



Q10805. Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 11 August 2009

Serbia - Information on education

Point 40 on page 12 of a *World Bank* report from November 2007 notes:

“High youth unemployment (including tertiary graduates) and comparatively poor performance in international assessments of student learning, indicate that the education system is not yet providing young people with the most appropriate skills and knowledge for a modern economy” (World Bank (13 November 2007) *International Bank For Reconstruction And Development International Finance Corporation Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Country Partnership Strategy For The Republic Of Serbia For The Period Fyo8-Fy11*).

Page 37 of a paper published in December 2007 by *The Coalition of NGOs in Serbia* states:

“Serbia is last in Europe by percentage of GDP for education, which led to the following problem; In last ten years, not a single school year was finished without strikes, and that means that not a single school generation had a „normal“ school year with full number of classes” (The Coalition of NGOs in Serbia (1 December 2007) *Implementation Of The Convention On The Rights Of The Child In Serbia*).

Pages 16 and 17 of a report issued in June 2008 by the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child(UNCRC)* responding to a state party report by Serbia states in relation to education that:

- (a) The low budget allocations for the educational system as well as slow progress with regard to the implementation of the reform;
- b) The “hidden costs” of free education, inter alia for books, stationary, transportation and also for private tuition in order to compensate for the poor quality of the educational system;
- c) The many schools in need of renovation, their poor equipment and training of teachers which does not prepare them for interactive teaching methods;
- d) The incomplete enrolment, the high levels of drop-outs and the comparatively lower achievement of children belonging to vulnerable groups, including children from rural areas, children living in economic hardship and deprivation, Roma children and children from other minority groups, refugee and internally displaced children;
- e) The slow progress in the training sufficient numbers of teachers able to teach in minority languages;

- f) The marginal incorporation of human rights and child rights education in schools at all levels;
- g) The slow expansion of vocational education and training, including for children who have dropped out;
- h) The reported widespread violence in schools, particularly among students; and
- i) The quality of education and the situation of the most vulnerable groups of children” (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (6 June 2008) *Consideration Of Reports Submitted By States Parties Under Article 44 Of The Convention, Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Republic of Serbia*).

Point 4.1.9 of a report published in November 2008 by the *European Commission* states:

“Financing for the education sector is still inadequate. It represents 3.7% of GDP and is affected by rigid allocation mechanisms, insufficient funding from local governments and a lack of involvement of the business sector” (European Commission (5 November 2008) *Serbia 2008 Progress Report*).

Section 5 of the *US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices* issued in February 2009 under the heading ‘children’, states:

“While the educational system provided nine years of free, mandatory schooling, including a year before elementary school, ethnic prejudice, cultural norms, and economic distress discouraged some children, particularly Roma, from attending school. According to an August 2007 government report, 95 percent of children started elementary school on time and 76-86 percent of secondary school-age children attended school. The report noted, however, that school attendance was significantly lower among children from vulnerable groups, including Roma and poor populations. Only 14.4 percent of children in rural areas attended preschool” (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Serbia*).

Points 149 and 150 of a paper published by the *Council of Europe* in March 2009 states:

“The budget allocation for education in the Republic of Serbia is one of the lowest in Europe at approximately 3.7% of GDP, according to the Ministry of Education. This falls far short of the European average of approximately 6% of GDP. Recalling how crucial education is to the realisation of a society based on human rights, the Commissioner strongly recommends that the government increase budgetary allocation for education... Social, material or administrative obstacles to education exist for many children, especially children suffering from poverty and social exclusion, such as Roma, refugee children and children with disabilities (particularly mental and intellectual disabilities)” (Council of Europe, (11 March 2009), *Report by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, on his visit to Serbia (13-17 October 2008)*).

Under the heading 'Economy', the *World Bank* in April 2009 states:

"Poverty is also strongly correlated with the education level of the head of household, which is significant factor in Serbia where more than a third of the population has no more than a primary education" (World Bank (April 2009) *[Serbia] Country Brief*).

Page 3 of a 2009 ETF Serbia report states:

"Education and training are essential priorities for the Serbia in order to increase employment. The relevance of education is the extent to which it provides people, especially young people, with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the labour market. By this measure, Serbia's education system faces major challenges" (ETF Serbia (2009) *Serbia, Etf Country Plan 2009*).

An undated document from the *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)* states:

"Routine statistics show almost universal enrolment (97%) to primary education. However, the drop out rate in the primary school is high. Some children only enroll to first grade. Children with special needs, children from disadvantaged ethnic minorities, particularly Roma, and migrant populations, children from remote villages, isolated communities and from urban slums, and children of poor families are particularly affected" (UNICEF (undated) *Girls' Education*).

This document continues:

"Poor quality of education is reflected in students' low achievements. About 50% of students master less than 30% of essential knowledge. Teaching methods are often outdated and not student-friendly. This is raising drop out rate further" (ibid).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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