

The words 'Private Schools' are hand-drawn in a blue, 3D blocky font on a piece of white graph paper. The letters have a sketchy, textured appearance.

# PRIVATE EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY:

## FEATURES, OPPORTUNITIES, RISKS

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## 1. Introduction

This background report provides a cross-country overview of issues pertaining to non-state education provision and the involvement of private actors in public education in a selection of countries which submitted country profiles for the 2021/2022 edition of the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report: Albania, Sarajevo Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina), North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey.

The paper describes key features of non-state education provision in these countries, presents and comments on the regulatory environment in which non-state providers are being established and operate, and it discusses how this environment influences the equity, quality, and inclusiveness of public education in the countries covered. The purpose of the report is to invite further research and inform follow-up actions in areas of significance for the equity, inclusiveness, and integrity of education in those countries.

The paper was prepared by a team from the Center for Applied Policy and Integrity in Bulgaria on behalf of the Network of Education Policy Centers in the period July-September 2021.

## 2. Methodology

The objective of this work was to identify, describe, and analyse aspects of non-state education which are shared across countries and are of relevance for policy-relevant follow-up and actions. To achieve that, the team pursued three research objectives: identify commonalities throughout the GEM country profiles; expand the repository of resources for the analysis by identifying a purposeful selection of titles and sources of

supplementary evidence that corroborates or rebuts the initial hypotheses; and finally, determine the policy implications and describe them into the narrative of this paper.

In total, the team scanned 68 additional sources and narrowed down the final selection to 24 additional documents in English and the official languages of the countries, which capture the state of prior research and complement the evidence provided in the GEM country profiles. The material was then screened by the research team. An initial round of analysis on that basis was carried out in the period July-August 2021 and the completion of the report took place in September 2021.

## 3. Key features of non-state school education in the region

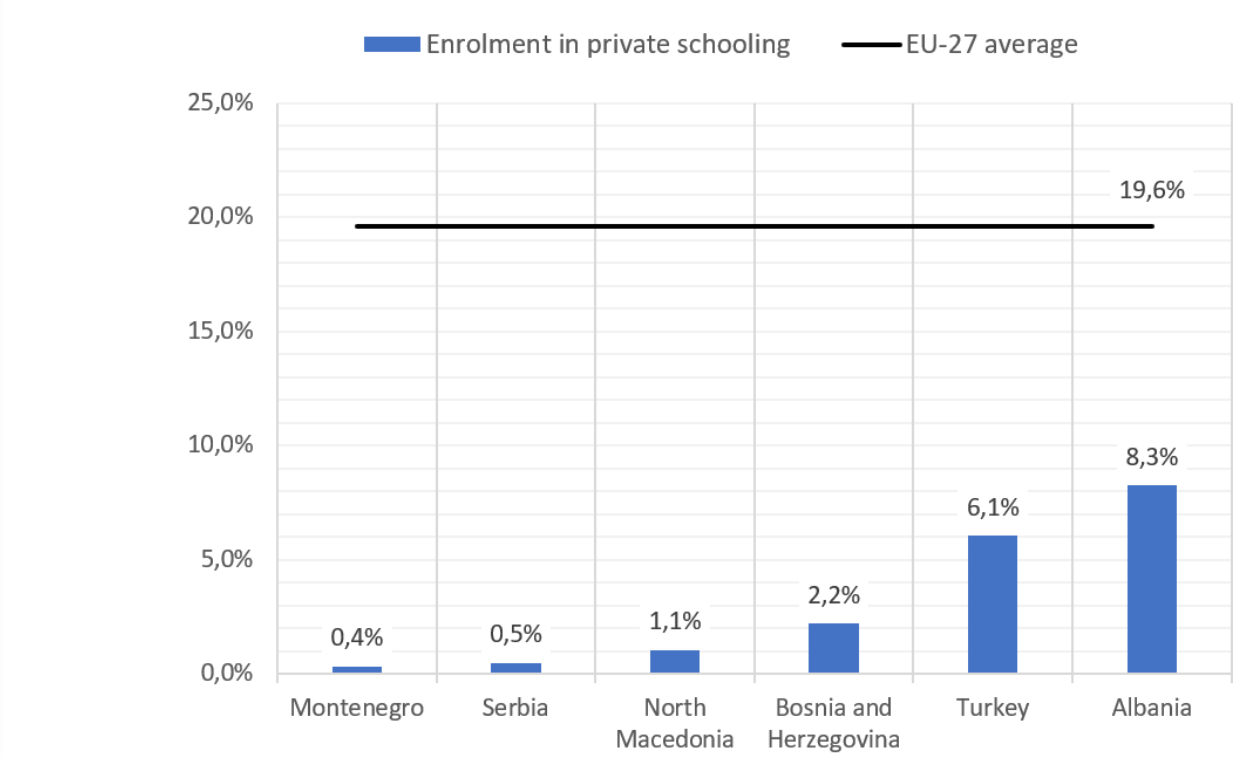
Non-state education in the countries covered in this report has some distinct features. One is the small size of the sub-sector in international comparison. Another is the weak base of publicly accessible evidence regarding non-state providers. A third feature is that public and private education in these countries is strictly divided along ownership lines and that within these lines, each of the two sub-sectors is strikingly uniform.

### **Non-state education accounts for a fraction of total enrolment**

The size of the private education sector in the countries covered in this report is limited in international comparison. In 2019, enrolment in private school education (primary and secondary) ranged from mere 0.4% of total school enrolment in Montenegro to 8.3% in Albania where it is the highest. In the same year, private schools accounted for 19.6% of all

enrolment in the EU, on average (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Enrolment in primary and secondary education in private institutions, in % of total enrolment, Western Balkans, Turkey, and EU average (2019)**



Sources: (World Bank, 2021) (UNESCO UIS, 2021), Eurostat

In some ways, this finding may be surprising. If to judge by macroeconomic trends alone, private education could have been a promising and thriving business opportunity in all these countries. Across the region, national economic output as well as the purchasing power of households were steadily growing over the past years, with GDP per capita (PPP) up by over 50% on average since 2010 (World Bank, 2021). In addition, education is traditionally valued highly in all these countries and satisfaction with the quality of public education is commonly rather low.

**The sub-sector is also not well-documented**

Another feature of the sub-sector of non-state schooling is that it is not well-

documented. Evidence about even the most basic characteristics of private providers, such as their number by type, is not always available and where it is available, it is either not publicly accessible or it is not reliable, as noted in some of the GEM country profiles scanned in preparation of this paper. Such gaps may limit the reliability of policy analysis (including the one presented in this paper) and from there, the effectiveness and monitoring of policy interventions that target private school education in these countries.

**Non-state providers operate in relative isolation**

Unlike the flourishing informal connections between private players and public providers

which are discussed in the next chapter, the two sub-sectors of education – public and private – operate in relative isolation from each other and their mutual connections are weak. With some exceptions, such as some VET providers in Turkey,[1] state providers are usually owned, operated, and funded by the state without any private support, while non-state actors are commonly run and funded by their founders alone.

Mixed arrangements and public-private partnerships in the form of non-state managed state providers, privately funded state providers, state-funded non-state schools and contracted non-state schools are legally possible[2] but remain uncommon, just like alternative forms of provision such as home-schooling or voucher schools (Table 1).[3]

**Table 1. Overview of schooling providers by form of ownership, management, and funding source, Western Balkans and Turkey (2021)**

	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
<b>State schools</b>						
<i>State-managed and funded</i>	3203	81(86)	496	225	3756	54715
<i>Non-state managed</i>	N	Y	N	N	N	N
<i>Non-state funded</i>	N	N	N	N	Y	N
<b>Non-state schools</b>						
<i>Independent</i>	348	6	12	31	64	13870
<i>State-funded</i>	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
<i>State contracted</i>	N	N	N	N	N	N
<b>Other schools</b>						
<i>Home-schooling</i>	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
<i>Voucher schools</i>	N	N	N	N	N	N
<i>Unregistered schools</i>	N	N	6	N	N	N

*Notes: Bosnia and Herzegovina - data only for Sarajevo Canton (Bosnia and Hercegovina). North Macedonia - home-schooling is permitted on individual basis only in case of grave medical condition. Two of the 12 independent non-state schools are religious. Serbia - data for non-state independent schools includes only secondary education.*

*Source: GEM country profiles*

[1] According to the GEM country profile, the Ministry of National Education in Turkey has signed bilateral corporation protocols with foundations, associations representing multiple sectors and companies, leading companies, and sector leaders for vocational education and training (VET) for public-private partnerships in support of public VET schools, such as for the establishing and/or equipping workshops, etc.

[2] In Montenegro, for example, a concession to implement a public programme may be granted to a private institution, domestic or foreign legal and natural person who meets the conditions for performing education and upbringing prescribed by law.

The provisions of the Law on Concessions apply to the performance of educational activities on the basis of a concession, unless otherwise provided by this Law.

[3] One of the few examples of only exception comes from Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a secondary school can be established by several legal entities at the same time. In these cases, when there are several founders, they regulate their relationship by contract (Article 16). Such is the case with the religious school "Gazi Husrevbegova Medrasa", which was founded by the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it is a public institution.



The reasons behind this state of affairs would merit a separate exploration. At present the two sub-sectors do not cooperate, coordinate, and complement each other as constituent parts of the same national schooling system, but co-exist in parallel and share the very same set of rules, as discussed later. This has some advantages. In the current landscape in which the “demarcation lines” between public and private schooling are clear and seemingly immutable, it is easier for public authorities to exercise control and enforce accountability from private education providers. However, there are also disadvantages as this division hinders mutual learning and cross-fertilisation and may prevent private providers from contributing their share to the development of the education system as a whole.

#### 4. Key policy issues and examples in non-state actors’ regulation and governance

##### **Regulatory environment: a conducive commercial (business) dimension**

In all countries in the sample, any legal or natural person, also religious organisations (in Sarajevo Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina) Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia), qualify to be founders of a private school after meeting only few basic criteria, such as availability of funds, lack of criminal record, tax registration, etc.

There are also national variations. Some countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia) require a bank account/guarantee to confirm the availability of funds availability. Others have introduced restrictions by level. Article 45 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, for instance, states that citizens cannot establish private primary schools, which can only be public.

In Turkey on the other hand, the second article of Private Education Institutions Law of 2007 distinguishes between Turkish and other private schools, which are further divided into foreign schools, minority schools and international private education institutions. Only foreign students can attend international private education institutions while there is no such restriction for foreign schools, which can be established by foreign individuals. In Albania and Serbia national minorities are explicitly referred to as prospective founders, who have the right to establish and administer their own private schools or vocational schools.

Overall, from a commercial point of view the regulatory environment in the countries covered in this report is rather conducive to the establishment of private schools. The business-related requirements in all countries are few and relatively easy to meet, and the legislation does not discriminate against any particular group of prospective founders.

##### **Regulatory environment: a rigid education policy dimension**

Education policy on the other hand seems to be much more obstructive for the growth of the private schooling sector. In all countries, the requirements for opening and operating a private school are identical with those for the public schools and include generous, often outdated, rigid and economically unsustainable criteria regarding availability of space, infrastructural and health standards, number of teaching and general support staff, etc.

For all countries the local Ministry of education and their bodies, commissions and institutions are responsible for determining the working procedures and principles, certification criteria and personnel

qualifications, developing curricula, monitoring, evaluating, and supervising the activities of private educational institutions. The conditions for establishing state and private institutions are similar in all six countries. In order to operate a private school (primary and secondary) must have a license. Applications are made to the Ministry of Education with a complete documentation (including program of work, proof for funding availability, institutions must meet the specified by the state requirements regarding the facilities, equipment, teaching aids, buildings, staff, hygienic, etc.). If some of the initial conditions are not met, the license of a private provider can be suspended.

The majority of requirements in this area are developed based on the assumption that physical infrastructure is a good enough proxy for the quality of the learning environment and thus, many of the more challenging accreditation and licensing criteria for private schools concern the material base of prospective providers. Some of the requirements set minimum standards for that infrastructure,[4] others limit the ability of providers to adapt and try out new arrangements, methods, and/or spatial standards in their learning environments. For example, in Turkey the Regulation on Private Education Institutions of 2012 stipulates that private primary and secondary schools must dispose of a building that has no less than 500 square meters of gardens and not less than 2 square meters per student.

Also the guidelines for operating a private school once established are fully aligned or identical with those in the public education sector.

In all countries covered here, the programmes of private schools have to be aligned with the national laws and by extension also with the state curriculum and standards. Any alternative learning content requires approval by the respective Ministry of Education, which acts as a deterrent as such changes require time and bear the risk of rejection and loss of investment. In general, private schools across all countries in the sample are limited in their freedom to choose and apply different curricula and programmes even if their alternatives may be superior to the state curriculum and lead to better learning outcomes. For example in Albania, teaching in a foreign language in a private school is only allowed with approval by the Council of Ministers and even in case of approval, Albanian and teaching all core subjects in Albanian remains mandatory alongside the foreign language.

Sarajevo Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina) offers a similar example. The common core of curricula is adopted in accordance with the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in a school whose founder is not a Canton, the curriculum of each individual subject may have a maximum of 20% of specific contents in relation to the curriculum. The only exceptions are international schools which can work according to the curriculum of their home countries (Article 31, Law on Secondary Education).

The complete or almost complete sharing of standards with public education continues in other areas of provider management and operation, such as the choice of teaching and learning materials, the teaching and

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[4] In some countries they are specified in a separate laws like in Turkey, but usually they are part of the general laws covering the state institutions as well.



learning environment, the teaching staff, etc. Compliance with these and other standards implies that private providers must emulate public education with little to no leeway for efficiency gains and adaptation/modernisation. In practice, this is a form of deterrent as it makes the establishment of a private education institution costly and unprofitable, and its operation rather complicated. It may also hinder flexibility and capacity to innovate, be efficient, and responsive to student needs and country and market developments: an alignment with the public education sector would effectively force them to replicate the problems and shortcomings of that sector too.

Data from OECD's PISA shows that this is a legitimate concern. For countries for which there is data (Serbia, Turkey, North Macedonia, and Albania) the learning outcomes between students who attend private and public education do not differ substantially and, in some of the countries, (Serbia, Turkey), students in public school outperform their peers in private education by a considerable margin (OECD, 2020d). This suggests that the form of ownership is a poor predictor of learning success and may also explain why demand for private education in the region is persistently lower than elsewhere as parents prefer to send their children to public education where the results are comparable, but costs may be lower and the educational prospects – clearer.

It should also be noted that some countries in the sample (Turkey) are trying to embark on an alternative path and are introducing a parallel set of dedicated requirements and guidance for private educational institutions. The country has set five goals related to private educational institutions (2023 Education Vision), which address the main areas of restrictions faces by private educational institutions: bureaucracy, rigid

external inspections, introduction of new programmes and standards, and better coordination and integration between private and public providers.

## Implications for equity, quality, and inclusion

### Regulatory rigidity as an advantage: safeguarding commitments

The relatively rigid requirements in the area of licensing, accreditation, and operation of private providers have some undisputable advantages. The probably most important one is that, by subjecting private providers to the same standards as public providers, authorities can ensure that commitments to non-discrimination, inclusion, and equity are safeguarded irrespective of the form of ownership of a school. This is also reflected in the GEM country profiles which underline that the safeguarding of education sector commitments is enforced with the help of the same criteria, tools, and mechanisms for public and for private education. Another advantage of such an alignment is that changes in public education policy, for instance improvement reforms, apply per default also to the network of non-state providers of education.

A major commitment which is safeguarded in this way is the provision of access to education for all children. Students in private schools as well as in state/public are protected from any kind of action that may cause discrimination based on their nationality, race, sex, language, religion, social origin, disability or other personal characteristics, violence, maltreatment, or moral damage. For example in Sarajevo Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the GEM country profile reports that the curriculum in both private and public schools must be (and is) based on the principles of individualization and differentiation,

integrated learning and teaching, active learning and application of learning, social interaction, development of social competencies, providing a safe and stimulating environment for learning, monitoring, evaluation and evaluation and partnerships with family and community. Even though private schools are allowed to select students according to their own regulations, they must follow the rule established by the public authorities for the public schools.

Most are similar in all six countries and compliance with some of them may be closer to the public mandate of education than to market and business considerations. For instance in Turkey, the Private Education Institutions Law (2007) states that each private school must have students who are exempt from tuition and their share in overall student population in the school cannot be less than 3%. Children of those deemed disabled in war and duty and children under state protection also have priority and must be exempt from tuition. Private providers are also obliged to support the professional development of their teachers on par with the opportunities provided to their peers in the public education institutions.

### **Regulatory rigidity as a source of risk: revenues from private sources**

The advantages of sharing rules and regulations between public and private education come at a certain price. The restrictive education sector regulations in the countries covered in this paper are one of the likely factors that tamper demand is that they are keeping the non- state schooling sector comparatively small, which in turn puts the responsibility of schooling most youth in these countries squarely on the public schools.

The decade-long efforts of authorities to ensure that public education is fit for that, are well-documented. School education is central to all national and regional development strategies (Mereuta, 2019; Kitchen, et al., 2019a; OECD, 2020b), and all countries have invested considerable resources and reform efforts in modernising the education sector in line with ambitious international commitments and rising domestic demand for good education (OECD, 2018; ETF, 2018).

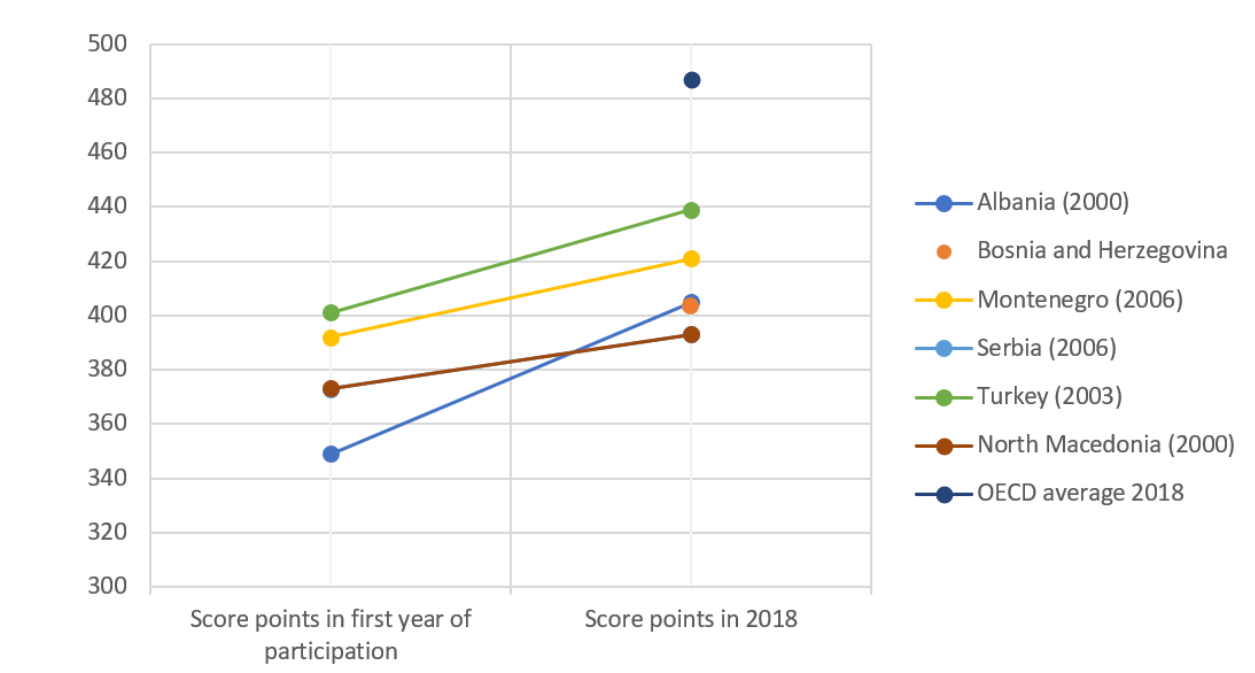
In Turkey for example, per student expenditure increased by over 40% between 2010 and 2018 (the latest year for which there is comparable data), which is by far the largest increase of all EU and OECD countries for that period. The quality of learning outcomes as measured by PISA has been on the rise as well (OECD, 2019). North Macedonia has managed to boost schools access to levels closer to those of EU countries and has invested heavily in making its schools more inclusive to ethnic and language minorities (Milovanovitch, 2019) while in Bosnia and Herzegovina enrolment rate in primary (90%) and secondary (70%) has remained relatively high throughout the country with near gender parity, despite the considerable fragmentation and politicisation of the education system (World Bank, 2019). Albania has witnessed improvement in a range of key education indicators as a result of long-standing, ambitious reforms (Maghnouj, et al., 2020b), just like Montenegro, where the quality of learning outcomes in reading, maths, and science is consistently better than in other countries in the region sampled for this background paper, except Turkey (OECD, 2019).

Despite these commendable achievements, however, there is evidence that in all countries public school education remains

under considerable strain to deliver what is needed and expected, on par with international benchmarks. The quality of learning outcomes in all countries is still below international average (Figure 2): in 2018, only a fifth of students in the region scored on par or higher than their peers in OECD countries (OECD, 2019; OECD, 2020b).

Equity deficits continue to persist, just like disparities in key competences and learning outcomes by socio-economic background, place of residence, and gender, which suggests that behind progress in the area of participation there may be other, perhaps less obvious gaps in access to good quality learning.

**Figure 2. PISA performance in reading over time, Western Balkans, Turkey, and OECD average (2018)**



Source: PISA Database (<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/>).

In each country there are examples of such gaps. According to OECD’s PISA, in 2018 over half of the students in Albania for instance were functionally illiterate at the age of 15 and 42% did not reach even the basic level of proficiency in mathematics. About a fifth of students in Turkey drop out before the age of 17 (OECD, 2021), with one of the long-standing reasons being low levels of learning and limited support for those who are falling behind (UNICEF, 2012; Kitchen, et al., 2019a). In North Macedonia ethnicity is still a main predictor of academic success and the country is the lowest PISA performer of all countries in the IPA recipient region (Figure 2).

In Serbia educational inequities are widening despite considerable investments to the contrary (Maghnouj, et al., 2020a) while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a large between-school variance in the quality and teaching capacity of public schools, which strongly correlates with the quality of learning outcomes (World Bank, 2019).

Prior work suggests that the reasons for these gaps are manifold. Most are country-specific, and their discussion would require a level of detail which is beyond the remit of this paper. However, there are also some commonalities.

One is the quality of teaching which is dominated by practices that are not conducive to good learning, such as teacher-directed instruction, by teachers who may not always have access to up-to-date professional development opportunities (Maghnouj, et al., 2020b; Maghnouj, et al., 2020a; Kitchen, et al., 2019b; OECD, 2020b). Another commonality which is more pertinent to the involvement of private actors and will be the backdrop of discussion for the remainder of this paper, is the insufficient and inequitable provision of

financial and material resources to public schools, in particular disadvantaged schools. Most countries in the sampled region spend a considerably smaller proportion of their national wealth on education than their OECD counterparts, on average (Table 2). Even in Turkey, where relative spending on education as percentage of GDP is on par with the OECD, expenditure per student in primary and secondary education remains the third lowest of all OECD members, in absolute terms[5](OECD, 2020a).

**Table 2. Spending on education as percentage of GDP, all levels (2016 or latest available year)**

Country	Spending on education as percentage of GDP (all levels)
Albania	3.6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4.6
Montenegro	4.0
North Macedonia	3.7
Serbia	3.6
Turkey	5.4
OECD average	5.4

*Notes: Year of reference for Albania, North Macedonia, Turkey and OECD: 2016. Year of reference for Montenegro and EU average: 2017. Year of reference for Serbia: 2018. Year of reference for Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2019.*

*Sources: (World Bank, 2021; UNESCO UIS, 2021; OECD, 2020b; World Bank, 2019)*

In addition to the low level of public spending, data from the latest round of PISA in 2018 shows that resources do not go where they are most needed. Resource allocations tend to favour schools which are already socio-economically advantaged and enrol students from better-off backgrounds. Principals in countries of the Western Balkans report greater concerns about

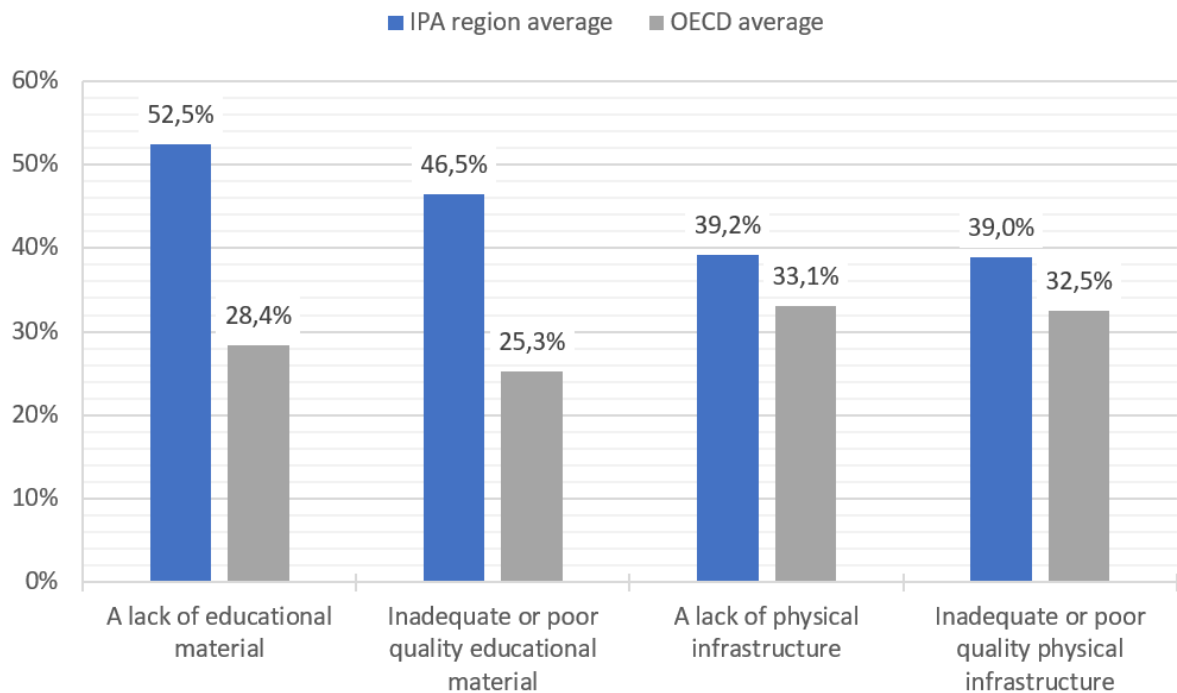
resource shortages in schools with more disadvantaged students (OECD, 2020c). In the selection of countries in focus of this paper, the average share of students who attend schools in which education provision is reportedly hindered by material shortages is considerably higher than in the OECD, especially when it comes to the availability and quality of education materials (Figure 3).

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[5] In equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP.

**Figure 3. Shortage of material resources, Western Balkans, Turkey, and OECD countries (2018)**

Percentage of students in schools whose principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction was hindered to some extent or a lot by material shortages



*Note: The regional average includes Kosovo.*

Source: PISA 2018 database, Table V.B1.5.1 (<https://doi.org/10.1787/888934132260>)

The problem is exacerbated by a failure to adapt the school network in these countries in line with their demographic developments and internal migration flows. The combined effect of a decreasing school age population and migration into urban centres away from rural areas, has left rural schools with excess enrolment capacity and oversized infrastructure, and urban ones with shortages due to overcrowding (OECD, 2020b).

The widespread resource shortages incentivise public providers to seek additional (formal and informal) revenue streams, mostly from private sources – with some success as it seems.

Families with school children in the region sampled for this paper spend almost twice as much on education as their EU counterparts (education in the region claims 1.7% of total household expenditure on average, compared to 0.9% in the EU). To put this share in a context, average enrolment in private schooling in the region is six times lower than in the EU (3.2% versus 19.6% respectively), which implies that public education likely absorbs a sizeable share of household spending on education in the countries covered in this paper (Table 3).

**Table 3. Household expenditure on education and enrolment in private schooling as share of total enrolment, Western Balkans, Turkey, and EU-27 (2019 or latest available year)**

	Household spending on education	Enrolment in private schooling
Albania	3.1%	8.3%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	m	M
Montenegro	2.1%	0.4%
North Macedonia	0.2%	1.1%
Serbia	1.4%	0.5%
Turkey	1.8%	6.1%
Regional average	1.7%	3.2%
EU-27 average	0.9%	19.6%

*Notes: North Macedonia and Montenegro: year of reference 2017*

*Sources: Enrolment in private schooling: (World Bank, 2021), Eurostat; Household spending: Eurostat, National Statistical Institutes*

Such data should be interpreted with caution as household spending on education can comprise a wide diversity of items and surveys may differ in scope and in the selection of items they capture. Nevertheless, both third party sources and the GEM country profiles provide supplementary evidence to suggest that among the various factors that can explain these figures, there are also fundraising practices which open channels for the involvement of private actors in public education, mostly parents, as discussed next. Some of these practices are driven by genuine need and can be traced back to the persistent lack and unequitable distribution of resources. In such cases education practitioners may see fundraising from families as a direct response to a shortage of resources for meeting basic institutional commitments.

In Serbia for example, parental donations are helping to fulfil school development plans, provide in-service training of teachers, and deliver other basic services for quite some time already (OECD, 2012; Maghnouj, et al., 2020a), while in Albania, there are reports of public schools which are entirely supported through parental donations.[6]

Other practices to raise private funding may be more problematic from an equity and integrity point of view. A recent string of examples comes from Turkey where, as the registration period for the new school year started in August 2021, the media was abuzz with stories and comments to the stories of how public schools continue to extort parents for “voluntary” donations even in cases when children would qualify for admission due to their place of residence and academic success.[7] Illicit parental

[6] See for instance <https://portavendore.al/2018/03/20/kamza-e-re-shkolla-qe-mbahet-ne-kembe-nga-leket-e-prinderve/>

[7] See for instance <https://www.ozgurkocaeli.com.tr/haber/7567425/okullardaki-bagis-parasi-velileri-cileden-cikariyor>. Similar media reports exist for the same period a year ago.



donations are a widespread source of income for public schools also in other countries of the region covered in this paper. In Albania, reports of “cash-strapped schools” which “pressure” parents to donate are happening “year after year” and are as relevant today as they were in 2015[8] and in Montenegro, evidence of fundraising from parents that seem clearly at odds with the regulation still find plenty of support among stakeholders. [9]

Another potentially problematic channel of involving private actors in public education is through the provision of paid supplementary services. Some of them, such as private supplementary tutoring which seems common in all six countries covered here, can be problematic because they may create conflict of interest situations for

teachers and bring the risk of bias and preferential treatment of students who pay for tutoring over those who do not (OECD, 2018). Others, such as the provision of specialised and support services to children in inclusive education, can be a source of risk as they can be offered for the sole purpose of fundraising for private or institutional benefit, and not to address genuine student needs. Recent in-depth research into the integrity of policies and practices in inclusive education in several countries (one of which Serbia) shows that children in need of additional support and their families are particularly vulnerable to such manipulation and are most often the target of illicit fundraising under the pretext of supplementary services (Figure 4), the price of which is either inflated or the need for which is misstated by schools.

**Figure 4. Forms of illicit fundraising in inclusive education in Serbia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kazakhstan, by frequency**

Codes	Manifestation	
<b>1</b>	<b>Illicit resource attraction through manipulation of access to IE</b>	45.0%
1a	Through manipulation of needs assessments	
1b	Through IOPs	
<b>2</b>	<b>Illicit resource attraction through additional IE-related services</b>	17.5%
2a	Through inflating the cost for additional IE services	
2b	Through misstating the need for additional IE services	
<b>3</b>	<b>Allocation of resources for IE based on alternative (political) loyalties</b>	7.5%
<b>4</b>	<b>Illicit resource attraction through fraudulent reporting on IE</b>	30.0%
4a	On student achievement (grades)	
4b	On exam-related student needs	

Source: (Kovac Cerovic, et al., 2019)

[8]<https://balkaninsight.com/2015/01/30/albania-s-cash-strapped-schools-pressure-pupils-to-donate/>; <https://exit.al/si-rripen-prinderit-nga-shkollat/>

[9]<https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/525725/os-milorad-musa-burzan-od-djaka-nije-smjela-da-uzimaju-novac>

Prior research, but also well-documented stakeholder experiences from other countries in Eastern Europe which share a similar legacy of policies and reforms with those covered in this paper show that without proper safeguards, private funding – whether illicit or not – can have an adverse effect on equity and integrity in public schools, and also on the capacity and willingness of public education providers to act in line with their commitments (Kazimzade & Lepisto, 2010).

A recent situation analysis of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina notes that children of families which are better off and willing to pay have a better chance to access to good education (UNICEF, 2020), just like in Turkey they will be better placed to enrol in their desired school even if they do not meet the formal requirements (see example above). Donations may also “entitle” parents to negotiate better grades and treatment for their child, as suggested in stakeholder accounts from Serbia and North Macedonia (OECD, 2012; Kitchen, et al., 2019b; Milovanovitch, 2019).

Although some forms of private funding of this kind such as parental donations, may not be illegal per se, the involvement of the private actors who provide it may create risks as it may be instrumentalised by both sides – recipients (teachers and principals) and givers (parents and other stakeholders) – as a form of bribe in exchange for key education deliverables such as access to education or grades (Milovanovitch & Lapham, 2018; Milovanovitch & Jovanovic, 2020).

## 5. Conclusion

The countries covered in this background report are diverse and each has its own reform priorities and trajectory, but they also share a number of commonalities when it comes to private school education. In all of them the sector is comparatively small despite a conducive business and macroeconomic environment, evidence about it is scarce and/or not publicly available,

and the involvement of public authorities is limited to rule-setting, compliance control, and enforcement. Conversely, most of the private schools in the six countries do not have a formal involvement with the rest of (public) schooling: there are no private schools that are publicly funded or managed, and with some small exceptions, there are no public schools that are privately funded or managed. This situation hinders mutual learning and cross-fertilisation and may prevent private providers from contributing their share to the development of the education system as a whole.

At the same time, public education providers have established channels of informal involvement with non-state actors, mostly parents, for the sake of generating additional revenue to compensate for widespread resource and material shortages. The practices which emerge through these channels, such as parental donations or the provision of paid supplementary services, are not well-documented or explored in the countries in focus, but they appear to be systemic and some of them put a strain on the capacity of public education to deliver to its commitments to equity and integrity. Despite the associated risks, policy interventions to address the phenomenon should take a pragmatic stance. Instead of trying to stop such practices which in most cases are longstanding and may be essential in addressing shortages that may otherwise affect the proper functioning of public schools, it may be more feasible to acknowledge that these practices happen and focus on exploring this area further and then on using the results to develop regulations that are more successful at achieving transparency around the financial involvement of non-state actors in public education. This is an important, but largely neglected area in the region covered in this paper.

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