



KCDE - Mëso Online
Kosova Center for Distance Education



ICEDA

Increasing Civic Engagement
in the Digital Agenda

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

“E-LEARNING” PROGRAMS AND ROMA, ASHKALI, AND EGYPTIAN YOUTH



The project is co-funded by
the European Union



The "Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda – ICEDA" project is implemented by Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia), Open Data Kosovo (Kosovo), e-Government Academy (Estonia), Partners for Democratic Change Serbia (Serbia), NGO 35 MM (Montenegro) and Lëvizja MJAFI (Albania).

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The original is written in English within the project:

["Advocacy for digital integration in the education system: Strengthening Distance Education in Kosovo"](#)

Implemented by:



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Policy Brief

Students across Kosova struggled to adapt to the “new normal” caused by the pandemic. While schools were being shuttered, policymakers turned their attention towards “e-learning,” believing that technology might help ensure youth could continue their studies amid lockdowns. However, evidence has shown that not all children were able to benefit from these interventions. For instance, those belonging to Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities faced a slew of challenges which prevented many from receiving an education. From inadequate digital infrastructure to limited digital literacy, various issues prevented the wider adoption of instructional technologies by local schools serving these overlooked populations. As a result, field experts have expressed major concerns about the learning loss experienced by the historically-marginalized groups.

A combination of factors are to blame for the situation facing youth from these communities. Yet the lack of equipment available stands out among the reasons why “e-learning” was limited in its success. Simply put, many Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian families [did not have devices](#) like tablets or laptops which students could use while at home. For example, Admovere, a nonprofit which focuses on the promotion of education throughout Kosova, prepared a report stating that [around 51% of students](#) from these groups in the Municipality of Ferizaj did not participate in these programs. These statistics, in turn, have led many in these communities to conclude that [a dearth of resources](#) contributed to this lack of engagement from students.

This troubling situation calls for the government to create provisions designed to facilitate the allocation of devices to households on the margins.

Guaranteeing that students have the equipment required for this type of instruction should be on the minds of stakeholders driven by this issue. They must also be aware that simply having a device is not enough. Many parents had to [share their smartphones](#) so that their children could attend classes, making do with the resources they had to participate in “e-learning.” A policy brief prepared by the Kosovo Education Center (KEC) highlighted that this stressful arrangement placed an [undue burden](#) onto Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian households. In other words, the glaring absence of additional hardware prompted many to believe these educational programs were not a practical option. Policymakers cannot accept this as par for the course. [Investment in assets](#) must be made for schools, and families, based in these communities.

Expecting them to use what they have, without providing support, would undermine the process of digitizing the system for education.

Though ensuring that devices get into the hands of students is key, officials in Kosovo must do more for students from these groups who wish to pursue an education. Specifically, they must start by acknowledge that the problems which arose during the pandemic were exacerbated by the [degree of poverty](#) found in these communities. Socio-economic instability, among [other structural issues](#), was cited in a recent report issued by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) on the larger complications which limited “e-learning” initiatives for school-age youth. Inequalities found outside of these institutions, such as discrimination in employment faced by parents, had an effect on the outcomes of children. Ultimately, the policies implemented by the government focused on “e-learning” did not account for inequities [worsened by the crisis](#). A comprehensive approach to “e-learning” promotion, centered on providing technological solutions tailored to community needs, must be adopted by relevant stakeholders in the education field.

Although “e-learning” is a format for instruction that can make education more accessible, it is evident that it has not always been an option for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian youth. For starters, policymakers must do their part to direct resources to schools serving these communities. They must also provide assistance to families in these areas, putting measures into place that would offer them support in the event that schools return to lockdowns. Finally, interventions pushed by officials must be broad in their scope, proposing pathways to digitizing the sector of education that are practical and appropriate for these communities.

Following these steps, those in positions of influence can make sure that the promise of “e-learning” is realized for youth in Kosovo, securing the right to education for individuals of all backgrounds.





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