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IMPRES News

Improvement of preschool education in Serbia



Project funded by
the European Union



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Improvement of preschool education in Serbia (IMPRES) is a joint project of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia and the European Union. The project is funded by the European Union with 3,75 million EUR from the pre-accession funds. The purpose of the IMPRES project is to strengthen the conditions of preschool education for children, especially those from vulnerable groups, through improvements in the quality of preschool programmes and expansion of the capacities of preschool institutions. 15 pilot municipalities are included in the project activities - *Pozarevac-Kostolac, Petrovac na Mlavi, Arandjelovac, Leskovac, Krusevac, Razanj, Surdulica, Gadzin Han, Bela Palanka, Uzice, Tutin, Ruma, Beocin, Sabac and Mali Zvornik.*

Project is implemented by SOFRECO and its partners Early Years and Internationaler Bund. Activities started in February 2011 and will continue until January 2014.



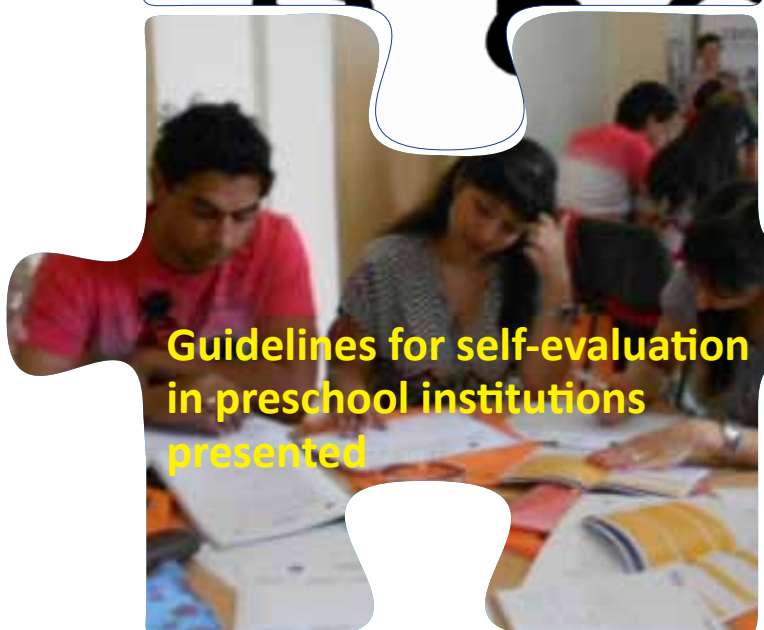
**Key project results in the
last six months**



**Last seminar for mentors
for development and
implementation of various
programmes for vulnerable
children**



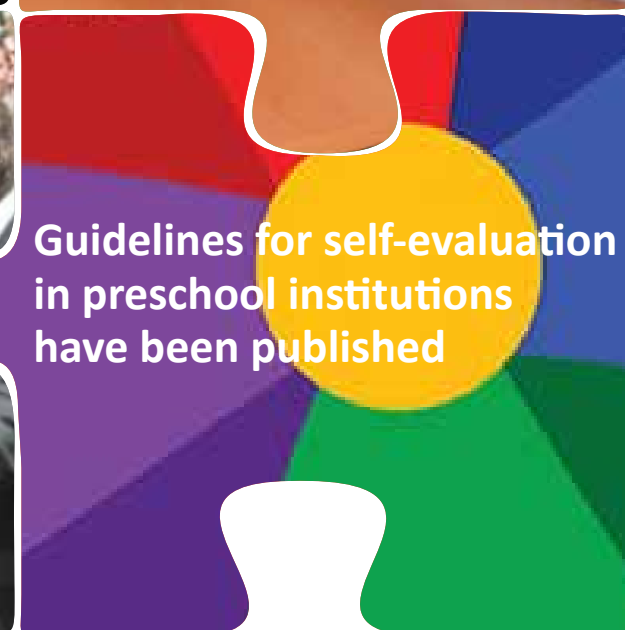
**New seminars on preschool
network**



**Guidelines for self-evaluation
in preschool institutions
presented**

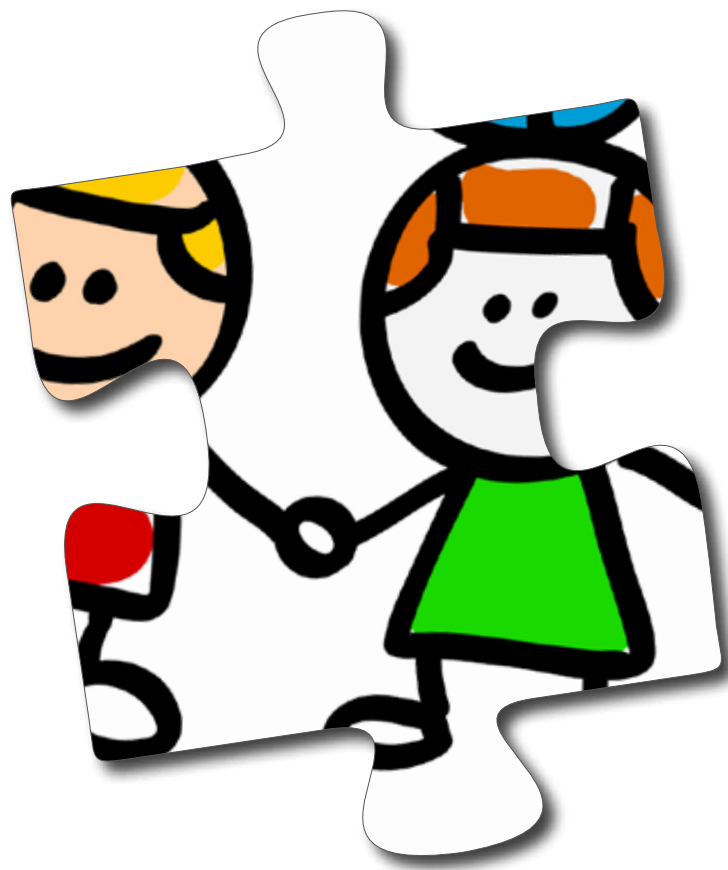


**New kindergarten opened
in Tutin**



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in preschool institutions
have been published**

You can find more information about the project on www.impres.rs
Project Team



KEY PROJECT RESULTS IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS

In this past period IMPRES project achieved the following key results:

- ✓ A good example of project cooperation and synergy between IMPRES and UNICEF's project "Kindergarten without borders - more opportunities for learning and development of young children" resulted in the development and implementation of various programmes for vulnerable children in 25 municipalities (15 for IMPRES and for 10 for Kindergarten without borders). As a result from these joint activities more than 1500 children ages 3-5.5 years previously not included in preschool benefited from these programmes and have now access to early childhood education.
- ✓ IMPRES project continued organizing and improving preschool networks with the aim to optimize the management and provision of preschool services at municipal level. A set of seminars attended by the representatives of local self-governments and preschool institutions were organized in the past period. In many of these municipalities preschool networks are now currently established and the importance of preschool networking at local level is recognized as an important step for improvement of services.
- ✓ The Guidelines for self-evaluation in preschool institutions, a first in Serbia, was developed within the project and are now published. These Guidelines were distributed to all the project's 15 pilot preschool institutions and school administrations and will be disseminated by the MoESTD to all preschools in Serbia. This Guidance stresses the importance of quality for early childhood education, as well as the understanding that good conditions for preschool practices are the ones constantly evolving, changing, improving...
- ✓ New kindergarten in Tutin was opened in late May 2013, after Sabac, Ruma and Uzice. In the coming period, 3 remaining kindergartens will be opened in Krusevac and Leskovac.

Read more about these activities ...





Last seminar for mentors for development and implementation of various programmes for vulnerable children and presentation of Manual for implementation of these programmes

Final seminar for mentors for development and implementation of various programmes of preschool education for children ages 3 – 5 was held in Belgrade on October 2/3, 2013. The event was jointly organized by IMPRES and UNICEF.

Introduction speech was given by Michel Crepon, IMPRES Team leader. Crepon stressed the efficiencies and synergies of inter-donor cooperation: 'We can express great satisfaction that even over a short period of 10 months, dedicated efforts from both teams and fruitful cooperation significantly increased access to preschool'.

The training was opened by Mr. Ljubisa Antonijevic, Assistant Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development. Antonijevic said that the Ministry provided support to the projects in developing various programmes and pointed out that in the meantime a legislative framework was developed to enable further development and improvement of these programmes in order to increase coverage of children in preschool institutions.

On behalf of UNICEF, guests were greeted by Ms Tanja Rankovic. She pointed out the importance of early childhood education and care and stressed that for 2012 in Serbia, 48 percent of children ages 3 to 5.5 were included in preschool education. Rankovic added that the implementation of this joint project was very important to UNICEF since this cooperation was carried out in areas where very few opportunities exist for vulnerable children.

This event was organized with the aim to create recommendations for the development and dissemination of successful models and programmes for children who are outside of the system and to increase coverage of children for preschool education. The two days training was attended by more than 60 preschool teachers and professionals in preschool institutions involved in the IMPRES project and project "Kindergartens without borders" as well as advisors from the school administration throughout Serbia.

The Manual for implementation of various models of preschool programmes for vulnerable children was prepared jointly by IMPRES and UNICEF projects' experts. The document offers practical solutions and experiences, advice and support to practitioners to better understand the importance of early childhood education and care. The Manual will be published by IMPRES in November.

1550 children ages 3-5.5 years were included in these special and specialized programmes and the coverage of children significantly increased by 25 % for all 25 municipalities' part of the joint project, with examples up to 103%. Development and implementation of these programmes changed the image, role and function of the preschool education and understanding that kindergarten is not only day care. Various programmes developed internal resources, increased visibility and prestige of institutions in local communities who now recognize the importance of early childhood education and not just care.

New seminars on preschool network



New set of seminars for preschool networks were held from September 18/25, 2013 in Sabac, Ruma, Cacak, Arandjelovac and Bela Palanka attended by 41 representatives of preschool institutions and local self-governments included in the IMPRES project.

Introduction speech was given by Michel Crepon, Project Team leader. Crepon stressed the needs of functioning preschool networks in municipalities and underlined the importance of cooperation between preschool institutions and local self-governments for better planning and optimization. The seminars were held by Branka Pavlovic and Kari Pitkanen, project's experts.

The seminars were organized with the objective to test the optimization methodology (toolkit) by using data and projections of all participating municipalities. The methodology was developed during previous seminars for each of the municipalities included in the project. By using this toolkit they will be able to improve the provision and management of preschool services by taking into account national objectives, demographic development, financial consequences of planning as well as present and future physical capacities combining possibilities between preschool and elementary schools.





Guidelines for self-evaluation in Preschool Institution presented

Final version of the Guidelines for self-evaluation in preschool institution was presented during a seminar in Nis on May 21/22, 2013.

The seminar was opened by Lidija Miskeljic, Key Expert for Early Childhood Education. She thanked all who participated in the development of this document and stressed that the Guidelines for self-evaluation in preschool institution is a first in Serbia. It was developed by IMPRES project based on wide consultations with practitioners from preschools from September 2011 until March 2013.

Self-evaluation should be a positive process with outcomes for children, but also brings benefits to practitioners by encouraging good practice, helping professionals to recognize their skills and expertise and facilitate mutual learning and professional development. It involves and requires a critical approach to practice and to be open for reviewing and changing.

The final purpose of self-evaluation is that children receive the best possible education in a stimulating and safe environment and that access and education to the child is based on a comprehensive (holistic) way for taking care of its welfare and education.

Representatives from 15 preschool institutions included in the IMPRES project, advisors from the school administration as well as international experts who worked on the Guidance – Maureen Bennett and Imelda Madigan attended the seminar.



New kindergarten opened in Tutin

New kindergarten in preschool institution “Habiba Stoevic” for which the European Union donated more than 100.000 EUR for the construction and equipment was open in Tutin on May 28, 2013.

The kindergarten, located in settlement Velje polje in Tutin, was opened by Yolanda San Jose, Head of Operations I EU Delegation in Serbia, Bogoljub Lazarevic, Head of group for preschool education of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Semsudin Kucevic, Mayor of Tutin municipality. The opening ceremony was also attended by Sinan Derdemez, Director of preschool institution, Jelica Colic, Programme Manager EU Delegation, Michel Crepon, Project Team leader, representatives of local self-government representatives, parents and children. “The opening of this kindergarten in Tutin is the best example that the EU is not only about negotiations and setting conditions. It is also about EU helping the citizens of Serbia to improve their lives. Education is a key factor for economic and social development of the country. EU wants to contribute in a concrete way by investing in education therefore EU has so far donated 64 million EUR in this sector in Serbia”, said Yolanda San Jose.

About 50 children more from Tutin municipality will be placed in the new kindergarten. The newly built facility is equipped with the latest standards for preschool education.

Sinan Derdemez thanked the EU Delegation to Serbia, the Ministry of Education and Tutin municipality for building the new kindergarten adding that more children will now have the opportunity to be involved in preschool education.

Bogoljub Lazarevic said that the Ministry will continue providing support to local self-governments that recognize the importance of early education. He added that IMPRES project is one of the most successful projects that the Ministry implements in cooperation with the EU.

Semsudin Kucevic said that the municipality of Tutin invests a great deal of funds in education and that in one year, thanking to investments, preschool institution increased its capacity to 2,000 square feet.

Equipment delivered by IMPRES project (prefabricated structures and vehicles) to 15 pilot municipalities included in the project will ensure increase of access to preschool especially for vulnerable children (from rural and poor areas, Roma or other minorities, handicapped, etc.). This kindergarten is part of a total donation of seven kindergartens in six municipalities for a total of over 1.350.000 EUR.



Guidelines for self-evaluation in preschool institutions have been published

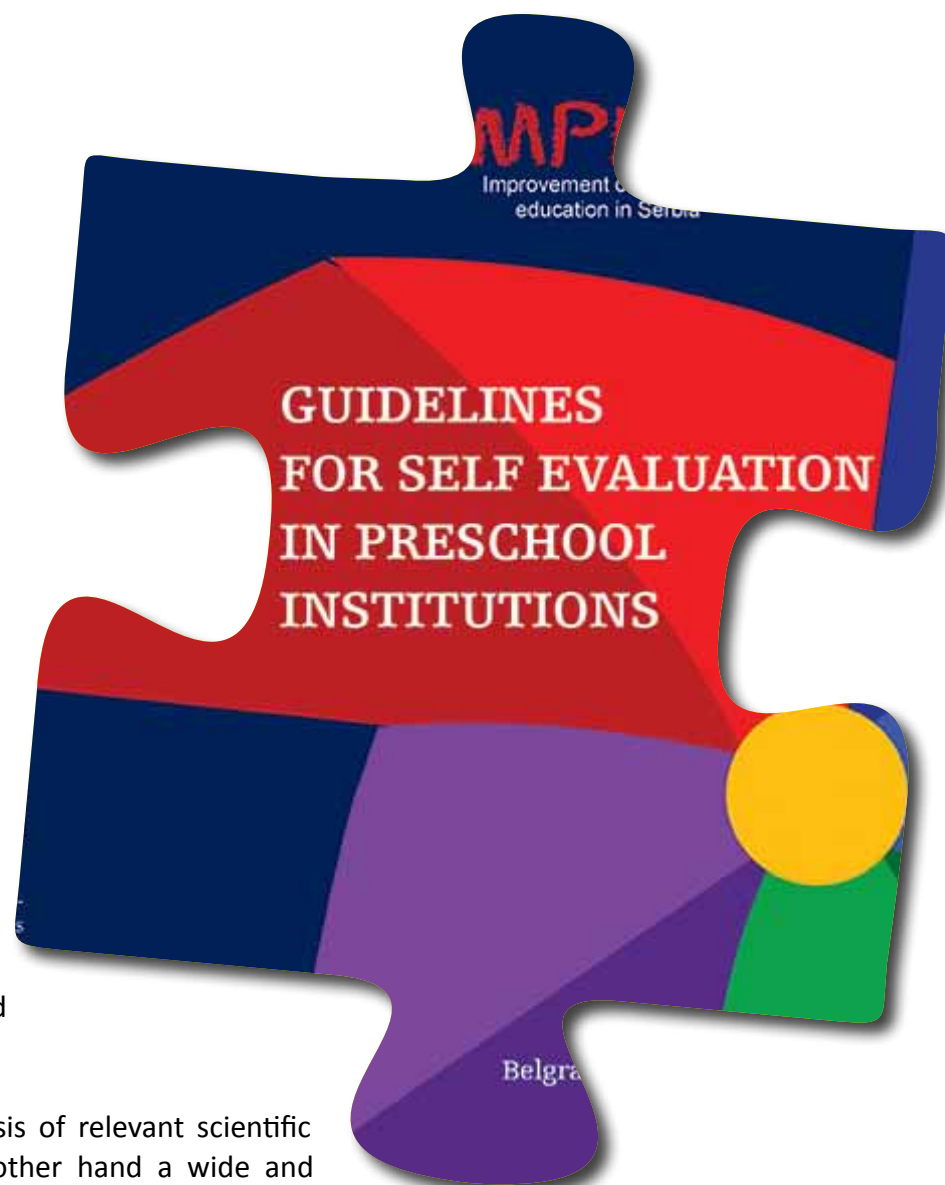
The Guidelines for self-evaluation in preschool institutions were published in September. The elaboration of this Guidance took into account the analysis of opinions, experiences and suggestions from preschool practitioners and as well opinions and proposals of other stakeholders - parents, MoESTD, representatives of local self-governments and non-governmental organizations.

These Guidelines have first been prepared with experts through the analysis of relevant scientific knowledge and specific European experiences in self-evaluation. On the other hand a wide and thorough consultative process, from September to December 2011, analyzed the needs of practitioners and representatives of the educational policies in Serbia and led to the development of the first draft version.

Pilot testing and implementation of the Guidelines in 15 preschool institutions from November 2012 to March 2013 led to feedback and monitoring of the first draft and complementary analyses of experiences from practitioners enabled to develop the final version.

Practitioners in the preschools are key actors in education and potential agents of changes. Although other social and material circumstances can pose difficulties and obstacles in developing quality of preschool education, it is the teacher's work that will largely determine what will be the practice of preschool education and whether it will improve and develop. Self-evaluation and guidance to it is a process that can help practitioners, starting from their understanding of current practice to decisions that will help to bring improvement and will develop quality of preschool education.

Authors of the Guidelines are Maureen Bennett, Imelda Madigan, Lidija Radulovic and Lidija Miskeljin. A significant contribution to the Guidelines was given by Vesna Kartal, advisor – coordinator in Institute for Quality Education and Jelena Paic, project expert.



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