**The cultural dimension of the right to education**

**Call for submissions for the 2020 HRC report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education**

1. ***Please provide information on how, in your country, the issue of respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person is reflected in school curricula (legislative, institutional and policy framework, and implementation)***

In the recent years Albania has made significant progress in relation to the education sector. Still many gaps are to be bridged in the future reforms. According to the article 10 of the Law on Pre-University Education System in The Republic of Albania:

* The persons, belonging to national minorities, shall be provided the opportunity to learn and be taught in their mother tongue, to learn their history and culture in accordance to the teaching plans and syllabuses.
* The students of the national minorities shall be ensured the conditions to learn the Albanian language and get to know the Albanian history and culture, to the effect of ensuring the active and equal participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life in the Republic of Albania.

Article 44 of the aforementioned Law, states that “The curriculum shall enshrine the principle of integration among the learning fields and subjects.

The education system in Albania, through the school curricula, ensures in principle that all children are included and taught, regardless of their backgrounds, such as ethnic or economic. The curricula include democratic citizenship education in the pre-university education.

In April 2017, the Albanian government adopted the National Agenda for Children’s Rights (2017-2020) confirming its commitment for violence-free schools (MMSR, 2017). In addition, the Agenda foresees a range of activities to improve access to schools and prevent the dropout of vulnerable groups.

1. ***Please provide information on how, in your country, the issue of respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person is taken into account in the organization of the school system and schools (legislative, institutional and policy framework, and implementation)***

The Pre-University Education Law, as amended in 2018, abolishes the State Education Inspectorate in its current form and provides for the establishment of an institution responsible for quality assurance in the Pre-University Education. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (AQAPUE) was established in February 2019 as effective merger of State Education Inspectorate and the Institute for Development of Education.

School Governance, even though there is no clear definition in the legal documents, can be described as an active involvement and cooperation of different bodies/structures and stakeholders in the school management, improvement and democratization process. Effective school governance ensures an active and meaningful participation of different stakeholders including teachers, parents and students through different mechanisms and especially through their representative structures and other significant decision-making bodies, such as the School Board. However, in spite of various efforts and continuous work such structures are still weak and do not yet possess the required capacity to play their significant role in a comprehensive school development, improvement and democratization process.

The Memorandum of Understanding, signed between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Sport on 25.01.2016, expresses the will to promote cultural awareness, expression, creativity and diversity, particularly to the young generation. The programme "Education through culture" realizes the cultural education for the young generation, in order for them to contribute in a general and sustainable growth of the country. Textbooks in minority languages have been made available for the Greek and Macedonian minority.

According to the article 10 of the Law On Pre-University Education System in The Republic of Albania the pre-university educational system aims at training every individual to be aware of the family, society and nation, and specifically:

* to respect, protect the national identity and develop the cultural heritage;
* to be developed in the ethical, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic aspect, be
* able to think independently, critically and creatively, to be adjusted to the
* changes, have self-trust and cooperation spirit, be able to provide his assistance
* for the welfare, progress, freedom and democracy;
* to be deeply convinced that justice, peace, harmony, cooperation and respect for
* others are high human values;
* to respect the traditions of other peoples;
* to be aware for meeting his responsibilities for the environmental protection.

1. ***Please clarify to what extent the measures described above relate not only to the issue of languages in education (in this regard, please briefly explain the context and provide details on the State language policy), but also to the arts, heritage, science, history, values and religions, or world views and ways of life, in all their diversity.***

Albanian is the language of schooling for the great majority of students; it is also a subject in its own right, comprising the curricular field ‘Languages and communication’ together with foreign languages. The curriculum for Albanian aims to enable students to:

* express and interpret concepts, ideas, feelings, facts and opinions in oral and written
* form;
* find, compare, analyse and assess different types of information;
* understand key features of Albanian grammar;
* make appropriate and responsible use of language in social relationships;
* understand and evaluate texts from different periods of Albanian literature

Significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve the general situation of Roma, and the education of children from the Roma and Balkan-Egyptian communities has been an important priority. Financial support has been provided to encourage improved attendance at school, and in higher education students from these communities are exempt from study fees. Romani is not a language of school instruction, but a department of Roma Language and Language Teaching opened recently at the University of Elbasan.Article 13 of the Law On Pre-University Education System in The Republic of Albania states that the fundamental competences for the entire students are:

* Communication in the mother tongue
* Communication in foreign languages
* Mathematical competences and basic competences in natural sciences and
* technology.
* digital technology.
* Competence to learn during the entire life.
* Social and civilian competences.
* Competence of initiative and entrepreneurship.
* Competence of cultural and expression training.

The aforementioned Law in the Article 15, foresees the opening of the Cultural Centers of children and they shall be complementary institutions, being under the authority of the local governance units and shall be opened upon the decision of the Council of Ministers.

The public education system provided by the state, creates the conditions and guarantees equal opportunities for all pupils as part of this system. The public education system is laic. This system is based on the Albanian tradition and is following legal norms related to the common values of contemporary education systems.

1. ***Please specify the specific and particular difficulties encountered in ensuring an inclusive and quality education that allows cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person to flourish at the same time***

The education institutions have reflected the changes and created opportunities for education for all children based on their characteristics and capacities. Still there is a need for a new conceptualization related to the work content, teaching methodology, environment adaptation, and organization and planning of the many educative elements in the process of education, in order for children to fully participate in the school community life as treasured members of it.

There are overcrowded class rooms, poor infrastructure, lack of proper transportation, discrimination and bullying from older children, school staff and parents of other children. Poor cooperation between professionals of different disciplines and between different sectors of local government, the lack of teaching materials and adjusted school programs for children coming from marginalized communities.

The educational system need to adopt an approach to training and support teachers so as to be able to manage their classes when they have pupils coming from different cultural backgrounds.

1. Have specific mechanisms been established to consult and ensure the participation of stakeholders, in particular the populations concerned and parents, for a better understanding and effectiveness of the right to education, including its cultural dimension? What place is given in this context to the voice of children?

To improve the quality of work and life in the country's schools, Ministry of Education and Sports has taken the initiative "Schools as Community Centre - A friendly school for all". Schools as community centers is a collaboration between stakeholders in the community, parents and the school, focusing on:

* supporting the development of children and youth,
* improve their achievements,
* supporting families and,
* community development.

1. What recommendations should be provided to States and other stakeholders on these issues?

Some of the recommendations:

* Promoting strong institutions and school infrastructure;
* develop and implement in-service blended learning programmes for all teachers that extend their training in the delivery of the curriculum and managing assessments;
* Recruit minority group members in the community who have the potential to support vulnerable and marginalized children and pupils from these communities;
* Increased cooperation between teachers, students and parents to improve quality of Education in Albania;
* Improvement of the quality of information for all stakeholders in education system regarding the importance of education and diversity;
* Improvements of the legal framework and the mechanisms for the prevention, protection and treatment of cases of violence in the educational system.

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