the monitoring plan, at the level of individual projects, and its consistent implementation are one of the key deficiencies perceived. Generally speaking, the established monitoring process aimed at being a proper base for the improvement of project activities and carrying out corrective activities, would greatly benefit from the unused mentoring support in the course of the project implementation.

Total evaluation findings show that all evaluated local project have made progress regarding all four general goals of the intervention. Although first two quarters of implementation were marked by considerable discrepancies against the projected implementation plan (due to the above-mentioned factors), greater progress towards the projected goals has been achieved subsequently. Generally speaking, **the share of the activities carried out greatly exceeds the share of the unrealised activities**, although further continuation of successful project implementation is once again endangered by the current epidemiological situation. It is vital to point out that in all evaluated local projects either good practice examples were perceived or their potential to turn into ones in the course of their implementation.

Bearing in mind the total evaluation findings, **the following recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the project activities and the sustainability of local projects were communicated:**

* Since the project activities in all communities were once again halted as of late November, and bearing in mind the uncertainty of future epidemiological situation, the future support should focus on the development of alternative scenarios for the realisation of project activities and the exchange of the proposed solutions among all the implementing entities, as well as on the adjustment of the project activities plan (which may also require budget adjustment).
* Due to the prolonged duration of this unpredicted external factor, it is recommended that the duration of local projects be extended by six months.
* In order to achieve further progress and to exchange experience and various good practice examples as regard the program activities, it is recommended that periodical thematic horizontal exchanges between all local intersectoral teams be introduced and organised by PMU. Since the organisation of online horizontal exchange would not incur financial investment, it is recommended that it be realised in such way. If there are means, it is recommended to offer both financial and conceptual support for further improvement of the horizontal exchange process by means of mutual visits in line with the prepared plan of visits.
* In the course of further implementation of local projects, greater emphasis should be put on ensuring visibility of achieved project, their documentation at the project team level and their dissemination in the local community.
* At the level of local intersectoral teams, it is necessary to introduce and/or put greater emphasis on the process of joint analysis and reflection of local intersectoral team members so as to assess the effectiveness of project activities and their continuing improvement, as well as sharing the experience with partner organisations and institutions in order to improve the sustainability of overall project interventions.
* In certain communities, the need has been identified for more equal engagement of certain partner institutions and organisations in the implementation of unrealised activities, which should be given priority.
* In the further implementation of the project, more attention is to be paid to the prevention of segregationist approach by including other children in project activities, as well as to the increased access of children with disabilities, whose families should be offered greater support.
* There is need for the improvement of visibility of project activities and results so as to improve the access for children and their families, and also to contribute to the sustainability of project interventions
* In the following period, special attention should be paid to the issue of sustainability of project interventions and the established mechanisms, means and channels of communications and cooperation. To that end, it is recommended that intersectoral cooperation protocols be signed, and also that the most important and the most effective project activities intended for vulnerable children and their families be included in local strategic documents, and also common initiatives prepared with the view to securing additional sources of financing. To that end, MoESTD can offer support to local initiatives through consultation and data sharing.

# APPENDICES

## I Overview of the realised sample of respondents

At the beginning a review is presented containing. the number of respondents by large groups of respondents (this number does not include children from the observed activities) which is 119. The following tables provide an overview of respondents who participated in the evaluation process as representatives of key project bodies and respondents from each of the seven evaluated local projects in seven selected local self-government units.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Presentation of the realized sample of respondents by large groups | |
| Group of respondents | Number of respondents |
| Key project bodies | 13 |
| LSG Aleksinac | 13 |
| LSG Prokuplje | 13 |
| LSG Novi Sad | 19 |
| LSG Beograd - Palilula | 15 |
| LSG Varvarin | 15 |
| LSG Kraljevo | 16 |
| LSG Merošina | 15 |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS: 119 | |

### 1.1. Respondents from key project bodies

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| RESPONDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS AS MEMBERS OF THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT | |
| Name and surname | Position in the Project |
| 1. Biljana Krasavac | Director of the Project |
| 1. Vesna Marković | Coordinator of Project component 3 |
| 1. Biljana Kojović | Coordinator of Project component 2 |
| 1. Bojan Komnenović | Technical assistant of the Project |
| 1. Sanja Štrbac Musmar | Grant coordinator of sub-component 3.2. |
| 1. Uroš Tošić | Technical assistant of sub-component 3.2. |
| RESPONDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS AS MEMBERS OF THE GRANT APPROVAL COMMITTEE | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Vesna Šaponjić | Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development |
| 1. Marija Balendžada | Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development |
| 1. Dušica Čolaković | PI “Radosno detinjstvo” |
| Sanja Štrbac Musmar | Project |
| Uroš Tošić | Project |
| RESPONDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS AS MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL FIDUCIARY UNIT | |
| Name and surname | Position in the Project |
| 1. Ljiljana Krejović | Member of CFU |
| 1. Ljiljana Džuver | Member of CFU |
| 1. Snežana Jovanović | Member of CFU |
| Sanja Štrbac Musmar | Grant coordinator of sub-component 3.2. |
| Uroš Tošić | Technical assistant to sub-component 3.2. |
| RESPONDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS AS REPRESENTATIVES OF MoESTD | |
| 1. Gordana Kosanović | Special advisor |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS: 13 | |

### 1.2. Overview of respondents of sampled LSGs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LSG: ALEKSINAC | |
| Members of the Local intersectoral team | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Snežana Živadinović | NGO Društvo za razvoj kreativnosti (Project Coordinator) |
| 2. Aleksandra Stevanović | NGO Društvo za razvoj kreativnosti |
| 3. Snežana Nešić | Municipality of Aleksinac |
| 4. Violeta Popović | PI „Lane“ |
| 5. Valentina Petrović | PI „Lane“ |
| 6. Nevenka Živadinović | PI „Lane“ |
| 7. Biljana Jelenić | SWC |
| 8. Javorka Zagorac | HC |
| 9. Ivana Osmanović | NGO Human |
| Parents | |
| 1. Aleksandra Mitić | |
| 2. Danijel Sajić | |
| 3. Jelena Ružić | |
| 4. Slađana Rakić | |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS:13 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LSG: PROKUPLJE | |
| Members of the Local intersectoral team | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Katarina Veljović | City of Prokuplje |
| 2. Uglješa Kostić | City of Prokuplje |
| 3. Vesna Jovanović | PI „Neven“ |
| 4. Zorica Radonjić | PI „Neven“ |
| 5. Miodrag Gubijan | NGO Inkluzija |
| 6. Aleksandra Marković | NGO Inkluzija |
| 7. Ivica Krstović | NGO Inkluzija (Project Coordinator) |
| Parents | |
| 1. Ivana Stojanović (Donja Stražava) | |
| 2. Jovana Pavlović (Donja Stražava) | |
| 3. Miloš Stojanović (Donja Stražava) | |
| 4. Tijana Lović (Mala Plana) | |
| 5. Dragana Janićijević (Mala Plana) | |
| 6. Veljko Nedeljović (Mala Plana) | |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS:13 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LSG: NOVI SAD | |
| Members of the Local intersectoral team | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Svetlana Rakić | City Administration for Social and Child Protection (Project Coordinator) |
| 2. Milana Marković | City Administration for Social and Child Protection |
| 3. Tatjana Lazor Obradović | NGO Centar za proizvodnju znanja i veština |
| 4. Vesna Cvjetanović | NGO Centar za proizvodnju znanja i veština |
| 5. Bojana Vukalović | HC |
| 6. Ružica Zećirović Srbljin | SWC |
| 7. Marina Koprivica | PI „Radosno detinjstvo“ |
| 8. Jasenka Drača | PI „Radosno detinjstvo“ |
| 9. Aleksandra Todorović Nešić | Primary and Secondary Education School with Student Accommodation „Milan Petrović“ |
| 10. Vlatka Vidić | NGO Centar za proizvodnju znanja i veština |
| Parents | |
| 1. Kovači Ruždi | |
| 2. Ademi Kabir | |
| 3. Spasoli Šaip | |
| 4. Durmiši Merita | |
| 5. Osmani Emina | |
| 6. Varga Marika | |
| 7. Varga Julijana | |
| 8. Prekadini Šireta | |
| 9. Isljami Drita | |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS: 19 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LSG: PALILULA (BEOGRAD) | |
| Members of the Local intersectoral team | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Muhmed Osmani | Municipality of Palilula |
| 2. Zorica Cmolić | PI „Boško Buha“ (Project Coordinator) |
| 3. Marija Milovanovic | PI „Boško Buha“ |
| 5. Novaković Mirjana | PI „Boško Buha“ |
| 6. Nataša Đukić | PI „Boško Buha“ |
| 7. Dragana Milošević | PI „Boško Buha“ |
| 8. Milka Pantović | PI „Boško Buha“ |
| 9. Darko Perašević | PI „Boško Buha“ |
| 10. Snežana Janić | SWC |
| Parents | |
| 1. Hamiš Variša | |
| 2. Naroda Čep | |
| 3. Liljana Agušaj | |
| 4. Žiža Beća | |
| 5. Liljana Bošnjaković | |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS: 15 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LSG: VARVARIN | |
| Members of the Local intersectoral team | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Dejan Milanović | Municipality of Varvarin |
| 2. Dragana Savić | PI „Naša Radost“ |
| 3. Vanja Nikolić | Daycare for children, young people and adults with developmental disabilities |
| 4. Marija Nikolić | PI (newly-established educational group in Obrež) |
| 5. Gabrijela Glišić | PI (newly-established educational group in Bačina) |
| 6. Svetlana Nešić | PI „Naša Radost“ |
| 7. Marija Jovanović | Municipality of Varvarin (Project Coordinator) |
| 8. Svetlana Aleksić | Pedagogical and Psychological Society |
| 9. Ivanka Milenković | SWC |
| 10. Sonja Živković | HC |
| Parents | |
| 1. Rade Petrović | |
| 2. Jelena Čolaković | |
| 3. Tijana Marinković | |
| 4. Nevena Popović | |
| 5. Sandra Mojsilović | |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS:15 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LSG: KRALJEVO | |
| Members of the Local intersectoral team | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Marija Jovanović Đusić | PI „Olga Jovičić Rita" (Project Coordinator) |
| 2. Aleksandar Cvetković | City of Kraljevo (City council) |
| 3. Mirjana Prodanović | Kraljevo City administration |
| 4. Ivana Janković | Kraljevo City administration |
| 5. Jelena Goljić | PI „Olga Jovičić Rita" |
| 6. Milica Jelić | Kraljevo City Centre for Local Services |
| 7. Sonja Jaćović | SWC |
| 8. Zoran Petrović | NGO Ruke prijateljstva |
| 9. Marijana Petrović | PI „Olga Jovičić Rita" |
| 10. Marija Dragičević | PI „Olga Jovičić Rita" |
| Partents | |
| 1. Nemanja Dragićević | |
| 2. Jelena Sekulić | |
| 3. Tanja Trifunović | |
| 4. Danijela Đorđević | |
| 5. Demir Gaši | |
| 6. Dragana Nikolić | |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS: 16 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| LSG: MEROŠINA | |
| Members of the Local intersectoral team | |
| Name and surname | Name of institution/organisation |
| 1. Vesna Ivković | PI “Poletarac” |
| 2. Snežana Dinić | Municipality of Merošina |
| 3. Milena Jocić | PI „Poletarac“ (Project Coordinator) |
| 4. Emilija Veljković | SWC |
| 5. Ristić Milica | HC |
| 6. Ratka Cvijanović | HC |
| 7. Ivica Krstović | NGO Inkluzija danas |
| 8. Miodrag Grubijan | NGO Inkluzija danas |
| Parents | |
| 1. Jelena Majer | |
| 2. Aleksandra Stanković | |
| 3. Kristina Ristić | |
| 4. Nataša Mladenović | |
| 5. Jasmina Stemanović Ramić | |
| 6. Milena Cvetković | |
| 7. Milijana Selimanović | |
| TOTAL NUBER OF RESPONDENTS: 15 | |

## II Justification of evaluation findings and activity observation results

In separate document (II) are given tables with summed evaluation findings and activity observation results for each of the evaluated projects.

### Aleksinac

### Prokuplje

### Novi Sad

### Palilula (Beograd)

### Varvarin

### Kraljevo

### Merošina

## III Further details about the perspective of the respondents from key project bodies

Given that the evaluation process included representatives of key project bodies, a separate document (III) provides a detailed overview of their perspectives on both development projects and many processes in grant programs, which is useful for all other local development projects (since the perspective of respondents from key project bodies is not only for evaluated projects).

## IV Set of research instruments

1. Guide for a group interview with the representatives of the Project Management Unit
2. Guide for a group interview with the representatives of the Grant Approval Committee
3. Guide for a group interview with the representatives of the Central Fiduciary Unit
4. Guide for a group interview with the main representative of the MoESTD
5. Guide for a group interview with the project coordinator and the representative of the LSG
6. Guide for a group interview with the local intersectoral team
7. Guide for a group interview with the project representative in charge of financial matters
8. Guide for a group interview with parents
9. Check list for project activity observation
10. Reporting form based on the overall evaluation results

1. This index was made for project purposes before announcing the public invitation and it takes into account various relevant criteria in terms of the evaluation of the requirements of individual communities for project support. Further details about this composite index are given in the following sections. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Project provides grants for Cycle Two as well, while the Cycle Two projects will be the subject of the evaluation in the second half of 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The division into the regions is based on the geographical distribution of LGSs and it was arbitrarily determined, meaning that it did not reflect the official district division in the Republic of Serbia (RS) or the division used by the MoESTD when determining the territories of school administrations. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The socio-economic profile of LSGs, inclusion of children in PE and the number of children from vulnerable social groups are at the same time the criteria present in the eligibility index of LSGs and will not be described here in full detail, but LGSs were ranked according to it as shown in the table below – LSGs/city municipalities are represented by that order in each region. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The data about the population are official data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, available in the data base: <http://devinfo.stat.gov.rs> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Key:

   Green = desirable situation,

   Blue = adequate situation, but there is room for improvement,

   Red = dominant need for improvement,

   Yellow = aspect evaluation is not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Key:

   Green = desirable situation,

   Blue = adequate situation, but there is room for improvement,

   Red = dominant need for improvement,

   Yellow = aspect evaluation is not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The organisation has not been formally established, but there is a signed agreement on the cooperation between the network members. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Key:

   Green = desirable situation,

   Blue = adequate situation, but there is room for improvement,

   Red = dominant need for improvement,

   Yellow = aspect evaluation is not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Key:

    Green = desirable situation,

    Blue = adequate situation, but there is room for improvement,

    Red = dominant need for improvement,

    Yellow = aspect evaluation is not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Key:

    Green = desirable situation,

    Blue = adequate situation, but there is room for improvement,

    Red = dominant need for improvement,

    Yellow = aspect evaluation is not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Key:

    Green = desirable situation,

    Blue = adequate situation, but there is room for improvement,

    Red = dominant need for improvement,

    Yellow = aspect evaluation is not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Key:

    Green = desirable situation,

    Blue = adequate situation, but there is room for improvement,

    Red = dominant need for improvement,

    Yellow = aspect evaluation is not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)