

No 1 December 2012

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.



**Special programmes developed
in preschool institution in Mali
Zvornik**



**Seminars on preschool
network**



**Development and Implementation
of Various Programmes of Preschool
Education**



**Guide for self-evaluation
presented**



**New kindergartens opened in
Ruma and Sabac**

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information about
the project on

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Project Team

Special programmes developed in preschool institution in Mali Zvornik



More than 40 children ages from 3 to 5 and a half year old participate in special programmes for preschool education in preschool institution “Crvenkapa” in Mali Zvornik. The children live in the remote rural areas and have no access the kindergarten of Mali Zvornik municipality. Thanks to a mini-van, delivered through the IMPRES project to the preschool institution “Crvenkapa” and good organization of local-self government, preschool institution and local elementary schools, children from villages Brasina and Donja Borina are transported every day to premises of the schools in neighboring villages. They spend two hours with preschool teachers and then are transported back to their homes.

According to Olga Todorovic, Director of preschool institution “Crvenkapa” and teachers, children and parents are satisfied with these specially adapted programmes that allow children to be part of preschool education. The youngest child is three years old and would never have had the opportunity to spend some time with other children, adapt from an isolated area to socialization and participate in all preschool activities, teachers said.

Special adapted preschool programmes began in April 2012 when the children were included in the preschool education twice a week. From October, children spend two hours every day in furnished rooms with other children who attend the preparatory preschool program.

Mali Zvornik is one of nine Serbian municipalities where mini-van were delivered as part of IMPRES project activities to enable children from vulnerable groups to be involved in preschool education.



Seminars on preschool network



The seminars on development of management and optimization of preschool education at local level were held during December in Centers for Competence Improvement in Leskovac and Krusevac. The representatives from preschool institutions, local self-governments and local working groups from Leskovac, Gadzin Han, Bela Palanka and Surdulica, as well as from Krusevac, Uzice, Tutin and Razanj participated at the seminars. Seminars for preschool networks organized by IMPRES at the decentralized level of the municipalities will enable LSGs and preschool institutions to improve the provision of preschool services in terms of more efficient management and better quality of education and care for children. Trainers on seminars were Kari Pitkanen and Branka Pavlovic, project experts.

The participants were able to improve common understanding and knowledge on key data to be collected (number of children, number of teachers, facilities, quality of work, cooperation with parents, needs of employees for professional education, financial possibilities of the LSG), to identify main actors in preschool education, to develop the basic skills for creating a sustainable network of local participants in preschool and improve planning through consultations, workshops, round tables etc. All these are necessary to successfully manage the social context of preschool education, planning and budgeting in local municipality.



Development and Implementation of Various Programmes of Preschool Education

As a result of cooperation between IMPRES project and UNICEF Serbia Project “Kindergartens without borders - more opportunities for learning and development of young children”, the training for development of special programmes in preschool education in Serbia for children from 3 to 5 years was held in Nis from October 31st – November 2nd 2012. Professional associates and teachers from 15 preschool institutions involved in IMPRES project and 10 preschool institutions included in the UNICEF program participated at the training. Ms. Jovanka Bogdanov and Ms. Ljiljana Marolt from the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Section for preschool education and representatives from school administration also participated at the training.

The aim of this training was to develop professional skills and knowledge of professional associates and preschool teachers, future trainers and mentors to make them able to work in the local community and preschool institutions in development and implementation of special and specialized preschool programmes. These programmes will improve conditions for early growth and development of children from vulnerable groups. Training was held by Zorica Trikić, coordinator of UNICEF’s project “Kindergartens without borders”, Olga Lakićević, psychologist from Centre for interactive pedagogy an NGO that implemented the project with UNICEF and experts from IMPRES project Caroline Boudry and Veerle Vervaet.

For many participants training was new experience that would help them to promote their work, the work of the institutions and above all to create different programs that will respond to the needs of parents and children towards increase of access to preschool for marginalized children. They concluded it is necessary to raise awareness about the importance of preschool education.

Preschool institution included in both projects will start with implementation of the mentoring of various programmes which will be free of charge. Cooperation between the two projects will be continued through exchange of experience and regional networking of the preschool institutions.





Guide for self-evaluation presented

The Guide for self-evaluation in preschool institution was presented on seminar held in Nis on October 22nd 2012. The employees from preschool institutions, the advisors from school administrations from 15 local governments included in the project and Vesna Kartal, from the Institute for Quality of Education and Evaluation attended the seminar. The Guide to self-assessment was developed within the IMPRES project using relevant scientific knowledge (in the field of preschool education, evaluation and self-evaluation and teacher occupation), European experience in self-evaluation and based on consultation with practitioners from preschools from September 2011 until March 2012. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, parents and representatives of local NGOs were included in the process of development of this Guide. Training was held by Imelda Madigan and Ljubica Popovic, project experts.

During the seminar, participants were able to acquire specific skills in order to further develop their self-evaluation approach, in theirs and in other preschool institutions. The participants analyzed Guide for self-evaluation through discussion and group work and they shared ideas and plans for piloting the Guide which will begin in their preschool institutions. All participants claimed that the seminar was very useful and that experience they have gained will help them in future work to enhance work of self-evaluation teams. The Guide for Self-Evaluation will be piloted in 15 preschool institutions included in the Project. In spring 2013, the final version of the Guide will be prepared.



New kindergartens opened in Ruma and Sabac



New kindergartens were opened in Ruma and Sabac for which the European Union donated over 200,000 EUR. Thanks to this EU donation, around 200 children from these municipalities will be placed in kindergartens. It will enable decreasing of waiting lists for entering in preschool institutions. The newly built facilities are equipped with the best standards for preschool education. Representatives of EU Delegation in Serbia, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development Opening and local self-governments were present at the opening ceremonies. Better working conditions for children and teachers are secured at these facilities.

New kindergartens will be opened in Uzice, Krusevac, Leskovac and Tutin. The kindergartens will be built as part of IMPRES project activities with the aim to increase preschool capacities in municipalities included in the project.



This publication has been produced with the assistance from the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the IMPRES Project and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.