



Република Србија

МИНИСТАРСТВО ПРОСВЕТЕ
НАУКЕ И ТЕХНОЛОШКОГ
РАЗВОЈА



ПРОЈЕКАТ
ПРУЖАЊЕ
УНАПРЕЂЕНИХ УСЛУГА
НА ЛОКАЛНОМ НИВОУ



Centar za obrazovne politike
Centre for Education Policy

EVALUATION OF DILS TRAININGS AND GRANT PROGRAMS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

DECEMBER 2013.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inclusive education, in its broadest sense, has been recognized as one of the priorities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia as shown in the Law on The Foundation of Education (LoFE). To aid the implementation of the LoFE and support the development of inclusion in the Republic of Serbia, the World Bank has introduced and funded the Delivering of the Local Implementation Services (DILS) project that, inter alia, included school grants and municipal grants for the promotion of education inclusion. The 298 carefully selected schools have received the grants in the amount of Euro 4000 while each of the 56 municipalities have received grant of in average Euro 35000 distributed to the local education institutions (55 preschools and 134 primary schools) and 56 Non Government Organization (NGO) with an aim to improve the inclusion of vulnerable population, especially Roma In the education system by supporting the local communities efforts and improving intersectoral cooperation on the local level.

Given that the DILS program was completed at the end of December 2013, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD), has proposed the evaluation of DILS and DILS/REF programs, believing that a three year span will be sufficient enough, as far as the education changes are an issue, to indicate the hopefully positive changes in the education inclusion in Serbia. Thus, *the main objective* of this study was to evaluate the effects of the two components of the DILS project related to education: a) the program "Strengthening schools for inclusive education" at the school level, which includes training for school staff and grants for school projects and b) grant program "Education Inclusion of Roma" (DILS/REF program).

The inclusiveness indicators used to measure the effects of the programs included: lower dropout rate, lower rates of absenteeism, higher academic achievement, lower rate of repetition, greater coverage with pre-school and primary education, the degree of mobility to higher levels of education, the rate of segregation, students' and parents' satisfaction with school, intersectoral cooperation at the municipal level.

The study sample comprised of the representative sample of 16 schools (one from each regional school administration) that have received the grants and the control group of 16 schools with similar geographic and demographic conditions but not included in any of the support programs (DILS/REF or another). Among the 55 municipalities, the 5 were included into the sample. Regarding the effects of the DILS training, sample has covered all the teachers who have undergone trainings in 16 schools.

The evaluation instrument, i.e. on-line questionnaire used to collect data for each component of the study has been designed on the basis of inclusiveness indicators but tailored for each group of respondents (e.g. municipal officials, school principals, teachers that underwent trainings, NGO representatives, the Professional team for inclusive education, school coordinators of DILS project). The questionnaire consisted of scales of assessment, filling out

forms for the school data and open questions intended to identify examples of good practice, challenges in the implementation of inclusive education and lessons learned.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE INTERVENTIONS PERFORMED UNDER DILS and DILS/REF PROGRAM

Based on the results and opinions of the different stakeholders, it can be concluded that the DILS school grants program has achieved its goal: it has contributed to a more successful implementation of inclusive education, led to higher academic achievements of the students with disabilities and made them feel more satisfied and accepted within the school. Furthermore, it led to cultivating inclusive culture within schools to greater extent. As the program of school grants was directed to the schools and to the development of competences within the school and internal procedures, it has achieved maximum effects in this domain, and had slightly smaller effects in the domain of collaboration with other institutions and schools in the municipality.

The external support was important for the school. It had the effect on a more successful implementation of inclusive education because it drew the attention of employees to the importance of inclusion and to the fact that for the education decision makers' inclusive education is of strategic importance. This has been confirmed by the opinions of educational advisors, as well as by the comparison of opinions of the school principals who participated in the DILS program of school grants and the school principals who did not, about the change that has happened since 2011. The greatest effects have been achieved in the school achievement of children with developmental disabilities; development of an inclusive culture; quality of teachers and the feeling of satisfaction of parents and students with disabilities. This is courtesy of the DILS program and trainings for teachers, along with the school grant.

Support that schools have received has most likely created the belief amongst the teachers and principals that changes in the achievements and progress of these children are possible which have resulted in the strengthening of self-efficacy, perceptions of own abilities and responsibilities of school for achievements of all children. Material assistance that schools received was not high enough to significantly improve the conditions in schools, but it has made an impact through the deployment of human resources and changing the perception of the importance of inclusion, not only for students who need additional educational support, but also for raising the quality of the entire educational process. Consequently, the children who need additional educational support in the schools that have received grants and whose teachers went through the DILS trainings, have received much greater attention and care (even twice as much), compared to the ones that have not received grants and DILS trainings.

The evaluation results have shown that, the schools that have received school grants compared to the schools in control group have achieved a remarkable progress. Their teachers have gained more competences due to the trainings received, while the children with developmental disorders and disabilities reported being more accepted and satisfied. The school principals and professional teams for inclusive education share their opinion that the achievement of these

students significantly improved unlike, unfortunately, in the schools that have not received the similar support. This, again, corroborates the beneficiary effects of the DILS school programs grants.

There is also strong evidence that DILS trainings have greatly contributed to the improvement of quality of work with students who need additional support in education. Also, the support by the school psychologist/pedagogue has played a significant role in this matter.

Another significant sources of knowledge contributing to the quality of work with students who need additional support in education include participation in projects related to work with these students, accredited trainings for professional development in education, the provision of advice/support from other colleagues, literature and information available on the Internet and principals' support. The least contribution to the quality of work with students who need additional support in education, as reported, has been provided by attendance to the scientific meetings and conferences, formal education, cooperation with educational assistant and cooperation with NGOs.

Subject teachers, compared to other categories of employees, consider as the least significant for the improvement of the quality of work with students in a need of additional education support, the contribution of the individual sources of information, such as visits to the experimental classes, accredited trainings and DILS trainings. However, both subject teachers and classroom teachers in the first four grades in primary school share opinion that there is insufficient impact of cooperation with colleagues and formal education on the quality of the work with students who need additional support in education. Not surprisingly, the trainings recommended by respondents to their colleagues include mostly those aiming to develop generic competences for inclusive education.

The greatest effect, or a wide range of impact, is attributed to DILS training *Inclusive Education - Strategies and methods of adapting instruction for children with disabilities and gifted children*. Its value is in increasing the sensitivity of teachers for students from vulnerable groups, ensuring progress in the education of students from marginalized groups, conducting individualized approach to students, differentiating instruction and the use of different methods and techniques of working with students, governance of class with students from vulnerable groups, securing their progressing in education and their involvement in extracurricular activities and elaboration of pedagogical profile. This training also allows the exchange of good teaching practice, teamwork and collaboration in school.

The second ranking DILS training is *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning*. In addition to increasing motivation for learning, this training is considered useful for increasing the sensitivity of teachers for students from vulnerable groups, ensuring their advancement in education and their involvement in extracurricular activities. Since this is the training aimed at developing generic competencies, such multifaceted effect is to be expected.

The other two DILS trainings, *Inclusive Education - Planning and elaboration of the (Individual Education Plans - IEP)*, and *Inclusive Education - Monitoring, evaluation and revision of the IEP*, are perceived as useful in the specific domain of their purpose.

Research results have shown that the DILS/REF municipal grants program has met its goal: it has contributed to better cooperation of the actors on the local level in providing services and support to children from deprived groups; it united the various stakeholders, enabled a very good cooperation with educational assistants; much has been done on the provision of free meals and transportation for students from deprived communities; it activated schools to make plans for prevention of dropout and made the children from deprived backgrounds and their parents feel more satisfied and accepted in the school. According to the reports of all stakeholders, in DILS/REF schools the absenteeism of students from deprived communities has been significantly reduced while their school achievements have increased. However, despite the positive trends, there are still more effort needed to reduce drop out and increase the coverage of primary education.

All the above-mentioned are the effects that the DILS /REF program has achieved. Although it was not possible to compare the opinions of the preschool principals, heads of the municipal administration and representatives of non-governmental organizations, the obtained opinions of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of DILS/REF program show that the very noticeable and significant changes have occurred on the e level of the almost all investigated indicators of inclusiveness. Comparison of opinions of school principals who were involved in DILS/REF program and those who were not indicate that there are clearly visible differences in perceptions of changes related to the indicators of inclusiveness. A lot has been done and if we maintain the structures formed on the municipal level and if this work continues, the near future could lead to increasing coverage and reduction off drop out of children from deprived backgrounds.

This study has shown the vital importance of the synergy for the successful implementation of inclusive education of children from deprived groups. It is not possible to leave school alone to struggle with this problem. It is important that there is a cooperation with NGOs, that there are pedagogical assistants and that there is a field work, while the municipality has to provide the means to meet the basic needs of children from deprived backgrounds (free meals, clothing, transportation) in order to maximize coverage and prevent drop out. The effective and efficient cooperation among all stakeholders is essential; additional work on improving cooperation with the municipal Centers for Social Work is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Based on the obtained results, we may assume that the external support to schools and teachers through the program of grants and the program of trainings, increases the teachers' and schools' self-efficiency. Besides developing competences, this has contributed to a better and more successful inclusive education. DILS grant schools have clearly stated that it is

possible to achieve success in working with children with difficulties and disabilities, if teachers work on it and receive both direct instructions and feedback about their practice. Schools' experiences indicate that the success comes slowly and that the persistence and patience are necessary. However, the experience of success boosts self-efficacy and belief in own competence. One of the recommendations for the educational system concerning the improvement of inclusive education is that it should "dispel" negative self-fulfilling prophecies of schools and teachers. This means that those teachers who do not believe that it is possible to achieve success in working with children with disabilities act in those ways that do not lead to success. This keeps them in the mistaken belief that it is impossible to achieve this success. DILS/REF program has clearly shown that the school grants, trainings and, external support successfully dispel such beliefs.

The teachers' trainings should continue, tailored to the school/teachers' needs. Schools need to be encouraged and capable, through the school grant, to make at least the minimal improvement of the school infrastructure (e.g. purchase of appropriate textbooks for visually impaired children, construction of access ramps, etc.). This means that the school implicitly takes responsibility for the implementation of inclusive education.

Since the trainings oriented towards the development of generic competences were perceived as useful for working with students who need additional support in education, but also as useful for working with all students in the class, they should be continued/introduced as additional support to the improvement of teachers' competences and their teaching practices in the field of inclusive education. As their relationship with the DILS trainings is complementary, they can be combined with DILS trainings in a variety of ways, depending on the each individual school teachers' needs— prior to the DILS trainings, parallel with the DILS trainings, or after the package of the DILS trainings. Since the quality work with all students in the class is the basis of the quality work with students who need additional educational support, it is recommended that the trainings on the development of generic competences are combined with trainings that enhance teaching competences in the field of inclusive education. To improve inclusive practices in schools, training programs on the development of generic competences should include as many teachers from one school as possible, especially subject teachers.

Prospective trainings should cover the following areas: (1) work with students who need additional support in education (successful inclusion and ensuring progress in the education of students from socially non-stimulating environment; Individualization and individual education plan; active learning in working with students who need additional support in education), (2) work with students who need additional support in education and all students in the class (support to the development of students' personality, motivating students to learn, encouraging critical thinking, communication skills and the skills of constructive conflict resolution, use of different methods, forms and techniques of instruction and extracurricular activities, monitoring and assessment of student achievement) and (3) improving inclusive practices in schools (sensitization of teachers for the needs of students who need additional

support in education, communication skills and the skills of constructive conflict resolution, teamwork and cooperation in school).

As for the inclusion of children from deprived backgrounds, it is necessary to provide tangible incentives (subsidies) to positively prevent the drop out and influence the coverage of the most vulnerable groups. Here lies one of the most important contributions of DILS/REF grant. The cost of aid in clothes, shoes, transportation and free meals is relatively little compared to the future gain of involving the children in the labor market and making them tax contributors rather than social benefits users. In addition, it is necessary to have better developed systems of collecting field data to enable better evaluations of actions. However, the significant progress has been made through the local action plans. All municipalities own the most relevant data on the Roma population, but the schools do not keep this information (e.g. absenteeism, drop out, coverage, achievement of children from deprived backgrounds) because the legal framework does not stipulate that. Changes and amendments to the legal framework regarding these items are recommended for the successful implementation of inclusive education of children from deprived backgrounds. The mere facts that the DILS/REF program has had the noticeable effects and that the changes in municipalities where the program has been implemented have been far more noticeable than elsewhere indicates that the existing legal framework does not foresee sufficient level of pro-activity and cooperation between the institutions. In cases where this kind of cooperation is stipulated by the law, it is possible that the legal solutions are not fully implemented. Creating data systems and monitoring of parameters about inclusiveness and other aspects of the education system can serve as a mechanism to control and monitor the implementation of legal solutions.

DILS/REF program provides valuable guidelines for the further steps and aspects of the system to be developed. Without completely clear information at the school and municipal level, the allocation of resources can be reduced, and this is what the DILS/REF program sought to correct. Importance of pedagogical assistants to carry out the plans and keep the children from the deprived backgrounds in the system is vital.

DILS program of school grants and DILS/REF municipal grants program testify to the fact that it is possible to succeed when there is a common goal and support of the Ministry. Additional work is required to increase the awareness of the importance of recording, analyzing and evaluating of each implemented procedure. With a clear and apparent good will of all stakeholders, the legal framework and the introduction of the Unified Information System of Education, every action can be assessed as more or less effective, and improved accordingly. The synergy created on the local level, is according to the stakeholders, best reflected in the drastic increase of children from deprived communities who receive social security and other material support. Some of these solutions should become permanent systemic solutions (e.g., hiring professional services in the provision of social security, more flexible procedures for social assistance, as well as preparing of evidence based local action plans in municipalities).

INTRODUCTION: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SERBIA

Until the adoption of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System of the Republic of Serbia (LoFE) in 2009 there were a number of individual initiatives that have followed and supported the process of inclusion implemented in the national system of education. Since the adoption of the aforementioned law, our educational system has been enriched by a series of measures that have paved the way to a systemic implementation of inclusive education in Serbia.

These changes were confirmed and supplemented by the amendments to the Law on the Foundations of the Education System in 2013 in which some solutions related to inclusive education have been more precisely specified (e.g. prevention of early school leaving with preventive measures to become a compulsory part of the education system; Article 6 stipulates setting up the Agency for Education to monitor these processes; Articles 24a and 24b, emphasize the importance of community support to children attending school according to the individual educational plan (IEP) with modified achievement standards, etc.). The essence of the law has remained the same: the state of Serbia has recognized the importance of inclusive education and made it strategically important for the improvement of the education system.

Thus, following the law, a functional model of inclusive education has been designed accompanied by the guide for the implementation of inclusive education. Coordination of the implementation of inclusive education is performed by the Team for inclusive education of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) in cooperation with decision-makers of all structures and levels.

All of the abovementioned is important for several reasons. Our education system cannot be proud with high students' achievement, as shown by PISA survey data. This is not surprising, given the transitional period and adjusting our education to the needs of the market economy and the information society, which require time. However, the equity of our education, according to the same survey, is perhaps the best aspect of our educational system. Although there are those who "merits" of this equity ascribe to the developed network of schools, accessible to all, being a legacy of the socialist society, examples of other countries (e.g. Poland and Finland) show that developing and fostering equity in education is a necessary path that leads to the increase of education quality. Equity as the possibility for children of different socioeconomic status to attain high academic achievements, as well as the possibility that schools adapt to the needs of children with disabilities, proves the society openness and fairness, but also the way in which the school provides a quality education to certain groups of students. Adapting and changing schools in the direction of increasing equity leads to the increase of education quality. Many countries have achieved the remarkable educational progress firstly by increasing equity which has soon led to the increase in the academic achievement of all students.

Numerous measures introduced by the LoFE foresee changes of educational practice that will by increasing the equity lead to increase of quality. The LoFE was followed by a number of bylaws (regulations) that further stipulate the obligations and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in education and ways to implement inclusive education.

Preparatory Preschool Program (PPP). This measure is based on psychological findings about the importance of early learning for future educational achievement. Particularly, it should have a positive impact on Roma children, who are generally deprived of early cognitive-stimulative content. According to the Law on the Foundations of Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", no. 72/ 09 , Article 97) a parent or guardian whose child is not involved in the preschool education, is obliged to enroll a child aged five and a half to six and a half years to preschool institution, or elementary school that implements PPP and has the right to choose a preschool institution or elementary school. Preschool institution, established by a local self-government, or an elementary school that provides preschool program, and whose founder is the Republic of Serbia, autonomous province or local self-government, are required to enroll each child in a preparatory preschool program, regardless of the residence of the parents.

Enrollment procedures and the establishment of classes (affirmative action). Affirmative action aims to empower Roma families in fulfilling their right to education. LoFE (Article 98) stipulates that each child, age between six and a half and seven and a half years until the beginning of a school year should enroll in the first grade. Due to the specific living conditions, children from deprived backgrounds (children from socially non-stimulative environment: Roma children, poor children, refugee children, children of displaced persons and children with disabilities) can enroll school after the specified enrollment period. Exceptionally, these children can enroll without parents' certificate of residence and necessary documents, including a certificate of attendance of preparatory preschool program.

Class size. Reduced class size is intended to provide the child who needs additional educational support with this support from teachers in a greater extent and time. According to the *Professional instruction on the establishment of the department and ways of financing primary and secondary schools*, the number of students in the class having students who are educated according to the individual educational plan (IEP) is reduced by the two, for each student with disabilities who is educated according to the IEP in the regular program (without adjusting standards of achievement), and by the three students, for each student with disabilities who is educated according to the IEP, modified program (with adjusted achievement standards).

Profiling/adaptation of teaching/differentiation of instruction. Individualization and differentiation of instruction are introduced to adjust teaching to the child and his/her capabilities needs and interests, not the child to the teaching. According to the *Regulation on detailed instructions for determining the rights to the individual education plan, its implementation and evaluation* ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 76/10, Articles 2 and 3) an educator, a teacher, or an associate, in addition to already given information about the child, or the student, collects data from various sources (from parents or guardians or child/student, professionals outside the educational institution who know the child/student ,

peers and the child/student, in a way that is possible), using a variety of techniques, such as systematic observation of the activities of the child/student in a variety of situations, testing, and interviewing and filling out the questionnaire by the students and others who know the child/student, etc.

Individual Education Plan (IEP). This measure enables school team and associates to create adequate and appropriate educational support to children in need. In the case of Roma children, the appropriate use of these measures may allow them to receive additional support in the education that they need. According to the *Regulation on detailed instructions for determining the rights to the individual education plan, its implementation and evaluation* ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 76/10, Article 5), IEP is a written document of the institution, planning additional support in the education and upbringing of the child or student if prior adjustments and elimination of physical and communication barriers have not led to achieving general education outcomes. IEP is also prepared meet the educational needs of students with exceptional abilities.

Free textbooks. The use of free textbooks is a very important measure, which aims to provide a learning tool for those who often do not have enough resources to obtain them themselves. To a large number of Roma students this measure is very helpful and supportive. According to the *Regulation on additional educational, health and social support for children and students* ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 63/2010, Article 4) and the *Regulation on the training program for pedagogical assistant* (Articles 3 and 4) the school is obliged to provide free textbooks and other instructional supplies to a child if it is estimated that the child needs them.

Pedagogical assistants (PA). Pedagogical assistants have been introduced into the education system to help Roma children to access education, to realize the right to social security and health care, to assist them in acquisition of language and reducing language barriers. Their assistance is necessary in the formative period of the first acquisition of scientific concepts, in facilitating their integrating into the educational system and strengthening their self-confidence. According to the *Regulation on additional educational, health and social support for child and student* ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 63/2010, Article 4) and the *Regulation of the training program for teaching assistant* (Articles 3 and 4) pedagogical assistants who speak Romani Language strive to *continuously improve work with students who need additional support in education*, assisting educator, teacher and professional associate, particularly in the preparation and implementation of the educational process, including assessment, taking into account previous experience and knowledge of children and students .

Health/social insurance. Health care and social insurance is very important when it comes to vulnerable groups that are not able to satisfy the basic needs. According to the *Regulations on additional educational, health and social support for children and students* ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", no. 63/2010, Article 4) assessment of the child's needs is performed in order to assess their needs and ability to provide direct and indirect additional support that requires additional funds, within the family, in the regular education system, in a special pre-

school group or school in a social or health care, whereby immediate additional support that requires additional funds consist, inter alia, of: a) organization of educational support in case of prolonged absence from school due to severe and chronic diseases, in order to achieve continuity in education, in the form of increased remedial instruction, individual work and engagement of experts with specialized knowledge, b) engagement of a psychologist or a person who knows the child in order to realize the health care, c) the right on health care services, which are not covered by health insurance and provision of home health services, g) facilitating free participation in cultural, sport and recreational activities organized by the school.

Antidiscriminatory measures. Preventing discrimination, besides protecting the basic human rights that, makes children feel more comfortable and secure in the school what can have a positive impact on their educational achievement. According to the LoFE (Article 44 and 45), acts of threatening, disparaging, discriminating or separating persons or groups of persons, on the basis of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or sex, physical and psychological characteristics, disabilities, medical condition, age, social and cultural background, economic status, or political affiliation, or by another basis stipulated by law on antidiscrimination, as well as encouraging or failing to prevent such activities, are prohibited in the institution.

Additional and remedial classes. According to the LoFE, Article 136, the full-time teacher has 20 hours of direct teaching during a week and *four hours other forms of direct educational work with students* (remedial, additional, individualized, preparatory work and other forms of work).

Network of support to inclusive education (www.mrezainkluzija.org). MoESTD has formed a support network for teachers and schools to assist them in introducing inclusive education practices. Support network includes school staff, experienced practitioners, teachers, support staff, principals, employees of the Ministry of Education, including school administrators, experts from the Institute for the Improvement of Education and the Institute for Quality Education, and representatives of non-governmental organization.

1. ABOUT THE STUDY

As already mentioned, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has implemented a number of activities to improve and modernize the education system. One of the key elements of the reform is setting up the new legal framework capable of providing an effective, efficient and equitable learning environment.

One of the Ministry's projects was *Delivery of Improved Local Services (DILS) Project*, developed in order to support the strengthening of the capacity of institutional stakeholders in the social sectors (education, social protection and health) in Serbia to provide the users with more effective and more accessible services of uniform quality in increasingly decentralized environment. DILS project (since 2009 till 2012) conducted a number of activities aimed at improving inclusive education, such as: a) the training of teachers, principals, psychologists and pedagogues, b) the allocation of grants to schools for strengthening inclusive education, c) assigning grants to municipalities for educational inclusion of Roma children, d) preparation of strategic documents and relevant bylaws, e) preparation of publications based on the conducted research, f) the creation of a mechanism at the national level to support schools and d) establishing support to the newly formed local inter-sectoral committees. Effects of the DILS project became evident after 2011, since the implementation was completed in 2010.

Bearing in mind that the DILS project is ending in late December 2013, MoESTD has recognized the need to examine: a) the extent to which the DILS project has contributed to the improvement of school classroom practice in terms of inclusive education, b) what changes have been expected and what is expected of teachers to do differently after they have received training, what changes have been expected and what are the schools and municipalities expected to do differently after they have received grants, and c) what lessons can be drawn regarding the DILS program interventions and used in further improvement of educational inclusion of children from vulnerable groups. Therefore, the presented study *main objective* has been to evaluate the effects of the program, and at the same time implicitly evaluate the possibilities of implementation of legal measures and to assess their effects. DILS project, thus, seeks to ensure the sustainability of project interventions, which, after the end of the project, thanks to the legal framework, will become a part of the permanent systemic solutions.

More specifically, *the main objective* of this study was to evaluate the effects of the two components of the DILS project related to education: a) the program "Strengthening schools for inclusive education" at the school level, which includes training for school staff and grants for school projects and b) grant program "Education Inclusion of Roma" (DILS/REF program).

The introductory part of the study is devoted to presenting the DILS project and a series of interventions it contained - content of the training, presentation of school grants and municipal grants, along with the measures created within these programs which aim to increase the inclusiveness of education. This is followed by the presentation of the indicators of

inclusiveness based on which the evaluation of the effects of the DILS grant programs was done. The study also measured indicators of inclusiveness through the assessment of educational stakeholders and data available in schools.

For the evaluation of DILS trainings for teachers, a questionnaire was created. It aimed to determine the usefulness, applicability of the trainings, as well as the level of teachers' satisfaction with trainings.

In order to evaluate the effects of school grants, an experimental group of schools that have gone through a grant program was created, and a control group of schools that were matched for confounding variables with the experimental (treatment) group of schools (geographic distribution, size, assessment of the school by regional school administration).

Also, in order to assess the effect of school grants, experimental (treatment) group of municipalities that participated in the DILS/REF program was created, and the control group of municipalities uniformed according to the geographical distribution of schools, the existence of Roma programs before DILS/REF program, the number of Roma in the municipality, the number of special schools and classes and the number of pedagogical assistants in the municipality.

On the basis of indicators of inclusiveness questionnaires were created for school principals and school coordinators of DILS program, Roma coordinators in the municipalities, and the heads of social affairs in the municipalities which had not participated in the DILS/REF program, for preschool institutions and NGOs operating at the municipal level at improving of the Roma students' position. The designed questionnaires aimed to collect the opinions on the change according to the aforementioned indicators of inclusiveness in the experimental (treatment) group of schools and municipalities and a control group of schools and municipalities.

Opinions of competent in-school professional staff on the changes in school and at municipal level since 2011, and data collected between 2006 and 2012, together with estimations of competent representatives in the municipal level, in preschool institutions and Roma NGOs stand as dependent variables based on which experimental (treatment) group of schools and municipalities was compared with a control group of schools and municipalities.

2. ABOUT DILS PROGRAM - SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS AND MUNICIPALITIES

2.1. Program "Strengthening schools for inclusive education" - DILS school grants and trainings for teachers

This program aimed at improving the capacity of schools for the successful inclusion and quality education for children who need additional support in education. The program consisted of two sub-components: a) four sets of thematic trainings for capacity building of teachers for inclusive education, which included 313 schools (i.e. 295 primary and 18 secondary schools) in all regions of Serbia (more precisely, in 134 out of 165 municipalities) and b) grants for school projects to 298 schools (282 primary schools and 16 secondary schools), out of the 313 schools included in the abovementioned thematic trainings. From 134 out of the 165 municipalities, at least one school received a school grant.

A) Four sets of thematic trainings were organized for members of the inclusive school teams or all employees from 313 schools. Four kinds of trainings included:

1. The two-day training *Strategies and methods of adapting instruction for children with disabilities and gifted children*. The objective of this training was to build understanding and ensure the application of different teaching models for children with different learning needs. Number of participants: 53 groups of 313 schools, a total of 1484 participants, 51 coaches.
2. The two-day training *Planning and Individual Education Plan (IEP)*. Number of participants: 53 groups from 313 schools, 1470 participants, 36 coaches.
3. One-day training *Monitoring, evaluation and revision of the Individual Education Plan (IEP)*. Number of participants: 30 groups from 180 schools, 699 participants, 33 coaches.
4. The two-day training *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning*. The objective of this training was to increase the generic competencies of teachers for more efficient and effective teaching, through the implementation of various learning strategies and support to students in developing self-regulatory learning strategies and motivation for learning. Number of participants: 206 groups, 6,006 participants, 78 coaches.

Coaches were trained by local consultants and authors of trainings, as well as through observation of the training.

B) Schools (298 of them) in the program "Strengthening schools for inclusive education" received a grant for the development and implementation of school projects with an aim to achieve two of the five goals:

1. Improving the professional competencies of employees to work with students with disabilities and learning difficulties;
2. Sensitization of school stakeholders and the local community for the acceptance and support to students with disabilities and learning difficulties;
3. Enhancing cooperation with parents of students with disabilities and learning difficulties;
4. Better involvement of students with disabilities and learning difficulties in the educational process;
5. Providing access to the school premises for students with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Total of 1,181.955.66 euro was allocated for schools through grants, meaning round 4,000 Euros per school.

2.2. Program "Educational Inclusion of Roma" - DILS/REF municipal grants

This component DILS program aimed to contribute to creation and implementation of the policy of Roma integration at the municipal level. The group of selected municipalities in which the DILS/REF program was implemented contained total of 56 municipalities selected, on the basis of two main criteria: a) the level of economic development of the municipality (an index of economic development), where the less developed municipalities were selected and b) the aggregate composite index based on a series of indicators derived from a group of indicators from official records related to the Roma population (e.g. number of Roma population), as well as indicators collected by the Roma Education Fund (REF). Within a total of 56 financed municipal programs, municipal grant was given to 192 local educational institutions (pre-school institutions and primary schools) and 56 NGOs.

Grant of 2,000,000 total euro aid was awarded to the municipal development teams from the DILS budget, meaning that on average one municipality received around 35,000 euro for the purpose of increasing the educational inclusion of Roma students through increasing the availability and quality of education.

Local development teams consist of representatives of local governments, educational institutions at the municipal level (preschool institution and at least two elementary schools) and at least one Roma non-governmental organizations (NGO).

The responsibilities of each of the participating municipalities were as follows:

- To provide a complete analysis of the educational needs of Roma children and comprehensive planning of development interventions in the community in order to achieve the overall objectives of the project;

- To remove barriers to access to realization of right to education for Roma children; as well as to provide full coverage of Roma children during the enrollment in preschool and elementary school;
- To significantly increase the participation of Roma children in pre-school education;
- To significantly improve the quality of services at the local level for Roma children;
- To strengthen the responsiveness of local authorities and other bodies responsible for the promotion of social integration of Roma children in the community;
- To provide the inclusion of any educational institution in activities aimed at the achievement of project objectives;
- To create Local action plan to ensure the sustainability of the implementation of inclusion of Roma students.

In order to provide additional support in 56 municipal teams, 26 municipal mentors were engaged in the period of development of the local project and during its implementation.

3. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

For different components of the DILS program special methodology was developed, tailored to the specificities of implementation of the individual components. The methodology is presented in the following sections, along with the indicators of inclusive education that have been created for this purpose. These indicators present "dependent variable", or indicators used as basis to evaluate the effects of school programs and municipal grants. For evaluation of the effects of trainings for teachers, teachers' opinions about the usefulness of training and reducing the gap between the pupils' needs and teaching competencies were used. During elaboration of the methodology, recommended OECD DAC criteria¹ for evaluating development aid were followed (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability).

3.1. Methodology of Evaluating Effects of DILS School Grants within the Program "Strengthening Schools for Inclusive Education"

The main aim of the research. The main goal of this research was to determine the contribution of school grants to the improvement of working conditions in schools, raising human capacities for the implementation of educational inclusion of children with disabilities and to improve the quality of inclusive education of children with developmental disorders and disabilities. The improvement in the implementation of inclusion has been measured on the basis of the developed indicators of inclusiveness (see 3.4.). For this purpose we have used quantitative data schools possess (if they regularly keep the records on required data), opinions of all educational stakeholders involved the implementation of the project at the school level (principal, professional team for inclusive education, school coordinators of the DILS project). In future, this study may be complemented with focus groups discussions with parents, students and teachers, as well as with creating of the questionnaire for this group of respondents.

The main research questions. According to the opinions of school principals, professional team for inclusive education and school coordinators of DILS project, the main research question was how has the grant program contributed to improving working conditions in schools, how has it raised human resources capacities in realization of inclusive education and has had a positive effects on students, shown through indicators of inclusiveness. Furthermore, additional research questions were related to the identification of potential difficulties and obstacles in improving inclusive education. Also, examples of good practice to be shared with other schools were identified, as well as lessons learned from the implementation of inclusive education.

¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/49756382.pdf>

Method. We used an experimental draft². Here we need to have in mind that complete and perfect randomization (equalization) of schools due to the specificities of the schools in the experimental and control group, according to the definition, is difficult and problematic. The experimental (treatment) group included the selected schools that have received DILS school grants, while the control group included schools that were by geographical location (belonging to the same regional school administration) similar to their pair in the experimental group, with the same result of the external evaluation. Their size is also comparable (i.e. similar number of students in both experimental and control groups schools). These criteria and the schools that have entered the sample were selected by the DILS team by random selection. This criterion has been used due to the feasibility of the study in a short period of time and the involvement of the regional school administration in conducting the research, since the regional school administrations have the close contacts with schools and are the most familiar with the working conditions in the school, as well as the quality of school work.

Opinions of the school principals involved in the DILS program were compared with opinions of the principals of the schools not involved in the same program. Opinions of the heads of regional school administrations are presented descriptively because they were required to compare the schools involved in the program and those out of the program, according to the indicators of inclusiveness.

Independent variable. Participation in DILS program of school grants.

Dependent variable. Opinions of the respondents on indicators of inclusiveness. Opinions of respondents are related to the change that occurred regarding the indicators of inclusiveness since 2011.

The sample of schools. The sample is representative, covering the schools that have received a school grant. It is random stratified sample. The 16 schools were in experimental (treatment) group, and the same number of schools was in the control group. The experimental (treatment) group of schools represented 5% of schools that have received the DILS school grant. The schools from all regional school administrations were included. The sample of schools that received school grant was representative in relation to the overall population of schools (298), which received DILS school a grant³.

² The experimental draft means that the effect of some action or intervention is estimated by comparing similar units of analysis (in this case the schools) divided into two groups, in the experimental in which some interventions is happening, whose influence we want to examine, and the control group, which needs to be as more similar to the experimental as possible, so the change in the dependent variable (what is the effect of the intervention, and the main object of measurement) could be attributed solely to the effects of intervention/measures (i.e. independent variable)

³ Commonly used formula for calculating the desired sample size (n), which requires that we have assumed that the proportion of occurrence in the population measure (pq), the desired level of statistical significance (z), is assessed standard error (which depends on the variability of the phenomena that we study) and the desired confidence interval that we want to achieve (c) to read as follows: $n = \frac{z_c^2 pq}{c^2}$, it shall be corrected by the formula $n = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{n-1}{N}}$

because we have a limited population (N = 298).

Instruments. Electronic (online) questionnaire was designed via Qualtrics platform for school principals (in order to collect opinion of the Professional team for inclusive education and school coordinators of DILS project). In addition, a questionnaire for heads of the school administrations was developed. It evaluated the degree of presence of changes in the implementation of inclusive education in DILS schools and schools out of the DILS program. The questionnaire consisted of scales of assessment, filling out forms for the school data and open questions intended to identify examples of good practice, challenges in the implementation of inclusive education and lessons learned.

3.2. Methodology of Evaluating the Effects of DILS Trainings for Teachers

The main aim of the research. The main aim of the evaluation of the effects of the DILS teacher trainings has been related to the teachers' opinions on to which extent the trainings have contributed to inclusive school practice.

The main research questions. The main research questions were related to the training participants' perception of: a) the effects of trainings - the usefulness and contribution to the improvement of teacher competences and their professional development for inclusive education, b) missing competencies and the teachers' needs for additional trainings in the field of inclusive education, c) the extent to which the horizontal learning has contributed to the classroom practice in terms of applying the appropriate teaching methods, techniques and tools for improving the quality of teaching and more intensive involvement of children in need of additional support in education. Also, the data obtained could be used as a basis for planning further trainings and projects aimed at the foster professional development of teachers for inclusive education.

Method. Exploratory method. Questionnaire was used to determine the level of efficiency of the trainings and how have teachers changed their work depending on the presence at the DILS trainings.

Sample. Out of the total number of teachers in the school, sample has covered all the teachers who have undergone trainings in 16 schools (one from each regional school administration). This means that the selected schools included all members of professional team for inclusive education that passed DILS trainings, as well as the teachers who have received internal training provided by the participants - members of professional team for inclusive education. These members of professional team for inclusive education are from schools which have received the grant.

Instrument. Electronic (*online*) questionnaire was designed so that it can simultaneously be filled in by different categories of respondents - teachers of primary schools from first to fourth

grade and subject teachers. Besides the questions about demographics, the questionnaire contained questions that included following thematic areas: a) activities that teachers employ in working with students who need additional educational support, b) the sources of information that influence teacher practice, c) usefulness and applicability of the knowledge acquired on the trainings, aimed to improve the inclusive education d) ranking of the trainings by the quality and impact on teacher practice.

3.3. Research Methodology of Evaluating Effects of DILS/REF Municipal Grants within the Program „Educational Inclusion of Roma“

The main aim of the research. The main aim of the study was to determine the contribution of municipal grants to the improvement of working conditions at school and municipal level and raising human capacity for the implementation of educational inclusion of children and improvement of the quality of inclusive education for children from deprived communities (Roma students). The improvement in the implementation of inclusion has been measured on the basis of the created indicator of inclusiveness (see 3.4.). They are measured by quantitative data which the schools possess (if they regularly keep the records of required data), the opinions of all educational stakeholders involved the implementation of the project at the municipal level (municipal project coordinator in the municipalities that have received a municipal grant, the regional school administrations and heads of the department for social affairs, schools (principal, professional team for inclusive education, professional associate), preschool institutions (principal with the assistance of the professional service) and non-governmental organizations (NGO)(a person who has been involved in the implementation of projects at the municipal level). In addition, opinions of the heads of the regional school administrations have been examined.

The main research questions. Based on the opinions of municipal coordinators, school principals, principals of pre-school institutions, NGO representatives and heads of regional school administrations and the data available from all institutions at the municipal level involved in the project, the first question was related to the effect DILS/REF project has had in the field of the educational inclusion of Roma students and what effects it has had on students, presented through the indicators of inclusiveness, i.e. whether the allocation of grants has had positive impact on the enrollment, attendance and progress of students coming from deprived communities (Roma students). The next question was whether the DILS/REF program achieved a positive effect on inter-sectoral cooperation at the local level, i.e. how the project interventions were relevant, effective, efficient, sustainable and participatory at the local level for the accessibility and inclusion of students who come from deprived environment. The last question referred to the effect DILS/REF project achieved in relation to the capacities of local institutions for planning, implementation and monitoring of the results of inclusive education.

Method. Experimental draft was used. We need to have in mind that the unification of municipalities has been even more difficult than the unification of schools. Speaking of the school unification, the socioeconomic status of students in the two schools was similar, since the control group may contain school from the same municipality where the school from treatment group is located. For municipalities, the index of economic development of the municipality had to be used. However, this index may be insensitive to a number of local specificities (e.g., the dominant industrial activity in the municipality, the number of schools, geographical features such as demographic segregation of Roma settlements, etc.). In order to better harmonize the municipalities in the experimental (treatment) group and a control group, the representatives of the DILS team have used the following criteria (confounding variables) for the standardization of the experimental and control groups: similar geographical position of the municipality, number of Roma in the municipality and the percentage of Roma population, development index of the municipality, average salary, number of pedagogical assistants, number of special schools and departments, and non-inclusion in other Roma programs. Such choice of municipalities for the control and experimental group is equalized on the basis of "similarity score" (propensity match score) rather than on stratified random sampling method, which uses a smaller number of criteria for a random choice. In this way, the best possible unification of municipalities has been done. Opinions were compared within the matching groups of respondents. Opinions of the school principals involved in DILS/REF program were analyzed and compared with opinions of school principals who were involved in the same program. The same applied to the municipal coordinator whose opinions were compared with opinions of the head of the regional school administration or head of social affairs in the municipality which was not included in DILS/REF program, as well as the principals of preschool institutions and representatives of Roma NGOs. Opinions of the heads of the regional school administrations are presented descriptively because they were required to compare schools involved in the program and those outside of it by the indicators of inclusiveness.

Independent variable. The involvement of municipalities (and with it the schools, pre-school institutions and non-governmental organizations) in DILS/REF program.

Dependent variable. Opinions of the respondents (school principals, municipal coordinators about the indicators of inclusivity. Opinions of respondents refer to the change related to the indicators of inclusiveness since 2011.

Sample. Out of the total of 55 municipalities that received municipal grant, 5 municipalities were selected, while in the control group there were four municipalities. The 15 schools (three from each municipality) entered the experimental (treatment) group and 12 schools entered the control group. The five representatives of NGOs entered the experimental (treatment) group and four the control group. The five municipal coordinators have completed the questionnaire in the experimental (treatment) group, while the four heads of the regional school administration completed the questionnaire in the control group. The five principals of preschool institutions completed the questionnaire in the experimental (treatment) group, while the four principals of preschool institutions completed the questionnaire in the control

group. The nine heads of the regional school administrations completed the questionnaire for educational advisers.

Instruments. Electronic (online) questionnaires were designed via Qualtrics platform for school principals, municipal coordinators and heads of regional school administrations, NGO representatives and principals of pre-schools. Questionnaire for school principals was the same for evaluating DILS school grants and DILS/REF municipal grants. The data analyzed were for the group of children for which the grant was mostly used. The questionnaires consisted of the scale of assessment, filling out forms for school data and open questions to identify examples of good practice, challenges in the implementation of inclusive education and lessons learned.

3.4. Indicators of Inclusive Education

Since the different ways to support the school have the same goal - whether they come from the municipal level or by providing additional funding to school – which is successful education of children who require additional support in education because they come from deprived backgrounds or manifest different learning disabilities or handicaps - different levels and kind of support can be measured by the same indicators that can be called *indicators of inclusive education*. The indicators of school inclusiveness include those indicators that represent the final educational effect on the level of a student who needs additional support, which can be measured quantitatively, or on the basis of opinions of educational stakeholders.

These indicators are:

- **Lower dropout rate**

Lower dropout rate is a reduction in the number of children from deprived backgrounds and children with developmental disabilities who leave school for good due to poor living conditions (poverty) and/or inadequate support and rejection within the school.

- **Lower rates of absenteeism**

Lower rate of absenteeism represents a lower degree of absence from school of students who need additional educational support, in the form of excused or unexcused classes. Absenteeism is often a prelude to early school leaving (drop out). In other countries, data on absenteeism are used in the system for early identification of children who are under the risk of leaving school.

- **Higher academic achievement**

School achievement of children who need additional support in education reflects the effectiveness of inclusive education. It is one of the factors that most successfully prevent the drop out. School achievement of these children is more adequate to observe through intra-individual progress, improvement with regard to the previous achievements of the child rather than in comparison with other peers.

- **Lower rate of repetition**

Repetition of children who come from deprived backgrounds or have a disability indicates inadequate educational practice and a low degree of sensitivity to the specificities of a child, as well as the absence of the developed individual educational plans.

- **Greater coverage with pre-school and primary education**

A large number of children who need additional educational support, who entered regular school, indicate the synergic activities of local institutions and successful inclusive practice. Increasing of the coverage sets up a foundation for a more successful future social inclusion and poverty reduction of vulnerable subpopulations.

- **The degree of mobility to higher levels of education**

Mobility to higher levels of education reflects the successful inclusive education and training of children in need of additional educational support for the labor market.

- **The rate of segregation**

Segregation may represent different things. It may be geographic (in a case of isolated Roma settlements, where their residents can hardly use existing school network and other local services); it can occur through the existence of "Roma schools" or schools that have a larger number of Roma students; it can occur within the school in the form of the isolated classes that have predominantly Roma students or students with disabilities. It can also occur within a class, if the children from deprived backgrounds sit alone and/or together in the last rows. Segregation within the class may apply to children with developmental disorders and disabilities and non-Roma children.

- **Students' and parents' satisfaction with school**

Satisfaction with school is one of the consequences of the positive fulfillment of previous indicators, but also the consequence of the existence of an inclusive culture and diversity tolerance, as well as an increased sensitivity of teachers to the specificities of the child.

- **Intersectoral cooperation at the municipal level**

This kind of cooperation is the synergistic action of various institutions at the local level, which leads to a positive effect on the abovementioned indicators. It is one of the prerequisites for a successful inclusive education.

The indicators used in this study are *de facto* dependent variables that need to be outcomes of the successful process of inclusion. On the basis of these indicators, rating scales were created. Their aim was to identify changes related to the indicators of inclusive education. In addition to these indicators, it should be borne in mind that some of the specificities of the educational process could not be quantitatively measured and expressed numerically. Therefore, each of the questionnaires contained the possibility of giving the answers to open questions, and striving to identify examples of good practice, challenges/difficulties in the implementation of inclusive education, as well as lessons learned.

4. FINDINGS ON THE EFFECTS OF DILS PROGRAM

The research findings are presented by components of DILS program because the different components of the program required a different methodology to estimate their effects. The findings on the effects of DILS school grants are presented first, followed by the results related to the DILS teacher training and finally, the effects of DILS/REF program of municipal grants.

4.1. Findings on the Effects of DILS School Grants

The findings on the effects of DILS school grants include opinions of the Head of Regional School Administration (RSA) on the differences in the changes of the indicators of inclusion that have occurred in schools that have received DILS school grants and the other schools under their RSA jurisdiction; the comparison of opinions of school principals that have received DILS school grants with the opinions the control group on the intensity of the changes that have happened according to the indicators of inclusion since 2011 until today; the comparison of available data collected from schools about the level of additional support provided to children who need additional support in schools. Finally, the examples of good practices, challenges and difficulties, as well as lessons learned from schools that received DILS school grant are presented.

4.1.1. Regional School Administration Views

Educational advisors are of great importance for assessing the quality of the school and are very well familiar with the situation in schools within their school administration. Therefore, their opinions and assessment of the changes that have taken place in the schools that have received DILS school grants are very important. In assessing the effects of the DILS school grants program, they were asked to assess to which extent, by the offered statements, schools included in the DILS school grants program differ from schools that were not included in the program in their school administration region. They were estimating on a 4-level scale how do DILS schools differ from schools not included in the DILS program where the number 2 indicated that the difference was not present, number 3 that the difference between the schools was insignificant, number 4 that there was a noticeable difference while the number 5 indicated that the difference was highly notable. Chart 1 shows the mean of opinions of Heads of RSA that filled the questionnaire with the assistance of their educational advisors.

The graph does not show statistical significance or the standard errors because the testing was done on the entire population of school administrations and not on the sample. The standard deviation of responses to each item shows that the smallest deviations are about 0.5 which indicates that the opinion of educational advisors on these items vary the least which may lead to the assumption that the differences between DILS school and those outside DILS program are stable in various school administrations. These are the items that have been most positively rated by educational advisors indicating the strongest effects of DILS program grants. Some items have a much higher standard deviation ($\sigma \approx 1$), and these

are the items that educational advisors rated the lowest, which means that the effect of DILS program on these items are the smallest (e.g. developing of systematized measures to prevent drop-out and reduce discrimination in schools). That means that some DILS school better than other DILS schools develop and formalize these measures, but also that DILS schools pay less attention to the students from deprived backgrounds because DILS school grants program was not mainly focused on this group of students and schools from the experimental group (schools that have received school grants DILS) do not have a large population of these students. The displayed items are the ones that all educational advisors could score (each item had the option that respondent cannot estimate the effect of it).

When we look at Figure 1, we can see that the pedagogical advisers stated that the smallest effect of DILS program was on the enrichment of school infrastructure and that in this respect there is the smallest difference between the schools included in the DILS program and schools not included in the DILS program ($M = 3.58$ - means that this difference is somewhere between slightly and moderate). This should not be surprising because the DILS grants were given mainly to the poorer schools and the average grant (€ 3500) was insufficient to drastically improve the school infrastructure. However, when we look at the opinion of educational advisors on what distinguishes most the DILS schools from schools outside the DILS program in, we can see that relatively small investments have a very positive effect on the inclusive culture within the school ($M = 4.36$), on the competence of teachers to work with children who need the additional educational support ($M = 4.33$ - which presents the effect of DILS training), the procedures for placing children needing additional educational support into the classes ($M = 4.27$), the procedures of affirmative action ($M = 4.18$), and the fact that these children feel more accepted and more satisfied at school ($M = 4.18$). According to the education advisors, DILS schools differ from schools not included in the DILS program by the higher achievements of school children with disabilities and those in need of additional educational support ($M = 4$), more effective collaboration between the teachers and parents ($M = 4.17$) and by better individualized teaching to meet the needs of children ($M = 4$). This indicates that, in the opinion of educational advisors, there are stable effects of DILS school grant.

In the opinion of educational advisors, somewhat weaker effects are present regarding the cooperation between schools and the institutions of local self-government at the municipal level. Although there are differences between schools that received DILS school grant and those that did not, the difference is somewhat smaller. There are slight differences also in cooperation with the Inter-sectorial commission, Center for Social Welfare, Health Center and municipality. Given that the DILS school grant mainly focused on supporting and activating the school and to the strengthening its internal procedures, competence development and providing better conditions for the implementation of inclusive education within the schools and classrooms, while the DILS/REF municipal grants aimed at activation of the all partners and stakeholders in the municipality, this is understandable finding especially bearing in mind that the quality of cooperation with institutions in the community depends not only on the school but also on other institutions.

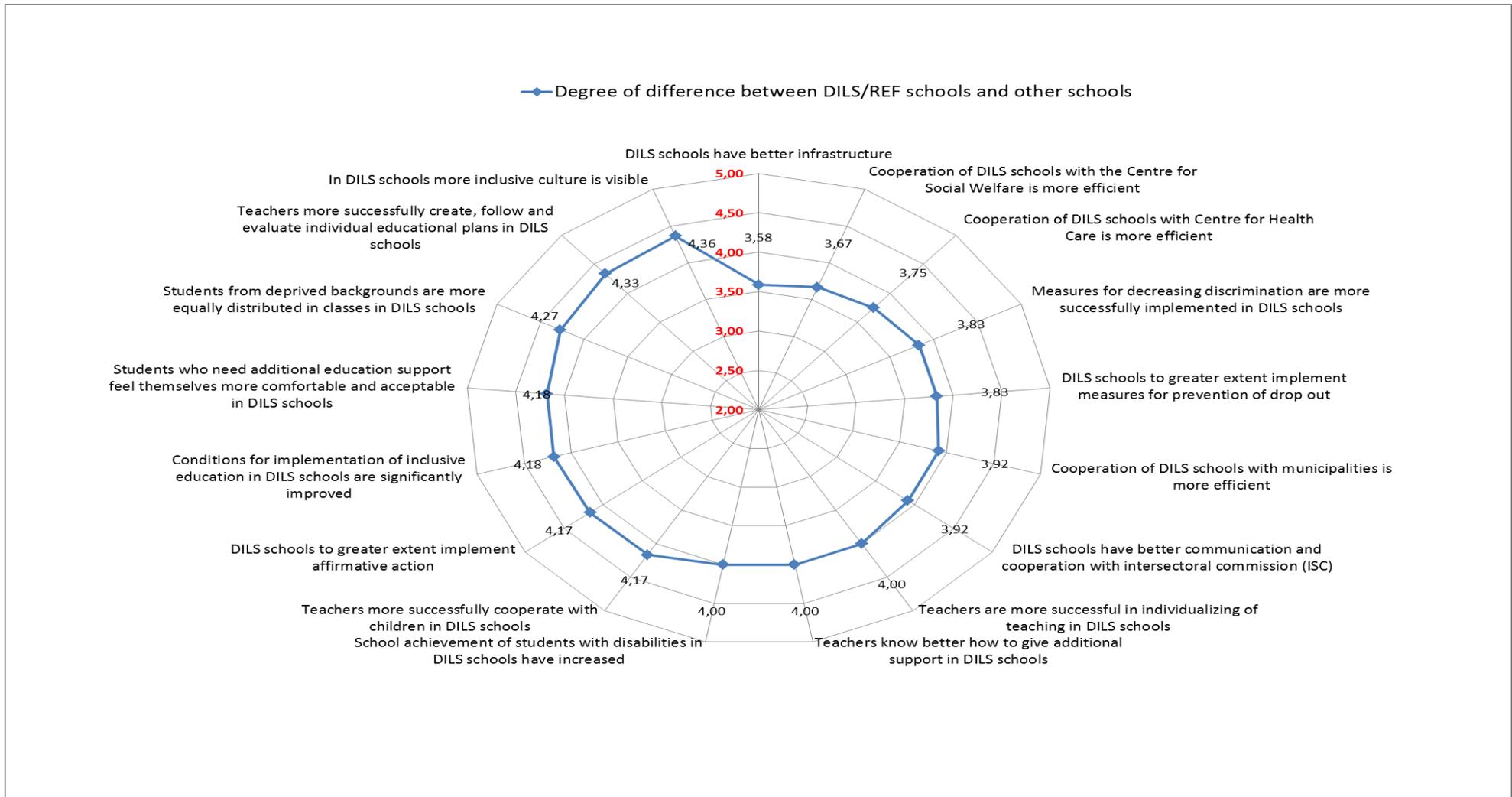


Figure 1: Opinion on differences between the schools included in the DILS program and school not included in the DILS program by educational advisors

4.1.2. Opinions of School Principals

When interpreting the findings it should be noted that the principals of the schools in the experimental and control groups assessed how certain changes have taken place in the school since 2011. This means that the principals from the control group would largely report that the specific changes occurred regarding the inclusion in school because the introduction of a law has changed school practice and introduced a range of inclusive procedures.

What should also be borne in mind is that for this reason responses on the 4-level scale of assessment of the prominence of the changes will not be distributed normally. Given a small sample (although representative of the population of limited size) it makes sense to apply non-parametric statistical tests (median and Mann-Whitney U - test). In all graphs the means of school principal opinions are shown. The number 5 means that the change is "very strong", number 4 is for a "moderate change", number 3 for a "minor change" and the number 2 "the change was not present". Since our scale is not the classical evaluation scale but has been designed to measure the degree of change, it is methodologically correct to observe this scale as ordinal, rather than as an interval. Due to this, the distribution of responses is not Gaussian, the data on the standard deviation and standard error would not be displayed. Only graphs for selected items are presented.

Academic success of students with developmental difficulties and disability. There was a statistically significant difference in the opinions of school principals that received a school grant on the increase of the academic achievement of children with disabilities ($p < 0.01$). Principals, together with the expert team for inclusive education in the schools involved in the DILS program, see significant changes in school achievement of these children ($M = 4.44$), while principals and expert teams from schools outside the DILS program see this change between minor and moderate ($M = 3.6$).

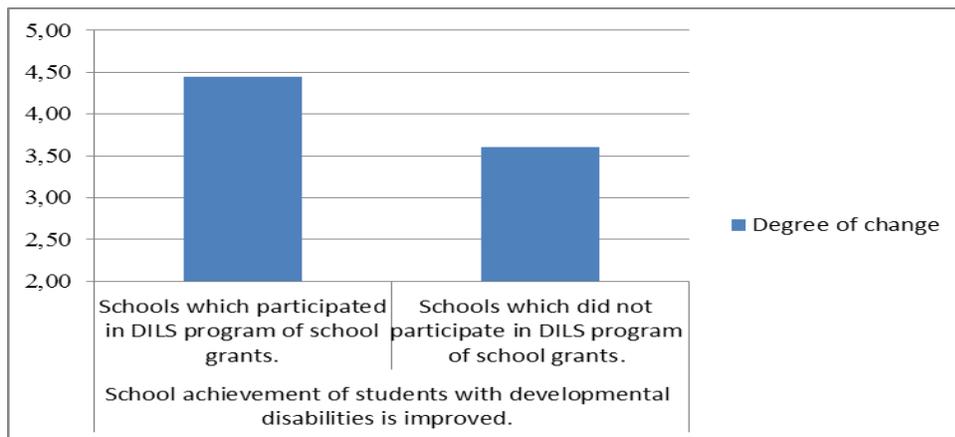


Figure 2. Opinions of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant on increase of the achievement of students with developmental difficulties and disabilities

The work of teachers. In the opinions of school principals, the teachers in DILS schools applied increasingly active learning in work with children who need additional educational support (Me = 4.44, Mk = 3.5), they are sensitive to the specificities of students (Me = 4.3, Mk = 3.4), the expert team closely follows the progress and analyzes what has been done by students with disabilities (Me = 4.78, Mk = 4.1) and to a greater extent create an atmosphere of acceptance of diversity among students themselves ($p < 0.01$).

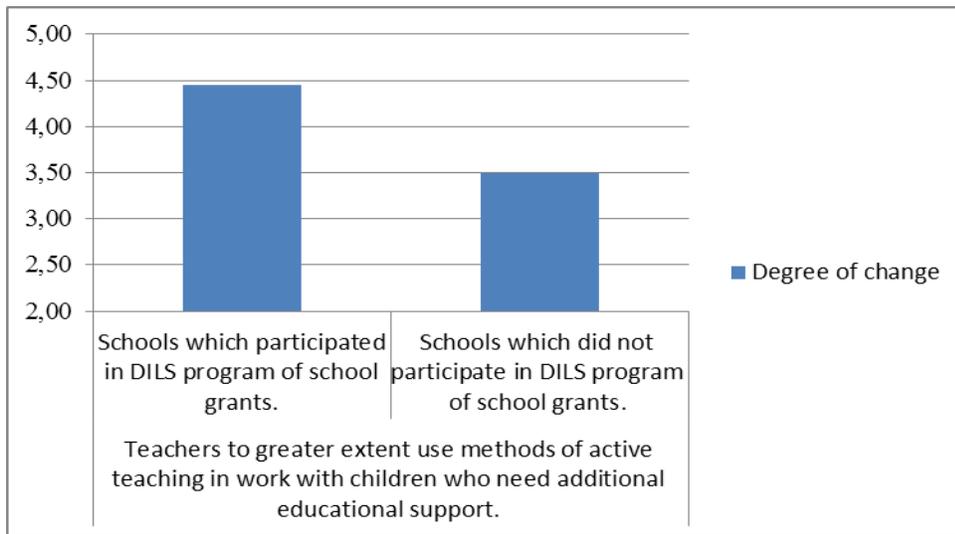


Figure 3. Opinions on teachers of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant

Dropout of children with developmental difficulties and disability. In assessing the dropout by the school principals of DILS and other schools, there were not significant differences and changes were noted as insignificant ($p > 0.05$). This is understandable given that DILS school grants program was not focused in the same extent on the children from deprived backgrounds who are in much greater extent early school leavers as on the children with developmental difficulties and disability that are rarely early school leavers because they do not come from poor backgrounds.

Absenteeism. Principals from the schools involved in the DILS program estimate that the change in reducing absenteeism for children with developmental difficulties and disability is expressed in school ($M = 4.5$), while principals of schools outside the DILS program believe that there is a slight change in reducing absenteeism ($M = 3.3$) of students with developmental difficulties and disability ($p < 0.01$).

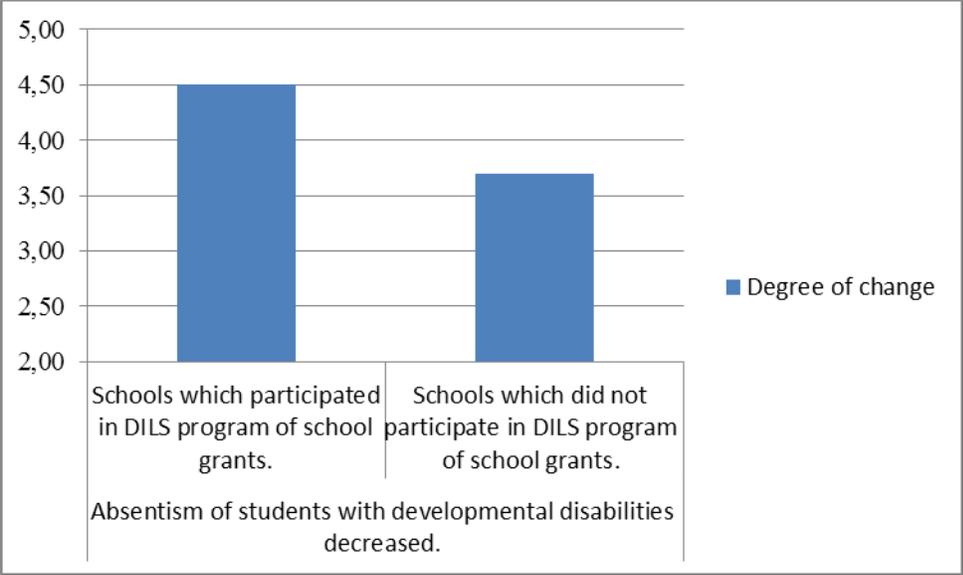


Figure 4. Opinions of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant of change in absenteeism of students with developmental difficulties and disability.

Coverage. Schools involved in the DILS program believe that the number of students from deprived backgrounds and with developmental difficulties and disability has not increased since 2011. This opinion is shared by the principals and expert teams from schools not included in the DILS program. The important role of municipalities and local service in reaching out to children living in deprived areas, who often remain outside the school system, and focus of school grants on children with developmental difficulties and disability explains why there are no significant differences in the opinions of principals.

The degree of mobility to higher levels of education. Both principals and expert teams of schools involved in DILS grant program and other schools have had difficulties to assess the mobility of children in need of additional educational support to higher levels of education. The cause of this is insufficient and undefined communication and exchange of data between primary and secondary schools and therefore cannot be taken as an indication that principals can assess.

Satisfaction of parents and students. Principals of schools that received DILS school grant are of opinion that the parents of children who need additional educational support have become more satisfied with the school than the principals from other schools. This may be explained by the fact that teachers in DILS schools have increasingly undergone trainings to work with children with developmental difficulties and disability, that the inclusive culture in schools is more present and this opinion is consistent with the assessment that the academic achievement of children has increased (Me = 4.44 , Mk = 3.8) (p <0.01).

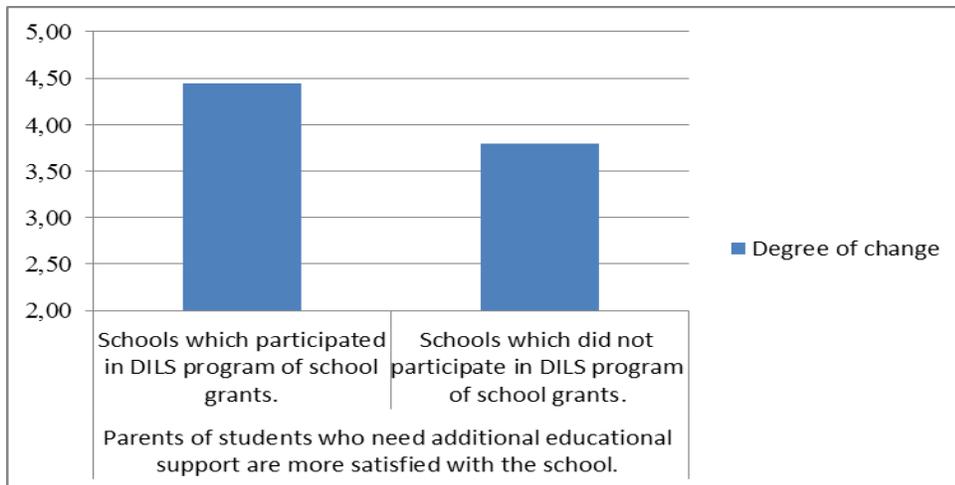


Figure 5. Opinions of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant on satisfaction of parents of students who need additional educational support

Intersectoral cooperation. Principals of schools that received DILS school grant report that the more notable changes have occurred in the improvement of cooperation between municipalities and school ($M = 4.33$) in the provision of support for children who need the support than in the control group schools ($M = 3.56$) ($p < 0.01$). There were no statistically significant differences between the cooperation of experimental and control groups of schools with the Centre for Social Welfare and Health Centre ($p > 0.05$), but moderate positive changes of improved cooperation have been noted in both groups of schools. As for financial support, the experimental group of schools has begun providing this support to a greater extent since 2011 ($M = 4.78$) than the control group schools ($M = 3.50$) ($p < 0.01$).

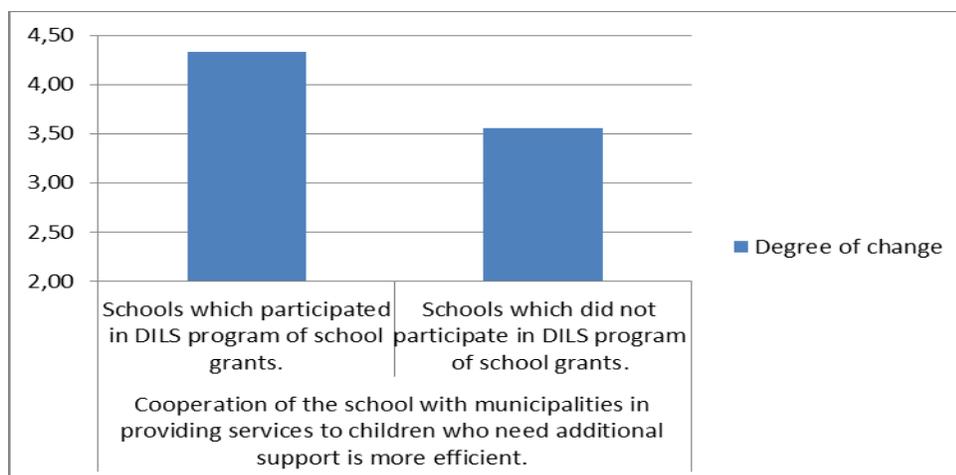


Figure 6. Opinions of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant on the quality of intersectoral cooperation in providing additional educational support to children.

Since the schools from the experimental and control groups belong to the same municipality, it is possible that school's proactive approach and better knowledge of procedures of school contributes to improving the quality of cooperation. Regarding larger extent of a financial support to students from deprived backgrounds provided by schools it is possible that the greater presence of teachers in training, and greater involvement of human resources in the school due to recognition of the importance of inclusive education, teachers and others recognize more clearly the link between poverty and school achievement, and therefore strive more to provide all necessary financial resources for students from deprived backgrounds.

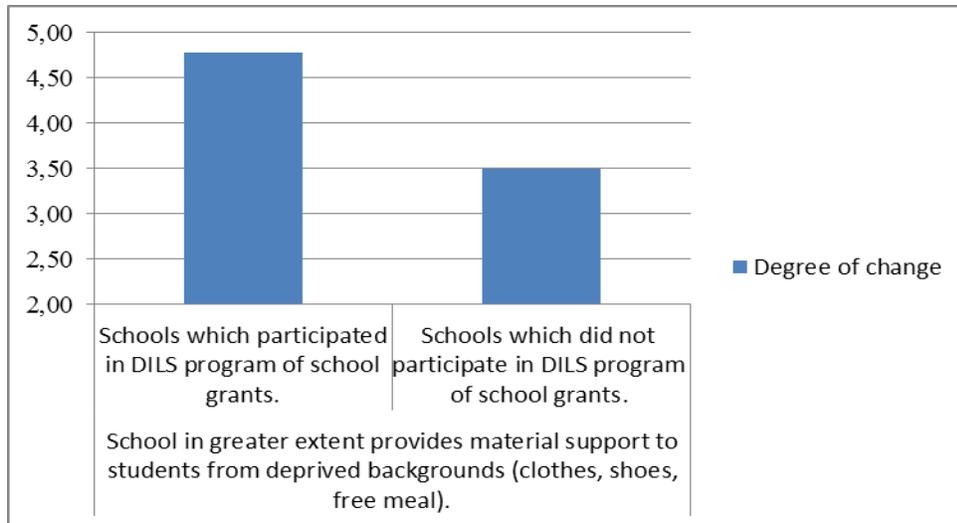


Figure 7. Opinions of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant on the provision of financial support for students from deprived backgrounds.

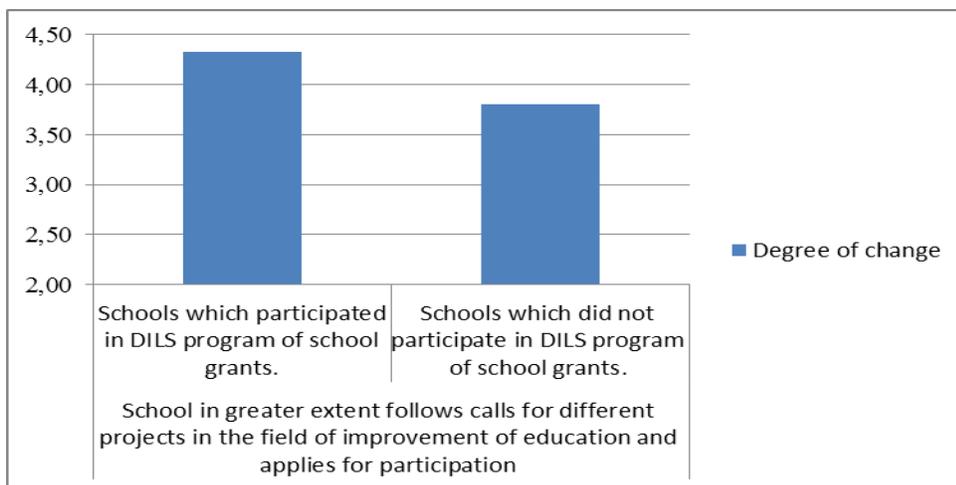


Figure 8. Opinions of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant on the participation in the project calls regarding to education improvement

Proactivity of the school. It is also important to note that, although it cannot be categorized under the selected indicators of inclusiveness (v. 3.4), proactivity of school and interest in receiving additional funding through projects, improve human resources and enhance their inclusive practice. Schools that have received DILS school grant follow more closely the tenders for various projects (M = 4.33) compared to the schools from the control group (M = 3.8) ($p < 0.01$), perhaps because they have realized the importance of external support in the engagement of human resources and teachers within the school.

The conditions for the implementation of inclusive education. The principals of schools which received DILS school grant, besides evaluating the school's inclusive culture as more prominent (Me = 4.56 , Mk = 3.8) ($p < 0.01$), estimate that the material conditions for the implementation of inclusive education, are better in these schools as a direct result of the school grant (Me = 4.44 , Mk = 3.7) ($p < 0.01$).

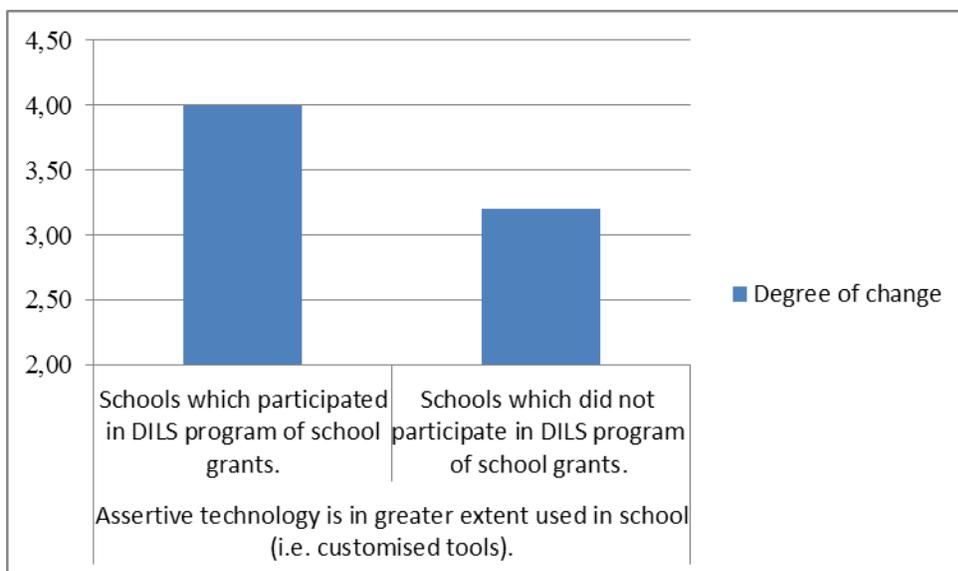


Figure 9. Opinions of principals of school which received a school grant and which did not receive the school grant on assistive technologies.

4.1.3. The Quantitative School Data

Schools could not provide online data on absenteeism, academic achievement and grade repetition of students with developmental disabilities in due time. Only the data that schools were able to provide are presented here.

The degree of individualization and additional support. One of the important indicators of successful inclusive education is an appropriate percentage of the individual education plans in the school population, which is more or less in line with the incidence of certain disorders and disturbances in the population. We see that in schools that have received DILS school grant there is a higher percentage of children with IEP-1 while the percentage of students with IEP-2

is nearly twice the size. The percentage of their children that the school sends to the Intersetoral Commission is also doubled. These percentages are not too high and correspond to the incidence of developmental disorders and disability in the population. This means that the schools involved in the DILS program are more sensitive to developmental disorders and disability of the student, the teachers are better trained and more competent to notice these situations; they probably know, can and know how to recognize it better and react to it. As for students from deprived backgrounds, there are no significant differences, although the schools involved in the DILS program are more sensitive to graver difficulties of students coming from deprived backgrounds.

	Percentage of students with IEP-1	Percentage of students with IEP-2	Percentage of students from deprived backgrounds with IEP-1	Percentage of students from deprived backgrounds with IEP-2	Percentage of students sent to ISC
Schools which participated in DILS school grants program	1,36%	0,80%	12%	0,70%	1,10%
Schools outside the DILS school grants program	0,96%	0,46%	15%	0,40%	0,57%

Table 1. Individualization and additional support in schools that have received and which did not receive DILS school grant

These findings, consistent with our findings from the previous chapters, show that schools that have received DILS school grant have become more motivated, more sensitive and more willing to engage in the implementation of inclusive education. It should be added that this fact is a consequence of the effects of the teachers' training in schools that have received school grants.

4.1.4. Open-ended questions: Best Practices, Problems and Difficulties, Lessons Learned

It is interesting that both schools which participated in the DILS program of school grants and those that did not show examples of good practice. This suggests that there is a general progress in the implementation of inclusive education at the level of the education system.

The problems listed by principals and expert teams for inclusive education in schools that have received DILS grants and in schools that have not received them are similar, but more positive connotation of the problem and a greater degree of belief in their own self-efficacy can be seen in schools from DILS program. For some of these problems, schools outside the DILS program state limited opportunities and the importance of special schools. Problems are usually related to the inability to finance specific legal solutions.

The lessons schools have learned are mainly humanistic and related to the expansion of capacity and capability that were considered unachievable, as well as for the evaluation of

diversity, tolerance and acceptance. The similar lessons acquired/learned could be found in both groups of schools.

4.1.4.1. Examples of Good Practice in Schools Participating in the DILS Program ⁹

Two students from the deprived social environment together with children with special needs were involved in extracurricular activities. Within the various workshops, two boys became close and helped a girl with Down syndrome. After the workshop, the boys began to come to school regularly and continued to be a friend with mentioned girl and help her on the regular basis.

Teachers succeed when taught one student with severe developmental disabilities to read and copy from the board by the end of third grade. She stayed in the classroom with 15 students.

The atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance in all the classes in which student with disabilities grows. This attitude is shared by the parents of other students.

Adaptation of the school space for the student who is visually impaired and has orthopedic health problems was done (classrooms on the ground floor nearest the entrance to the building, the yellow tape on the edges of the tread on the stairs, handrails on stairs), Also, the applied activities are created for her in IEP (to increase the text size by using photocopier machines, writing in notebooks for the visually impaired) as well as additional support through work in school for special education "Milan Petrović" Novi Sad.

The school developed a list of changed standards in accordance with the basic level of the existing standards. Each amended standard was than divided into several steps, so there is a very high degree of concretized progress plan of students with disabilities in a form of step by step ("stairs") approach. This list is both - a guide for assessing students and guidelines how to develop pedagogical profile. According to the list of standards class teachers in collaboration with subject teachers have suggested a lot of activities to achieve those "steps", which greatly facilitates the creation of IEP. Activities related to support are presented in the form of internal manuals. Also, through their activities, representatives of the Students Parliament provide additional support for students with disabilities twice a week. Parliament has also introduced an action which is conducted once in a semester - collection of basic school supplies for students with disabilities to ensure that these students have the necessary supplies in class because most of them are in a difficult economic situation.

In the second grade we have student with cerebral paralyzes, who besides patronage of teachers and individualization, has been provided with wheels chair to be able to reach the board and do assignments. A student uses his own, adapted, toilet. Approaches to the school are also adapted to the students with this and similar handicaps. The inclusive practice is successfully implemented in this school.

⁹ All of the above examples are quotes

Student N.J. this school year is going to finish the eighth grade. From the beginning of the school the additional educational support was provided for him. He has neurological disorders, diagnosed ADHD and behavioural disorders. In the first four years, class teachers, peers, professional associates have provided him with a multiple supports in the process of adaptation, socialization and learning. There were many challenges, but the good cooperation between the school and family contributed to the changes that took place in all aspects of students' development. In the process of transition to subject teaching, adequate support of teachers with ongoing monitoring and support of professional services, principal, and in the continuous cooperation with parents was received. Support consisted in adapting the conditions and methods of work. In the eighth grade, great attention is given to the professional orientation - choice of high school and preparing him for the final exam.

The student, M.J. is in the eighth grade in this school year. He was in the third grade in our school when difficulties in reading, writing and learning were noticed. Teachers' and school employees' opinion was that the student has a specific learning disability - dyslexia and dysgraphia, although there is no student professional estimate. All six years he has received individualized support in learning. The teaching process has been adjusted to the student's ways of learning, contributing to progress in learning. He was involved in extra-curricular activities which contributed to the development of his self-confidence.

Brother - sixth grade with lumbo-sacral agnesia and sister - fourth grade with achondroplasia, are the students of our school since the first grade. In addition to adjusting the space and enabling teaching process in situation when they were hospitalized, on the initiative of the school treatment of "sister" in Russia (actions carried out at the city level) has been organized. School team for inclusive education succeed in efforts to give their father status of a personal assistant.

Our eighth grade student, last year suffered from a rare disease that causes sudden vision loss (suspected to Leber disease). With the support of his teachers he has completed the previous and is now attending the final grade, but the school is neither able to rent nor buy the assistive technology that would facilitate learning and allow him to take the final exam.

4.1.4.2. Challenges and Difficulties in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Schools Involved in DILS Program¹⁰

- *The resistance of a number of colleagues towards inclusion and inclusion of children with special needs in regular classes, not in terms of open resistance, but the various types of non-verbal messages and unconscious processes that are difficult to prove and influence.*
- *We have a student in the fourth grade who writes, does not read and whose mother is not willing to cooperate and accept I.O.*
- *Legislation and regulations governing the support of pedagogical and personal assistants. Kraljevo municipality has not provided even one personal assistant. Schools and parents are finding different ways: engaging volunteers teachers from the National Employment Service, parents finance their own assistants, and so on.*
- *Create an atmosphere of acceptance.*
- *A large number of students with individual education plans in one class in the fourth grade (students from disadvantaged families), and currently there is no possibility to hire teaching assistants, although we have school board sent requests.*
- *The biggest problem is inability to employ teaching assistants who are necessary due to the large number of students who attend the IEP in the subject teaching - nineteen of them. Another problem is inadequate cooperation with parents who are generally of low socioeconomic status and do not consider highly the importance of child's education.*

4.1.4.3. Lessons Learned from schools that received DILS school grants¹¹

- *We all have the same rights and the right to enjoy them in different ways, according to their characteristics. The education system and the people in it have to adapt to the students, not the other way around.*
- *All students are required to complete primary education according to their ability and skills.*
- *The same goals cannot apply to everyone! The fact that one needs different objectives should not be a reason for punishment (negative scores, repetition...)*
- *Each child can learn.*
- *There is no inclusion without differentiated instructions, ongoing education and collaboration with parents.*

¹⁰ All of the above examples are quotes

¹¹ All of the above examples are quotes

4.2. Results of the DILS Training for Teachers

As noted in section 3.2. Questionnaire used in the evaluation was distributed to 16 schools (one from each RSA) included in the DILS program component "Strengthening schools for inclusive education" to be filled out by all the members of the expert team for inclusive education as well as teachers who have attended internal training provided by the participants-member expert team for inclusive education. The sample of schools was selected by the representatives of DILS project of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. This evaluation was primarily aimed at understanding the perceptions of the effects of training that were organized for the purpose of improving teacher competences and their teaching practices in inclusive education. Evaluation did not cover opinions on the application of knowledge and skills acquired during training in everyday classroom practice; it should be subject of future evaluation in this area. Collecting data on the application of knowledge and skills acquired during the training will have to be based on the observation of classes held in regular teaching hours and on other qualitative research techniques and forms of supplementary and complementary work with students.

The questionnaire was filled out and submitted to the Center for Education Policy by the total of 379 respondents, of which a significant number have worked with students with special needs and disabilities (277 or 73%) and students from nonsupporting social environment (293 or 77%) as shown in the following chart.

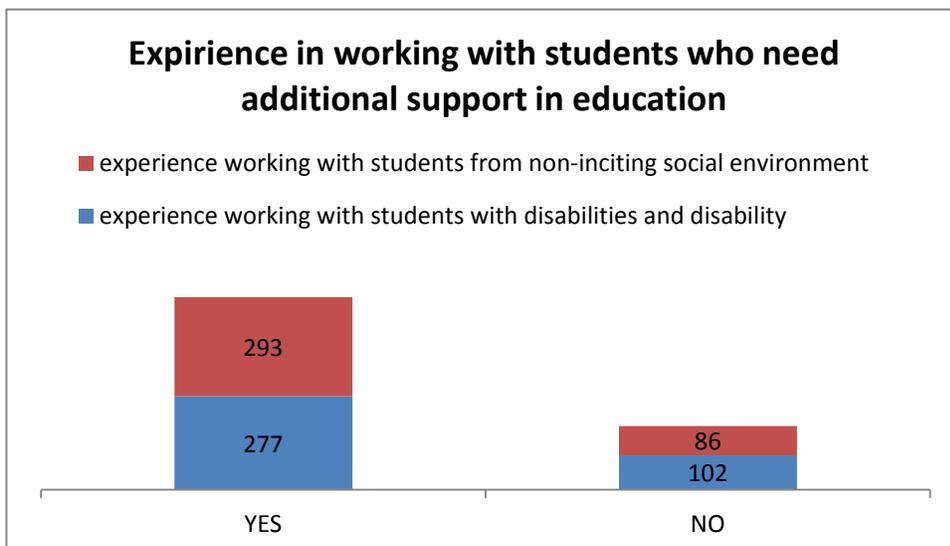


Figure 10. Exprience in working with students who need additional support in education

4.2.1. Participation in Activities Related to Students from Vulnerable Groups

Regarding the activities related to the students who need additional support in education (see Table 2), the majority of respondents participated in activities within the school projects that support inclusive education in regular individualization of instruction according to the needs of students.

Activities	Yes - number of teachers	No - number of teachers	In total
Participation in any activity within the school projects that support inclusive education	327	52	379
Regular individualized instruction to meet the needs of students	292	87	379
Customization of the work of the school in accordance with the needs of students from vulnerable groups	276	103	379
Participation in activities / campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive education	260	119	379
Providing and performing additional / extra classes for children from marginalized groups	227	152	379
Making Individual Education Plan (IEP)	221	158	379
Application of IEP	197	182	379
Evaluation and revision of IEP	191	188	379

Table 2. Participation in activities related to the students who need additional support in education

A large number of respondents have participated in the development of pedagogical profile of students as well as the adaptation of the work of the school to correspond to the needs of students from vulnerable groups. The next is involvement in providing and performing additional/extra classes for children from marginalized groups and the development of individual education plans. Respondents were least engaged in the implementation, evaluation and revision of the individual educational plan, although more than 50% of all surveyed teachers have participated in these activities.

4.2.2. Sources of Information and Influence on the Quality of Work with Students who Need Additional Support in Education

In order to analyze the influence of DILS's training on quality of work with students who need additional support in education, these trainings were compared with other sources (Table 3¹²).

Sources of information	Did not help in the work (%) (a)	Slightly helped me to work (%) (b)	It helped me to work (%) (c)	Significantly helped in the work (%) (d)	Total- and number %	(c) + (d) ¹³
DILS training	2%	5%	29%	64%	379 100,0%	93%
Participation in projects related to work with children from vulnerable groups	2%	6%	42%	50%	322 100,0%	92%
Accredited training for the teachers professional development	1%	8%	43%	48%	379 100,0%	91%
Provide advice/support to other colleagues	2%	7%	52%	39%	365 100,0%	91%
Support of the school psychologist/pedagogue	3%	7%	29%	61%	363 100,0%	90%
Technical literature and information available via the Internet	1%	12%	45%	42%	212 100,0%	87%
Principals support	3%	11%	35%	51%	341 100,0%	86%
Presentation/conduct training for colleagues in school	4%	10%	46%	38%	298 100,0%	84%
Visits experimental and respectable classes	4%	11%	49%	36%	316 100,0%	84%

¹² In order to neutralize the effect of the uneven number of respondents who stated the individual activities, the ranks were determined on the percentage of respondents who choose to answer, not on the frequency.

¹³ To facilitate interpretation of the findings the last column of the table shows the pooled opinion of the effect of different sources of information on the quality of work with students from vulnerable groups, i.e. the results in columns “helped me to work” and “significant helped in the work” have been summed up.

Participation in discussions, presentations, campaigns related to work with children from vulnerable groups	7%	14%	48%	31%	258 100,0%	79%
Collaboration with colleagues from other schools	5%	17%	49%	29%	290 100,0%	78%
TV shows and movies related to children/vulnerable adults	6%	21%	52%	21%	316 100,0%	73%
Participation in scientific meetings and conferences	13%	16%	41%	30%	191 100,0%	71%
Formal education (high school, undergraduate studies, master, specialization, etc.).	13%	24%	42%	21%	354 100,0%	63%
Cooperation with the teaching assistant	27%	12%	31%	30%	161 100,0%	62%
Cooperation with NGO	15%	25%	36%	24%	198 100,0%	60%

Table 3. Sources of information and influence on the quality of work with students who need additional support in education

The results demonstrate that the majority of respondents (64%) believe that their DILS training significantly helped in working with students who need additional support in education, i.e. significantly improved the quality of their work with this group of students. Support by the school psychologist/pedagogue is the second important factor in improving the quality of work with students who need additional support in education - 61% of respondents believe that the support by the school psychologist/pedagogue significantly helped in the work. Also, the sources of knowledge perceived as a significant help in work include support of principal (51%), participation in projects related to working with students who need additional support in education (49%), accredited training for professional development (48%), and professional literature and information available via the Internet (42%).

A somewhat different picture is obtained from the combined results on how the participants rated the evaluation of sources of information which „helped“ them and which greatly helped in working with students who need additional support in education. Then the most important factors for more than 90% of the participants in the evaluation are DILS training (93%), participation in projects related to working with students who need additional educational support (92%), accredited training for Professional Development in Education (91%), counseling / support to other colleagues (91%), support by the school psychologist/pedagogue (90%).

The minimum number of respondents felt that their knowledge of the sources was not helpful enough in working with students who need additional support in education. The exception is cooperation with the teaching assistant (for which more than 20% of the participants in the evaluation found as not helpful), participation in scientific meetings and conferences, cooperation with NGOs and formal education (for which more than 10% of respondents felt that they were not helpful).

Evaluation results show that the opinions of class and subject teachers, professional associates, and the influence of certain sources of information on the quality of work with students who need additional support in education vary. Statistically significant differences¹⁴ were found for the following sources of information:

- Accredited training for professional development - subject teachers, as compared to other categories of employees, to a lesser extent, believe that their accredited training helped in working with students who need additional support in education.
- Provide advice/support to other colleagues; Presentations/conducting training for colleagues in school - associates and managers to a greater extent than class teachers and subject teachers believe that the presentations and conducting training for the colleagues in the school significantly contributed to improving the quality of work with the students who need additional support in education.
- Visits to the experimental and reputable classes - subject teachers to a greater extent than primary school teachers, particularly in relation to associates and managers believe that the class visits do not contribute to improving the quality of work with students who need additional support in education.
- Collaboration with colleagues from other schools - associates and principals increasingly believe that collaboration with colleagues from other schools contributes to a better quality of work with students who need additional support in education while the class teachers and subject teachers in particular do not share thus opinion.
- Formal education - class teachers and subject teachers more than associates and principals find that their formal education was not helpful in working with students who need additional support in education.

¹⁴ Differences were registered with the help of χ^2 test. In order to ensure the conditions for the application of χ^2 test was performed compression category not help me at work and slightly helped in the work, as well as the category *has helped me at work* and *Significant helped in the work*. For the same reason, the combined responses associates and principals.

4.2.3. The Usefulness of the Training for Work with Students from Vulnerable Groups and Work with all Students

Participants in the evaluation section of the questionnaire related to the usefulness of the training for the work with students who need additional support in education were given a list of 19 training (list of trainings that were part of the mandatory training package designed for schools participating in DILS programs to strengthen inclusive education as well as some of the training that the school ordered through grants). The task was to indicate for each of the training in which person participated how much that training was useful for working with students who need additional support in education. If they had not attended the training - "cannot judge" should be the selected option. Table 4¹⁵ shows how the participants see the usefulness of specific training in working with students who need additional support in education.

Training	I'm not used to work (%) (a)	Slightly I used to work (%) (b)	I used to work (%) (c)	Significantly, we used to work (%) (d)	Total-number and %	(c) + (d) ¹⁶
Children with disabilities in preschool and school (Group MOST)	3%	4%	39%	54%	74 100,0%	93%
Inclusive Education - Planning and IOP (DILS)	1%	6%	38%	55%	379 100,0%	93%
Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt instruction for children with disabilities and gifted children (DILS)	1%	6%	33%	60%	379 100,0%	93%
The art of Communications (Psihokod)	2%	7%	29%	62%	200 100,0%	91%
Goodwill Classroom (MOST)	2%	7%	32%	59%	223 100,0%	91%

¹⁵ In order to neutralize the effect of the uneven number of respondents who attended some of the training, rather than the frequency ranks were determined based on the percentage of respondents who was given training, which believes that it is useful to work with students from vulnerable groups.

¹⁶ To facilitate interpretation of the findings in the last column of the table shows the pooled estimate of the usefulness of training i.e. collected the results in columns *I used in my work* and *significant used to work*

Individualization in the Serbian language, math, science and social studies for children with specific disabilities in progress (PDS)	2%	7%	45%	46%	95 100,0%	91%
Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (CIP)	3%	7%	31%	59%	137 100,0%	90%
Learning disabilities - identifying and overcoming obstacles to learning in preschool and school-age children (Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina)	4%	6%	32%	58%	81 100,0%	90%
Inclusive education - Monitoring, evaluation and revision of IEP (DILS)	2%	9%	37%	52%	379 100,0%	89%
School without Violence (Unicef)	3%	9%	45%	43%	255 100,0%	88%
Active teaching / learning (Education Forum)	3%	9%	41%	47%	369 100,0%	88%
By creating individual education plans to inclusive practices (SURS)	4%	8%	40%	48%	143 100,0%	88%
The motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning (DILS)	2%	11%	39%	48%	379 100,0%	87%
Neither black nor white (CIP)	5%	10%	16%	69%	62 100,0%	86%
Step by step (CIP)	9%	9%	43%	39%	89 100,0%	82%
Roma children and schools (Sunčica Macura Milovanovic et al.)	2%	16%	35%	47%	49 100,0%	82%
Inclusion - how to approach the teacher in a mainstream school (Snezana Ristic Kostov et al.)	4%	20%	49%	27%	49 100,0%	78%

Table 4. The usefulness of the training to work with students who need additional support in education

It is evident that almost all of the training seminars under analysis have in a very large percentage been found as useful for work with students who need additional support in education. It is also interesting that participants in evaluation at the same time perceive training aimed at developing competences for inclusive education and fostering inclusive practices in schools and at the development of generic competencies as useful for working with students who need additional support in education. Thus, over 90% of respondents believe that in their work with students who need additional support in education, the following training aimed at developing competences for inclusive education have been useful:

Inclusive Education - Planning and IEP (93%), Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt instruction for children with disabilities and gifted children (93%), individualization in the Serbian language, math, science and social studies for kids with specific disabilities in progress (91%), as well as the two training aimed at developing communication skills and conflict resolution skills: communication Inserts (91%) and classroom goodwill (91%).

Considering the trainings identified by the participants in the evaluation as significantly useful for the work with students who need additional support in education, the two trainings stand out: Neither black nor white (69%) and communication skills (62%). Over 60% of respondents believe that they are significantly useful in working with students who need additional educational support. They are followed by trainings: Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt instruction for children with disabilities and gifted children (60%), Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (59%) Goodwill Classroom (59%), Learning disabilities - recognizing and overcoming obstacles learning in preschool and school-age children (58%), Inclusive Education - Planning and IEP (55%), Children with disabilities in preschool and school (54%) and Inclusive Education - Monitoring, evaluation and revision of IEP -a (52%), which more than 50% of the participants in the evaluation finds substantially useful for the work with students from vulnerable groups. Other training are identified by less than 50% of the respondents as the training they significantly helped in working with students who need additional support in education.

As for the difference in the perception of the usefulness of specific training in working with students who need extra support in the education of the various categories of respondents, the χ^2 test showed no statistically significant differences in the opinion on the usefulness of the training between class teachers and subject teachers, support staff and managers.

4.2.3.1. The Most Useful Training for Working with Students who Need Additional Support in Education

The opinions of the participants in the evaluation on which of the presented training has been the most useful for working with students who need additional support in education are summarized and presented in the form of rankings in Table 5. According to this criterion the two DILS training aimed at developing competencies for inclusive education stood out: *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children, and Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP.*

Rank	Training	Number of teachers
1	Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children (DILS)	183 - 48%
2	Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP (DILS)	120 - 32%
3.	Other training	76 - 20%

Table 5. The most useful training for working with students who need additional support in education

4.2.3.2. The Most Useful Training for Working with all Students in the Classroom

Table 6 shows respondents' opinion on which of the attended training has been the most useful for working with all students. According to this criterion the six training were marked off, while the first three are: *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking*, *Active teaching/learning* and *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning*, followed by *Goodwill Classroom*, *Communication skills*, and *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children*.

It is noticeable that the training perceived as useful for working with all students in the classroom are primarily those aimed at developing generic teachers' competences.

Rank	Training	Number of teachers
1	Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (CIP)	79 – 21%
2	Active teaching/learning (Education Forum)	74 - 19%
3	Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning (DILS)	64 – 17%
4	Goodwill Classroom (Group MOST)	61 – 16%
5	Communication skills (PSIHOKOD)	52 – 14%
6	Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children (DILS)	49 - 13%

Table 6. The most useful training for working with all students in the classroom

4.2.3.4. Recommendation to the Colleagues who have not received the Trainings

The recommendations to the colleagues who have not received any of training are shown in Table 7. The first three re: *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking*, *Communication skills*, and *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children*, followed by *Goodwill Classroom*, *Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP* and *Active teaching/learning*.

Rank	Training	Number of teachers
1	Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (CIP)	88 – 23%
2	Communication skills (PSIHOKOD)	78 – 21%
3	Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children (DILS)	69 – 18%
4	Goodwill Classroom (Group MOST)	54 – 14%
5	Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP (DILS)	49 – 13%
6	Active teaching/learning (Education Forum)	41 – 11%

Table 7. Recommendation to the colleagues who have not received the training

4.2.4. Contribution of Training to the Quality of Work in Different Areas

Regarding the development of pedagogical profile of students, only two training were distinguished as relevant: *Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP* and *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children*. This was expected because these training target specifically this type of competence.

Based on the respondents' opinions there are only three training that contribute to the quality of work in terms of an individual approach to student, differentiated teaching, using different methods and techniques for working with students. They are: *Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP* and *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children*, *Individualization in teaching the Serbian language, math, natural and social sciences for children with specific difficulties in progressing* and *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking*.

In the field of development, implementation and evaluation of IEP as it was expected, the two DILS training were distinguished as the most useful: *Inclusive Education - Monitoring, evaluation and revision of IEP* and *Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP* (DILS).

In terms of benefits to the management of classroom with students from vulnerable groups the first three trainings are: *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children*, *Communication skills* and *Goodwill Classroom*. On the list of useful training in this area are also *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning* and *School without violence*.

Among the six trainings which respondents assessed as useful for developing self-confidence and respect for diversity of students, the first three are: *Neither black nor white*, *Goodwill Classroom* and *Communication skills*. Other trainings are: *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning*, *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children* and *School without violence*.

In term of ensuring progress in the education of students from marginalized groups, according to the respondents' opinion, the most useful are two DILS training: *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children* and *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning*.

When it comes to the inclusion of children from marginalized groups in extracurricular activities there are the three most useful training according to the respondents' opinion: *Neither black nor white*, *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children* and *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning*.

The most useful trainings that contribute to the sensitization of teachers for students from marginalized groups are: *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for*

children with disabilities and gifted children and Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning and Communication skills.

According to the respondents' opinion and in terms of improving relations between children from marginalized groups and other children at school, the most useful training is *Neither black nor white* while the second and third are *Goodwill Classroom* and *School without violence*. In addition to these and for quality of work in this area, according to respondents' opinion the useful trainings are *Communication skills* and *Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP*.

Among the six trainings which respondents assessed as useful for reducing prejudice and discrimination against children from marginalized groups, the first three are: *Neither black nor white, Roma children and school* and *School without violence*. On the list of useful training in this area are also *Goodwill Classroom, Communication skills* and *Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children*.

When it comes to the motivation of students for learning, the three most useful trainings are: *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking* and *Active teaching/learning*.

The respondents marked off the four trainings as useful for encouraging teamwork and cooperation in school: *Communication skills, Active teaching/learning, Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children* and *Inclusive Education - Planning and developing IEP*.

Furthermore, the respondents find the following four trainings as the most useful for the exchange of good teaching practices among colleagues at school: *Active teaching/learning, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking, Inclusive Education - Strategies and actions to adapt teaching for children with disabilities and gifted children* and *Developing IEP for inclusive practice*.

4.3. FINDINGS ON THE EFFECTS OF DILS/REF MUNICIPALITY GRANTS

Research findings on the effects of municipality DILS/REF grants include: opinions of heads of the regional school administration about the differences in the changes in indicators of inclusiveness that have occurred in schools from municipalities that participated in DILS/REF program and other schools that are within jurisdiction of the regional school administration but were not directly involved in DILS/REF program; comparison of opinions of principals of schools which were involved in DILS/REF program with opinions from a control group of schools on the intensity of the changes that have happened in the indicators of inclusion since 2011 until today. It was planned to carry out a comparison between the opinions of heads of the regional school administration, principals of preschools, and the representatives of non-governmental organizations, but due to the low response rate in the control group, we are presenting only the estimated rate of change of stakeholders involved in the implementation of DILS/REF program in the municipality. Finally, we present the comparison of available and collected school data on the level of additional support that children who need additional support in schools are receiving. At the end, the best practices examples, challenges and difficulties, as well as acquired lessons of stakeholders involved in the implementation DILS/REF program are given.

4.3.1. Opinions of the Regional School Administration

Educational advisors are, as noted above, of great importance for assessing the quality of work of schools and are very well acquainted with the situation in schools within their regional school administration jurisdiction. Therefore their opinions and their assessment about the changes that have occurred in schools that received DILS/REF municipality grants are very important. Although it is a municipality grant, the project activities included the schools and this makes the opinion of the educational advisors relevant. In assessment of the effects of DILS/REF municipality grants program, they were asked to assess the extent to which the schools involved in DILS/REF program of municipality grants differ from schools that were not included in the program and are within the jurisdiction of their regional school administration.

Using the four level scale they assessed the difference between schools involved in DILS/REF program and those not involved. The number 2 meant there was no difference at all, the number 3 that the difference between the schools was insignificant, the number 4 that there was a noticeable difference while number 5 meant that the difference was quite notable. The graph 11 shows the arithmetic mean of opinions of heads of the regional school administration who responded to the questionnaire with the help of education advisors in their regional school administration.

The graph does not show statistical significance neither the standard error because the testing was done on the entire population of school administration and not sample as in the previous case during the estimation of DILS school grants. When we look at the standard deviation of responses to each item, they are at least around 0,4 which indicates that these

are the items with the greatest agreement among education advisors, and therefore we assume that the schools differ least by the effects of DILS/REF program on these items.

These are typically items where the highest effect of the program has been noted. Some items have a much higher standard deviation ($\sigma \approx 1$) and these are the items that got lower rate by educational advisors i.e. that in some schools there are effects that are less pronounced regarding those items. The items scored by all pedagogical advisers (for each item is given the option that the respondent cannot estimate the effect) are also presented.

When we look at graph 11, we see that according to opinions of the education advisors there are the smallest differences between DILS/REF schools and other schools on items related to the level of cooperation with local institutions. This means that those schools that were not included in DILS/REF have a similar level of cooperation with local institutions (with the Centre for Social Welfare, the Health Center, the preschool and the municipality). Does this mean that there are no effects of DILS/REF on cooperation of schools with local institutions? No, because it is likely that there are effects as municipal grants were targeted to include and engage all institutions at the local level, which, consequently, enhance cooperation with schools not directly involved in DILS/REF program located in the same municipality.

Secondly, the assessment of pedagogical advisers still say that this cooperation is noticeably better among the schools that were involved in DILS/REF program (cooperation with the Centre for Social Welfare, the preschool and the municipality, $M \approx 3,9$). Moderate difference between DILS/REF schools and other schools from the regional schools administration was observed in terms of the conditions for implementation of inclusive education ($M = 3,9$), in the provision of financial support to students from deprived backgrounds ($M = 3,9$). Significant differences were observed for items related to the cooperation with NGOs ($M = 4$) as well as for all items related to the internal procedures of school, such as the implementation of affirmative action ($M = 4$), creating an atmosphere of acceptance and respect for diversity within the classroom ($M = 4$), satisfaction of students who need additional support in education ($M = 4, 1$) and the measures that schools use to prevent drop-out ($M = 4, 11$). The regional school administration estimations indicating even larger differences between DILS/REF and other schools refer to the successful cooperation between teachers and parents of children who need additional educational support ($M = 4,2$), more developed inclusive culture within the school ($M = 4,2$), far more individualization of teaching ($M = 4,2$), evenly distribution of students from deprived backgrounds in grades ($M = 4,22$), and successful development and monitoring of IEP by teachers ($M = 4,22$).

Based on the results, we can see that there are positive assessments of effects of DILS/REF program at the school level. We can say that almost all estimates of the differences between schools within the regional school administration involved and not involved in DILS/REF program, pedagogical advisers describe as noticeable and moderate. According to the opinions of pedagogical advisers, there are slightly more pronounced changes related to the internal procedures of the school as well as the contribution of teachers to inclusive education, while there are less potential differences between schools regarding the cooperation with local institutions in the municipality. Given that local institutions were project partners, it is expected that a somewhat lower estimates of difference between

schools, are the consequence of increased and improved cooperation of these institutions with all the schools in the municipality because the educational advisors are in a position to compare the schools only within the same municipality.

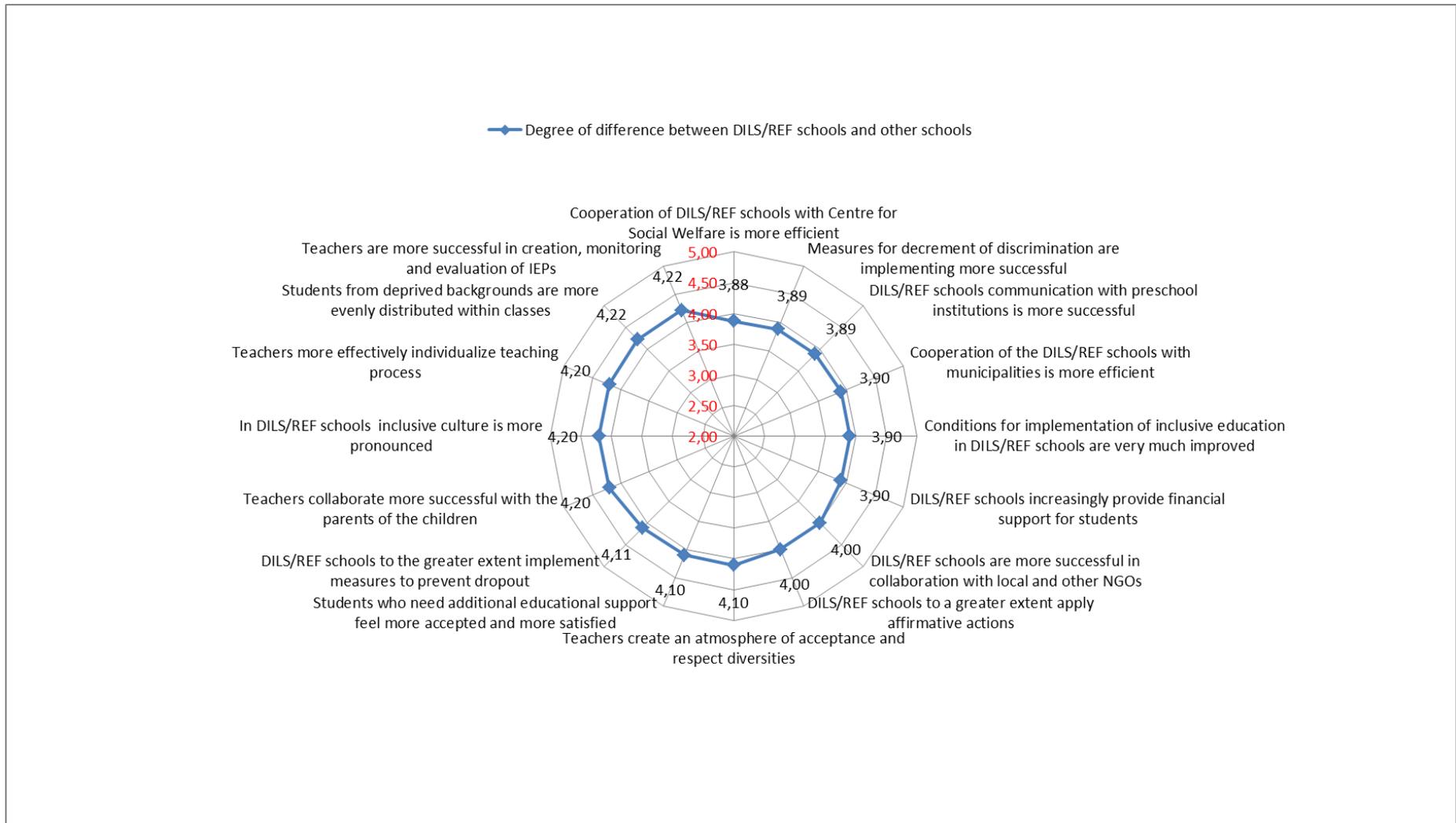


Figure 11. School advisors estimates of differences between school in DILS/REF program and out of DILS/REF program

4.3.2. Opinion of School Principals

School principals involved in DILS/REF municipal grant program and principals of schools outside of this program (as with DILS school grants), have assessed how certain changes occurred at the school since year 2011 measured by indicators of inclusiveness. As the legal solutions for implementation of inclusiveness in full force has begun in 2010, it is expected that the changes in terms of development of inclusiveness also occurred in schools in the control group.

Due to this reason, the responses on four-stages scale for assessing the level of these changes will not be normally distributed, within the small sample (although it is representative for the population of limited size). It makes sense to apply the non-parametric statistical methods (median and Man - Whitney U - test). All graphs show the arithmetic average Opinion of school principals, while mark 5 means that the change is "very strong", mark 4 a "moderate change", mark 3 a "minor change" and the mark 2 that "change is not present." As the distribution of responses is not Gaussian (due to these reasons) the data on the standard deviation and standard error will not be displayed. Presented graphs are selected to represent the most important indicators of inclusiveness. Based on the integrative Figure 12, we can see that school principals involved in DILS/REF program estimate the changes that have occurred in the school as more evident than school principals from control group, measured by items created on the basis of indicators of inclusiveness. Almost all differences in assessment between the principals of the experimental (treatment) and control group are expressed (e.g. the provision of financial support for students from deprived backgrounds - principals of DILS/REF schools evaluate this change as evident while the principals from control group of schools evaluate this change between minor and moderate), while a small number of other assessments do not show the difference between the Opinion of schools involved in DILS/REF program and those outside it (such as the assessment of the increase in the number of children from deprived backgrounds who enroll school).

School achievement of students from deprived backgrounds. There was a statistically significant difference between the ratings of principals of schools involved in DILS/REF program and principals of schools outside of the program on how student achievement has improved ($p < 0.01$). School principals involved in DILS/REF program estimate moderate changes happened related to increasing student achievement from deprived backgrounds ($M = 3.9$), while principals from schools outside of DILS/REF programs that change assessed as minor ($M = 3.1$).

The work of teachers. There are significant differences in the Opinion of principals of the schools involved in the DILS/REF program and those outside DILS/REF program related to the work of the teachers with children from deprived backgrounds. The principals of the schools involved in the DILS/REF program assessed that teachers can better provide additional educational assistance to students from deprived backgrounds ($M = 4.2$) compared to the assessments of principals from control group of schools ($M = 3.6$) ($p < 0, 01$); teachers have better cooperation with parents of children from deprived backgrounds ($M = 4.3$) in DILS/REF schools than in the control group of schools ($M = 3.5$) ($p < 0.01$) and

remedial teaching is used increasingly as a mean of support and has a more positive connotations in the DILS/REF schools (M = 4.26) than in the control group of schools (M = 3.7). Teachers are equally using active learning to work with children from deprived backgrounds in DILS/REF schools (M = 4.06) and control group schools (M = 3.75) and this difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). However, teachers in DILS/REF schools are using individual teaching in greater extent and more successfully (M = 4.15) than teachers from the control group of schools (M = 3.6) ($p < 0.01$). Based on the principals' assessments, expert teams for inclusive education in DILS/REF schools are working more intensely and analyze achieved results on more regular basis (M = 4.46), than the expert teams from control group of schools (M = 3.8) ($p < 0.01$).

Drop out of students from deprived backgrounds. There are differences in the assessment of reducing dropout of children from deprived backgrounds in DILS/REF schools (M = 3.5) and in the control group of schools (M = 3) ($p < 0.05$). Slightly lower observed changes in this indicator indicate that dropout prevention is a key goal of inclusiveness of children from deprived backgrounds and that achieving this goal requires more time for implementation and showing the effects. However, according to the Opinion of principals, the schools involved in DILS/REF program have started to create measures to prevent dropout of students from deprived backgrounds (M = 4.2) compared to the schools from the control group (M = 3.1) where these changes are minor ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, since 2011 DILS/REF schools have been much more engaged in providing financial resources for children from deprived backgrounds (M = 4.7) than the control group of schools where this change is between minor and moderate (M = 3.6) ($p < 0.01$); this change should result in a lower rate of drop out in DILS/REF schools.

Segregation. Students from deprived backgrounds are more evenly distributed to classes in DILS/REF schools (M = 4.1) compared to the control group schools (M = 3.5) ($p < 0.01$) according to the Opinion of principals. Besides, DILS/REF schools are developing antidiscrimination measures to a greater extent (Me = 4.26, Mk = 3.26) ($p < 0.01$).

Absenteeism. There are significant differences in the assessment of absenteeism of students from deprived backgrounds between the principals from the experimental and the control group ($p < 0.01$). Class absences by students from deprived backgrounds are noticeably reduced in DILS/REF schools (M = 3.93), while only the slight change occurred in the control group of schools (M = 3).

Coverage. There are no differences in the principals' assessments about the increase of the number of enrolled children from deprived backgrounds in the experimental and control group schools ($p > 0.01$). The number of children from deprived backgrounds who enrolled school has increased and this change has been described between moderate and minor (M = 3.5). It is disputable whether principles are able to assess the number of children not enrolled in the first grade of the primary school, because to assess the improvement of coverage it is necessary to get municipal estimation and official statistic data about coverage (it is problematic to get these data because there are entire families who are not registered and thus do not have regular birth certificates).

There are statistically significant differences in implementing affirmative actions – principals of DILS/REF schools assess that these schools are to much greater extent applying more “user-friendly” procedures for enrollment of children from deprived backgrounds (M = 4.4) than in the control group of schools (M = 3.75).

The application of affirmative action, the in situ work of teaching assistants present in 65 % of the schools involved in the DILS/REF program compared to 28 % of schools in the control group who have teaching assistants, are the measures that should lead to an increase of primary education coverage in the near future and with adequate support from local municipalities.

The degree of mobility to higher levels of education. Although a number of principals reported that it is problematic to assess the degree in which students from deprived backgrounds enroll the high schools, there were statistically significant differences between experimental (M = 3.6) and control group (M = 3.1) ($p < 0.05$).

Satisfaction of parents and students. School principals involved in DILS/REF program positively assess the changes that occurred in the satisfaction of parents of students from deprived backgrounds (M = 4.2). This change has also occurred in schools in the control group but at a lower rate (M = 3.8) ($p < 0.01$). According to the estimate of principals, there are no differences in the change of satisfaction of students who need additional educational support ($p > 0.05$), but the students’ satisfaction has increased since the beginning of implementation of inclusive education in the experimental and control group schools (Me = 4, 4, Mk = 4.2).

Intersectoral collaboration. According to the assessments of school principals, all aspects of cooperation between the municipality and the schools have significantly changed in the municipalities that received municipal DILS/REF grants. In experimental schools there is intense change towards better coordination of activities at the local level aiming at improving the educational inclusion of students from deprived backgrounds (M = 4.15) compared to the control group of schools (M = 3.25) ($p < 0.01$); cooperation of the school with municipality is more efficient in experimental schools (M = 4.27) than the cooperation of schools and municipalities from control group (M = 3.37) ($p < 0.01$). According to the opinions of inter-sectoral commission, the local government is providing larger support to the students (M = 4.2) in municipalities with municipal grant than in municipalities outside DILS/REF program (M = 3.5) ($p < 0.01$), although the positive changes have occurred in control group of schools and municipalities. Schools in the experimental group have more intense cooperation with Roma non-governmental organizations (M = 3.8) than schools in the control group (M = 2.75) ($p < 0.01$). There are no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups of schools regarding collaboration with the Health and Social Work Centre, although there are some positive changes in terms of cooperation in both groups of schools (Me = 3.86, Mk = 3.5 ; me = 3.73 , Mk = 3.62) ($p > 0.05$).

Schools’ proactivity. According to the principals, there was no statistically significant difference in the change in monitoring the competition/open calls for the promotion of education and applying for grants between the experimental and control groups of schools,

although both groups of schools have shown a positive change in their proactivity (Me = 3.93 , Mk = 3 , 87) ($p > 0.05$).

The conditions for the implementation of inclusive education. The school principals opinions have shown the significant differences in the conditions for the implementation of inclusive education in schools involved in DILS/REF programs and schools outside the program. In DILS/REF schools, principals estimated that the major changes occurred in the usage of assistive technology (M = 3.46) compared to the control group where it is lower (M = 2.75) ($p < 0.01$); the conditions for the implementation of inclusive education are improved in DILS/REF schools (Me = 4.06, Mk = 3.5) ($p < 0.01$) as well as school culture – DILS/REF schools have more inclusive culture (Me = 4.2 , Mk = 3.6) ($p < 0.01$).

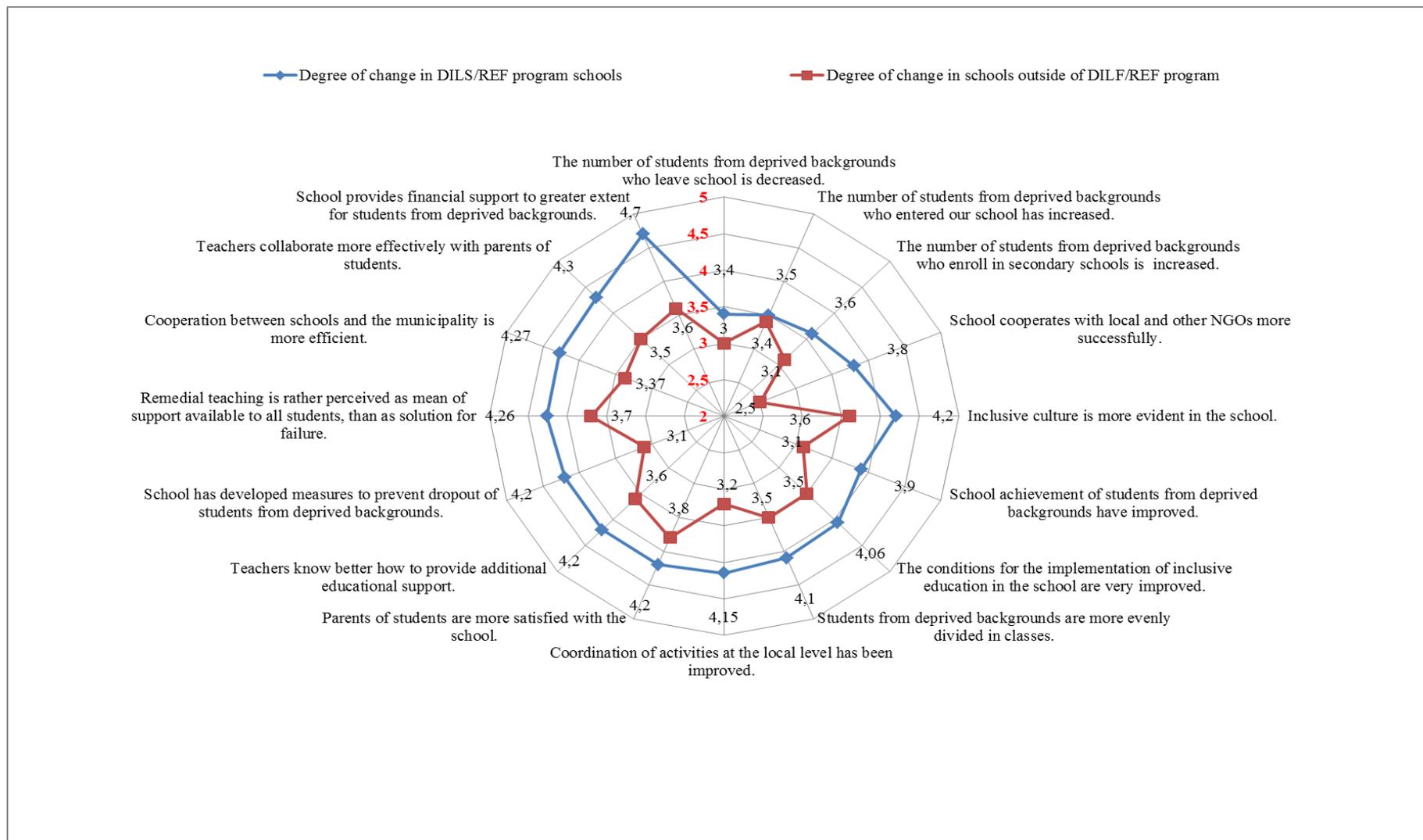


Figure 12. Opinion of school principals involved in DILS/REF program and school principals from control group of schools on changes that took place at the school level since 2011.

4.3.3. Opinion of Municipal Coordinators

Because of the low response of control group municipalities in answering the questionnaire, we are here presenting descriptive data on the assessment of changes related to the implementation of inclusive education on the local level within the municipalities that received municipal DILS/REF grant. All these municipalities keep data on the demographic characteristics of the Roma population in the municipality and school cooperation with inter-sectoral commission, while they do not exchange data with schools on school data (absenteeism, grade repetition, school success).

Below are shown the average Opinion of municipal coordinators (M), where mark 5 means that the change is "very strong", mark 4 that a "moderate change", mark 3 a "minor change" and the mark 2 that "change is not present."

The least observed changes regarding the implementation of inclusive education at the municipal level are related to: the number of students from deprived backgrounds who entered high school, improvement of school infrastructure and the municipality scholarship programs (M = 3.4). These changes are rated between minor and moderate by municipal DILS/REF coordinators.

Changes in the coverage of primary school students from the deprived backgrounds, changes in the reduction of drop-out rate of students from deprived backgrounds, increase of school achievement of students from deprived backgrounds, and improving cooperation with the Center for Social Work are also described as visible and with tendency to become moderate changes (M = 3.6). Small changes in these long-term goals of inclusive education for children who come from deprived backgrounds testify about the effects of the program of municipal grants.

Coordinators estimate that there is a noticeable change in developing an inclusive culture within the schools and in implementing affirmative action (M = 3.8). Clearly visible and noticeable changes that have occurred in the implementation of inclusive education, according to the municipal coordinators, refer to informing parents of students who need additional support in education about their rights and all procedures and to monitoring degree of mobility of students from deprived backgrounds to higher levels education (M = 4).

More noticeable changes that have occurred since year 2011, according to the municipal coordinators of DILS/REF program, are related to the reduction of absenteeism of students from deprived backgrounds, their more even distribution in the classes within the school, creation of antidiscrimination measures within the school, better coordination of activities at the local level, the greater involvement of local government in monitoring the results achieved, provision of free transport (tickets) for students who are recipients of social allowances, and promotion of actions that strengthen solidarity (charities) (M = 4.2).

The changes that are approaching mark “very strong”, according to the municipal coordinator of DILS/REF program, regard the feeling of satisfaction and acceptance of students who need additional educational support in school, the development of internal procedures for school dropout prevention, the enhancement of cooperation between the school and the Inter-sectoral commission, the inclusion of Roma and other NGOs to improve the situation of children from deprived backgrounds, better co-operation with the pre-schools institutions, the development of a local action plan, as well as the quality of the Inter-sectoral commission work (M = 4.40).

More evident changes, according to the municipal coordinators of DILS/REF program, are related to the improvement of the quality of teachers' work with children from deprived backgrounds and their parents, the enhanced co-operation with the Health centers, provision of larger financial support for children from deprived backgrounds and the increased and more accurate identification of children who need additional educational support (M = 4.60).

Changes that can be described as a very strong, according to the municipal coordinators of DILS/REF program, are related to the enhanced cooperation between schools and municipalities in providing services to children who need additional educational support, to the higher level of municipal proactivity in applying at various calls for projects, the quality of the inter-sectoral cooperation and the exchange of information about children who need additional educational support, the degree of commitment of pedagogic assistants, as well as the effects achieved by the pedagogic assistant working with children from deprived backgrounds in the context of increasing their achievement (M = 4.80).

All municipalities unanimously assessed as “very strong” the changes related to providing the transportation for students from deprived backgrounds to accomplish desegregation and more even school load, defining a local action plan to reach out to all children in the municipality, as well as encouraging other actors in the municipality to share information about children and work together more efficiently and effectively (M = 5).

4.3.4. Opinion of Principals of Pre-school Institutions

Because of the low response of preschool institutions principals from control group of municipalities, we are presenting here the descriptive data on the assessments of changes related to the implementation of inclusive education by preschool principals in the municipalities that participated in the DILS/REF program. Preschools generally do not keep data on the number of children from deprived backgrounds enrolled in the preschool program (other than one preschool institution that records number of children from deprived backgrounds who enroll the preschool program).

Below are shown the average estimate of principals of preschools institutions (M), where mark 5 means that the change is "very strong", mark 4 that it was a "moderate change", mark 3 a "minor change" and the mark 2 that "change is not present."

The smallest observed changes, based on assessments of the principals of preschools involved in DILS/REF program, refer to the encouragement of preschool institutions by municipalities to engage pedagogical assistants (M = 3.75) and to advance the cooperation between schools and preschool institutions (M = 3.83). Although these are the lowest rated changes by the preschool principals, these rates are telling that the positive changes on these issues occurred and that the changes are visible and noticeable.

Clearly evident changes, by the judgment of the principals of preschool institutions involved in DILS/REF program, refer to more effective communication between preschools and schools, the provision of transport for children from deprived backgrounds and their more balanced enrollment in preschool institutions (M = 4).

In addition, the principals estimate that the preschools are demonstrating a more inclusive culture, that the number of children from deprived backgrounds entering the preschool program has increased, that the work of preschool staff is more individualized and adapted to the needs of children, that the achievements of children who need additional support have increased, that cooperation with the Health Center is better and more efficient, that the coordination on the local level is more efficient, that the local governments to the greater extent monitor the achieved results and that the municipality organizes activities that promote solidarity (M = 4.17).

Changes that are closer to “very strong” are those related to providing material support and services to children from deprived backgrounds, to participation of preschools in the projects focused on the promotion of inclusive education as well as on assisting to preschool institutions to manage and share data (M = 4, 33).

The changes between the evident and very strong changes are related to the improvement of the local action plan, affirmative procedures for enrollment in preschools, better integration of children from deprived backgrounds in the peer group, the increased sense of satisfaction and acceptance of children who need additional educational support, better cooperation with NGOs, better cooperation and intensified informing the parents of children from deprived backgrounds on their rights and all existing procedures (M = 4.5).

Very strong changes are related to the provision of free meals by the municipality (M = 4.83), evaluation of the quality of work of pedagogical assistants and their contribution to improved achievement of children from deprived backgrounds and their well-being (M = 5).

4.3.5. Opinion of Non-governmental Organizations

Because of the low response of non-governmental organizations from the control group of municipalities, we present here the descriptive data on the assessment of changes related to

the implementation of inclusive education by NGO representatives from the municipalities that participated in the DILS/REF program.

Below are shown the average estimates of representatives of non-governmental organizations (M), with mark 5 meaning that the change is "very strong", mark 4 that it was a "moderate change", mark 3 a "minor change" and the mark 2 that "change is not present."

All assessments of changes by NGOs, as in previous cases, are indicating that the changes in the municipalities have occurred which testifies the successful implementation of inclusive education. NGOs representatives estimated that NGOs help more in reducing the number of students from deprived backgrounds (M = 3.8), organize activities that promote solidarity (M = 4.2), cooperate to a greater extent with the Centre for Social Work in providing social protection and help Roma parents in exercising their rights to a greater extent (M = 4.4).

Opinion of changes that are closer to "very strong" relate to the assessments of a better institutional coordination at the local level in proving support to children from deprived backgrounds, the cooperation between NGOs and local governments has improved and NGOs to a greater extent participate in projects related to inclusive education (M = 4.6).

As "very strong" can be described those changes related to the involvement of NGOs in increasing coverage of children from deprived backgrounds, to the cooperation with schools in reducing discrimination, to increase of cooperation with Roma parents, to better and more effective involvement of NGOs in implementing affirmative action and informing Roma parents about it, to the greater involvement of local government in monitoring the results of the inclusion (M = 4.8). NGOs are unanimous that the changes related to communication with the preschool institutions, to collaboration with the Health Center, to the creation of a local action plan and to the quality of cooperation with pedagogical assistants, are very strong (M = 5).

4.3.6. The Quantitative School Data

Schools were not able to submit all the data on students' from deprived backgrounds absenteeism, school achievements and grades repetition in the given time period, so the presented data are only data that schools were able to provide.

Degree of individualization and additional support. One of the important indicators of successful inclusive education is an adequate percentage of the individual educational plans in the school population, which is more or less in line with the incidence of certain disorders and disabilities in the population. This also applies to Roma students who mostly come from deprived backgrounds and whose deprivation should not be seen as an obstacle to the development or as a disability.

	Percentage of the students with IEP 1	Percentage of the students with IEP 2	Percentage of the students from deprived backgrounds with IEP 1	Percentage of the students from deprived backgrounds with IEP 2	Percentage of the students sent to ISC
Schools included in DILS/REF program	1,72%	0,60%	4,67%	1,18%	0,60%
Schools outside of DILS/REF program	1,25%	1,60%	8,9%	11%	1,6%

Table 8. Individualization and additional support in schools within the municipalities involved in the DILS/REF program and in schools outside the DILS/REF program

We should bear in mind that number of Roma students in DILS/REF schools is three times larger than in other schools (Me = 90, Mk = 27.7), and that the percentage of DILS/REF school students from deprived backgrounds is 17.7% of the school population, while in the control group schools that percentage is 4.3% of the school population. We have noticed that the DILS/REF schools use less both – IEP-1 and IEP-2 which means that more informal individualization of teaching is taking place. Information that may be of concern is that in the control group of schools, IEP 2 (with modified standards of achievement) is used much more than needed for students from deprived backgrounds (more than assumption on incidence of various disabilities and disability in the population). This raises the question of whether the IEP 2 is used properly and whether it can constitute a means of implicit and unintentional discrimination. In DILS/REF schools IEP 2 is used appropriately.

4.3.7. Open Answers: Good Practice Examples, Challenges and Difficulties, Lessons Learned

Good practice examples can be found in both groups of schools, municipalities and non-governmental organizations. What makes these good practices different is that in DILS/REF schools, municipalities and non-governmental organizations, the examples are related more to the system solutions while the examples in the control group schools are related more to personal initiatives and resolving individual cases. Examples of good practice in DILS/REF schools and municipalities indicate significant progress in the implementation of inclusive education.

Challenges and difficulties underlined by DILS/REF schools, are to a great extent related to the real and systemic flaws which are beyond municipal and school level (lack of funds, the general poverty) while the control group schools often referred to the individual cases while some issues indicate the existence of non-inclusive practice. In some cases respondents, in both groups of municipalities and schools, indicate violations of procedures, sporadic inefficient cooperation with intersecotral commission and long waiting for the decisions, and in one case, inadequate action of center for social work.

Lessons learned in DILS/REF schools, municipalities and non-governmental organizations indicate recognition of important systemic factors that lead to important positive effects of inclusion on students coming from deprived backgrounds such as decreasing of drop-out and absenteeism, greater satisfaction and acceptance in school, as well as their higher school achievements. Lessons learned in control group also indicate certain „shifts“, but their reports mostly include the importance of particular actions, the activities of the individual school and the importance of personal initiative.

4.3.7.1. Good Practice Examples in DILS/REF Schools¹²

The school involved peers in preventing dropout. In the cases of children who already dropped out of school the joint work of teaching assistants, peers and teachers gave good results. Several children have returned to school.

In our school, we strive to involve students who need additional support in all school activities so that these students actively participate in clubs and extracurricular activities at school, in accordance with their interests. When celebrating important dates in the school we are involving all those students in the preparation and execution of the program in the city or in the school.

Classes are inclusive, there is no segregation on any basis, teachers are given assistants funded by the municipalities in those departments where needed. Working with children is thus almost individualized for all children which gives good results. Almost all Roma children complete primary school.

4.3.7.2. Good Practice Examples in Municipalities Involved in DILS/REF Program¹³

In all primary schools in the municipality, desegregation of classes was made in 2009. Since then, the Roma children attend school with other children.

Student M.A. who dropped out of primary school in the sixth grade, returned to regular education after year because we provided her with meals, free school supplies, textbooks. She is accepted by her peers and receives support from teaching assistants.

Schools, NGOs, teaching assistant and the Center for Social Work took out the whole documentation of a Roma family whose three children have not previously attended school, aged 10, 8 and 6 years old and enrolled them in the first grade. The children were not in the births register. The family is provided by social assistance for the first time.

¹² All of the above examples are quotes

¹³ All of the above examples are quotes

During the project "DILS / REF Educational inclusion of Roma", the coverage of Roma students was planned. Thanks to the successful realization of the presentations and discussion fora in the schools, visited by a large number of parents and children, where they were told what benefits can the realization of the project bring and how important the education, school attendance, health care are – the coverage of Roma children has increased significantly beyond all expectations. The students are provided with free snacks, transportation, textbooks, school supplies, clothing and shoes, and that has all contributed to a more regular attendance and better academic performance of children in school.

4.3.7.3. Good Practice Examples in NGOs in Municipalities Involved in DILS/REF Program¹⁴

Help a Roma family with five children in the education system. At the personal request through informal discussion with the Director of Social Welfare, that family has received immediate financial assistance.

Purchase of clothing and footwear for Roma students from the first to eighth grade for 128 of them contributed to make them feel more satisfied, happier because someone cares for them and their needs. We are grateful to the promises that it will justify the trust and would regularly attend classes.

Thanks to the implementation of the project and the work of educational assistants, who lives in a Roma settlement in J. Lesnici, where there are about 70 Roma households. She constantly encourages Roma children to attend school every day. When she goes to work in the school she always takes a group of children with her. She particularly seeks to motivate those parents who are indifferent to encourage their children to go to school regularly. She helps children to learn in the cases where the parents do not have the capacity for it. She records every problem; keep a diary for each child in J. Lesnica and reports to team members in inclusive education and the Commission to monitor. In this way, the Romani pupil self –image is changing. I feel safer and more accepted in school, have more open communication (the knowledge that someone cares about them, is achieved by working with parents and partly in the stands). As a result, there is significantly larger regular attendance. Parents see teachers as

¹⁴ All of the above examples are quotes

4.3.7.4. Challenges and Difficulties in DILS/REF schools¹⁵

- *The problem is financing of the teacher training activities in order to strength their capacities for work with such children.*
- *A problem that often occurs is that the parents of students who need additional support do not want to sign consent for the implementation of IEP.*
- *Poor cooperation with the intersectorial commission (ISC).*
- *Center for Social Work does not transport students who use wheelchairs although there is a decision of ISC.*

4.3.7.5. Challenges and Difficulties in Municipalities Involved in DILS/REF Program¹⁶

- *Economic situation and the insufficient funds in the budget prevent us to provide a greater measure of support (additional employment of special education teachers and speech therapists, personal attendant of a child, recreational classes, purchase school supplies, free snacks for all children from deprived backgrounds, to assist parents of children with disabilities in organizing meetings, continuing education of parents of children from deprived areas about the importance of education, school attendance, hiring of teaching assistants in the municipality).*

4.3.7.6. Challenges and Difficulties in NGOs in Municipalities Involved in DILS/REF Program¹⁷

- *Information from line ministries are much needed (related to actions, measures, public tenders) and need to be more directed to the local level and to address NGOs.*
- *A very large number of vulnerable individuals and families in municipalities.*
- *The presence of large-scale migration in the municipality, and the coordination with these families is very scarce.*
- *If the request for social assistance is sent to the Centre for Social Work in one copy by uneducated person, it happens that there is no number under which it is registered. It could cause that persons are not informed that their requests were not granted and there is no possibility of appeal. Also, occasionally the Center for Social Work hangs a letter on the door announcing that the municipality does not transfer resources for one-time help so the persons do not submit a request and cannot complete their rights.*

¹⁵ All of the above examples are quotes

¹⁶ All of the above examples are quotes

¹⁷ All of the above examples are quotes

4.3.7.7. Lessons Learned in DILS/REF Schools¹⁸

- *Disability and poverty are not barriers to learning.*
- *Access to inclusive education must be done individually because, and in spite of the common problems that occur in various groups, each individual has own specificities and it is very important to choose the right approach to each student.*
- *Sometimes when we think that success and progress are impossible, with some effort and adjustment in the work there is a shift in student progress.*
- *Openness to an inclusive approach is a good opportunity for all.*
- *One of the most important lessons is that we need to be patient, to get down to the level of a child with who we work and the results will come later.*
- *It takes time for Roma families to understand the importance of education.*
- *Tact and calmness in partnership with parents is very important.*

4.3.7.8. Lessons Learned in Municipalities Involved in DILS/REF Program¹⁹

- *Pedagogical assistants are very helpful in breaking the barriers when it comes to discrimination and segregation and linkage among children who come from families with different socio-economic status.*
- *We recognize the main problems of Roma families; we found where the responsibility lies and who is in charge for what. How, how much, and who can help to Romani families. Local Action Plan (education, housing, health and employment) provides funds in the municipal budget.*
- *Potential of NGOs is recognized in order to understand and explain to Roma families the importance of early education of their children. It is important to plan together (with NGOs, pre/school institutions and primary schools) within municipality and submit projects aiming improvement of conditions of Roma families.*
- *It is important to do a larger work with Roma parents regarding to importance of education and how to help their children to overcome the obstacles they are facing during schooling.*

4.3.7.9. Lessons Learned in NGOs in Municipalities Involved in DILS/REF Program²⁰

- *Increased communication and cooperation contributed to faster and more efficient problem solving.*
- *The lesson learned during the implementation of the project is that all Roma children accept education and are very satisfied with the help they get from the local government.*
- *Collaboration and co-operation is most important Recommendation is to be permanently in contact with representatives of the municipal government.*

¹⁸ All of the above examples are quotes

¹⁹ All of the above examples are quotes

²⁰ All the examples are actual citations.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE INTERVENTIONS PERFORMED UNDER DILS PROGRAM

Based on the results and opinions of the different stakeholders, it can be concluded that the DILS school grants program has achieved its goal: it has contributed to a more successful implementation of inclusive education, led to higher academic achievements of the students with disabilities and made them feel more satisfied and accepted within the school. Furthermore, it led to cultivating inclusive culture within schools to greater extent. As the amount of the fund schools received was not extensive and sufficient to allow a significant improvement of school infrastructure, it is more likely that the DILS school grants program has achieved its goal by moving the human capacities and resources toward the implementation of what are legal obligations and the obligations of educational work. As the program of school grants was directed to the schools and to the development of competences within the school and internal procedures, it has achieved maximum effects in this domain, and had slightly smaller effects in the domain of collaboration with other institutions and schools in the municipality. We should bear in mind that the trainings of teachers through DILS trainings which have aggregated effect with school grants have led to these effects.

We may assume that the external support was important for the school and that it had the effect on more successful implementation of inclusive education because it drew the attention of employees to the importance of inclusion and to the fact that for the education decision makers inclusive education is of strategic importance. This has been confirmed by the opinions of educational advisors, as well as by the comparison of opinions of the school principals who participated in the DILS program of school grants and the school principals who did not about the change that has happened since 2011, measured by indicators of inclusiveness. Having in mind all the indicators, the greatest effect has been achieved in the area of school achievement of children with developmental disabilities; development of an inclusive culture; quality of teachers and the feeling of satisfaction of parents and students with disabilities. This is courtesy of the DILS program and trainings for teachers, along with the school grant.

External support that schools have received has most likely created the assurance amongst the teachers and principals that changes in the achievements and progress of these children are possible. Further on, this resulted in the strengthening of self-efficacy, perceptions of their own abilities and responsibilities of school for achievements of all children. This is mostly mentioned in the open answers of the Professional teams for inclusive education and principals. Material assistance that schools received was not high enough to significantly improve the conditions in schools, but it has made an impact through the deployment of human resources and changing the perception of the importance of inclusion, not only for students who need additional educational support, but also for raising the quality of the whole educational process. As a result, in the schools that have received grants and schools whose teachers went through the DILS trainings, children who need additional educational support have received it to a greater

extent (even twice as much), comparing to the ones which remained without grant and DILS trainings. They have received necessary individualized and customized instruction (measured by the percentage of individual education plans) while, in the same time, according to opinions of the educational advisers, their satisfaction and acceptance in school was noticeable.

According to opinions of the educational advisers, school grants have led to the creation of more inclusive culture in the schools that have received them compared to the schools in control group. The teachers in these schools have become more competent owing to the trainings received, and children with developmental disorders and disabilities, in their opinion, seem more accepted and satisfied. It is important to emphasize that school principals and professional teams for inclusive education think that the academic achievement of these students significantly improved. This progress is seen as more visible, compared to the opinions of principals in the control group of schools; teachers work was evaluated as of better quality; absenteeism is less notable, and satisfaction of the students with disabilities and their parents, school teachers as advisors - significantly more positive than in the control group of schools. Twice larger percentage of children in these schools follow developed individual education plan with modified achievement standards (0.8% compared to 0.4% in the control group of schools), which probably says more about the sensitivity and higher competence to identify disabilities. Relying on these opinions, we may say that the DILS program of school grants has been very effective.

With the presented results in mind, we may conclude that (compared with other sources of information) DILS trainings are perceived as the most important factor that has contributed to improvement of quality of work with students who need additional support in education.

After DILS trainings, the second most important factor that affects the quality of work with these students is the support by the school psychologist/pedagogue.

For the respondents, significant sources of knowledge which have contributed to the quality of work with students who need additional support in education include participation in projects related to work with these students, accredited trainings for professional development in education, the provision of advice/support from other colleagues, literature and information available on the Internet and principals' support. Factors that have least contributed to the quality of work with students who need additional support in education, compared to other sources of information, are participation in scientific meetings and conferences, formal education, cooperation with educational assistant and cooperation with NGOs.

Subject teachers, compared to other categories of employees, evaluated as the least significant the contribution of the individual sources of information, such as visits to the experimental classes, accredited trainings and DILS trainings, to the improving of the quality of work with students who need additional support in education. However, both subject teachers and classroom teachers in the first four grades in primary school share opinions about the insufficient impact of cooperation with colleagues and formal education on the quality of work with students who need additional support in education.

When evaluating the general usefulness of individual trainings for work with students who need additional support in education, within DILS trainings that aim at developing specific competences for inclusive education (primarily training *Inclusive Education - Strategies and methods of adapting instruction for children with disabilities and gifted children*), trainings for work with this group of students trainings aimed at developing generic competencies of teachers stood out as useful. On the other hand, the respondents said that the trainings directed to the development of generic competencies were to a greater extent very useful for work with all students.

The list of trainings the responders would recommend to colleagues who have not attended any training contains trainings aimed at developing generic competences and trainings aimed at developing specific competences for inclusive education, which were previously rated as the most useful for working with students who need additional educational support and for working with all students.

Detailed insight into the opinions on the usefulness of individual trainings for the work with students who need additional support in education is obtained when analyzing how the respondents assessed their contribution to the quality of work in various fields.

The greatest effect, or a wide range of impact, is attributed to DILS training *Inclusive Education - Strategies and methods of adapting instruction for children with disabilities and gifted children*. This training is considered particularly useful for increasing the sensitivity of teachers for students from vulnerable groups, ensuring progress in the education of students from marginalized groups, conducting individualized approach to students, differentiating instruction and the use of different methods and techniques of working with students, governance of class with students from vulnerable groups, securing their progressing in education and their involvement in extracurricular activities and elaboration of pedagogical profile. In addition, this training, according to respondents, contributes to the exchange of good teaching practice, teamwork and collaboration in school.

In addition to the *Strategies*, DILS training *Motivation for learning and psychological principles of learning* is seen as amazingly versatile training, although to a lesser extent than the *Strategies*. In addition to increasing motivation for learning, this training is considered useful for increasing the sensitivity of teachers for students from vulnerable groups, ensuring their advancement in education and their involvement in extracurricular activities. Since this is the training aimed at developing generic competencies, such multifaceted effect is to be expected.

The other two DILS trainings, *Inclusive Education - Planning and elaboration of the IEP*, and *Inclusive Education - Monitoring, evaluation and revision of the IEP*, are perceived as useful in the specific domain of their purpose, especially the training *Inclusive education - Monitoring, evaluation and revision of the IEP*.

Based on the results and opinions of actors, we can conclude that the DILS/REF municipal grants program has met its goal: it has contributed to better cooperation of the actors on the

local level in providing services and support to children from deprived groups; it united the various stakeholders, enabled a very good cooperation with educational assistants; much has been done on the provision of free meals and transportation for students from deprived communities; it activated schools to make plans for prevention of dropout and made the children from deprived backgrounds and their parents feel more satisfied and accepted in the school. According to the reports of all stakeholders, DILS/REF schools significantly reduced absenteeism of students from deprived communities, school achievements have increased, but what yet requires work is reducing drop out and increasing the coverage of primary education, although the positive trends were noted in these aspects as well, in the opinion of stakeholders.

One of the conclusions of this study is that synergy is essential for the successful implementation of inclusive education of children from deprived groups. It is not possible to leave school alone to struggle with this problem. It is important that there is cooperation with NGOs, that there are pedagogical assistants and that there is a field work, while the municipality has to provide the means and meet the basic needs of children from deprived backgrounds (free meals, clothing, transportation) in order to maximize coverage and prevent drop out. The cooperation is effective and efficient among all stakeholders; additional work is needed on improving cooperation with the municipal Centers for Social Work.

In DILS/REF schools, individual education plans are used less in working with children from deprived backgrounds, which is right and positive, because it is possible that in the schools in the control group something that is a consequence of deprivation may be misinterpreted as some kind of a disability. It would be necessary to perform a detailed qualitative analysis of IEP for such a conclusion. Generally, all the stakeholders, on all indicators, in situations where it was possible to make a comparison, perceive the changes that have taken place related to the implementation of inclusive education as more intense than in the control group of municipalities and schools within them. Synergy at the municipality level leads to the better school practice - internal measures for prevention of drop out and reducing discrimination are being developed.

All the above mentioned are the effects that the DILS /REF program has achieved. Although it was not possible to make a comparison of opinions of the preschool principals, heads of the municipal administration and representatives of non-governmental organizations, the obtained opinions of the stakeholders involved in the implementation of DILS/REF program show that the very noticeable and significant changes have occurred related to almost all investigated indicators of inclusiveness. Comparison of opinions of school principals who were involved in DILS/REF program and those who were not indicate that there are clearly visible differences in perceptions of changes related to indicators of inclusiveness. A lot has been done that, if we keep the structures formed on the municipal level and if this work continues, could in the near future lead to increasing coverage and reducing drop out of children from deprived backgrounds.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Based on the obtained results, we may assume that, in situations where there is external support to schools and teachers through the program of grants and the program of trainings, self-efficiency of the teachers and schools have increased. Along with the development of competences, this has contributed to a better and more successful inclusive education. Open answers of the DILS grant schools indicate gained insight that it is possible to achieve success in working with children with difficulties and disabilities, through work and when teachers receive direct instructions about their practice. Experiences of schools indicate that these successes are coming slowly and it is important to be persistent. Experience of success then determines self-efficacy and belief in own competence. One of the recommendations for the educational system concerning the improvement of inclusive education is that it should "dispel" negative self-fulfilling prophecies of schools and teachers. This means that those teachers who do not believe that it is possible to achieve success in working with children with disabilities act in those ways that do not lead to success. This keeps them in the mistaken belief that it is impossible to achieve this success. Through the school grants and trainings, external support successfully dispelled these beliefs of teachers and schools.

Implementation of the teacher trainings should continue, but the schools need to be encouraged and capable, through the school grant, to improve at least the minimum of infrastructure in school (e.g. purchase of appropriate textbooks for visually impaired children, construction of access ramps, etc.). This means that the school implicitly takes responsibility for the implementation of inclusive education.

Since the trainings oriented towards the development of generic competences were perceived as useful for working with students who need additional support in education, but also as useful for working with all students in the class, these trainings should be seen as additional support to the improvement of teachers' competences and their teaching practices in the field of inclusive education. As their relationship with the DILS trainings is complementary, they can be combined with DILS trainings in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of teachers from each individual school – prior to the DILS trainings, parallel with the DILS trainings, or after the package of the DILS trainings. Since the quality work with all students in the class is the basis of the quality work with students who need additional educational support, it is recommended that the trainings oriented towards the development of generic competences are combined with trainings that enhance teaching competences in the field of inclusive education. That is, in order to improve inclusive practices in schools, training programs oriented towards the development of generic competences should include as many teachers from one school as possible, especially subject teachers.

Prospective trainings should be directed to the following areas: (1) work with students who need additional support in education (successful inclusion and ensuring progress in the education of students from socially unstimulating environment; Individualization and individual

education plan; active learning in working with students who need additional support in education), (2) work with students who need additional support in education and all students in the class (support to the development of students' personality, motivating students to learn, encouraging critical thinking, communication skills and the skills of constructive conflict resolution, use of different methods, forms and techniques of instruction and extracurricular activities, monitoring and assessment of student achievement) and (3) improving inclusive practices in schools (sensitization of teachers for the needs of students who need additional support in education, communication skills and the skills of constructive conflict resolution, teamwork and cooperation in school).

As for the inclusion of children from deprived backgrounds, it is necessary to provide tangible incentives (subsidies) in order to positively prevent the drop out and influence the coverage for those who are the most vulnerable. Here lies one of the most important contributions of DILS/REF grant. Aid in clothes, shoes, transportation and free meals can cost relatively little, but in future leads to the involvement of children in the labor market; instead of spending social benefits, they could be the tax contributors to the society. In addition, it is necessary to have developed systems of collecting data from the field, so the actions could be better evaluated, although there are significant steps made through local action plans. All municipalities own the most relevant data on the Roma population, but the schools do not keep this information (e.g. absenteeism, drop out, coverage, achievement of children from deprived backgrounds) because the legal framework does not stipulate that. Changes and amendments to the legal framework regarding these items can be recommended for the successful implementation of inclusive education of children from deprived backgrounds. The mere fact that the DILS/REF program has effects that are noticeable and that the perceptions of changes are more intense in those municipalities where the program was implemented, says that the existing legal framework does not foresee sufficient level of cooperation and proactivity of institutions. In cases where this kind of cooperation is stipulated by the law, it is possible that the legal solutions are not fully implemented. Creating data systems and monitoring of parameters about inclusiveness and other aspects of the education system can serve as a mechanism for controlling and monitoring of the implementation of legal solutions.

DILS/REF program in this way gives good guidelines for further steps and aspects of the system that should be developed. Without completely clear information at the school and municipal level, the allocation of resources can be reduced, and this is what the DILS/REF program sought to correct. Importance of pedagogical assistants to carry out the plans and keep these children in the system is vital. This aspect is best assessed, together with improved cooperation, by all stakeholders.

DILS program of school grants and DILS/REF municipal grants program testify to the fact that it is possible to succeed when there is a common goal and support of the Ministry. Additional work is required on increasing the awareness of the importance of recording, keeping record, analyzing and evaluating of each procedure which is being implemented. With a clear and apparent good will of all stakeholders, the legal framework and the introduction of the Unified Information System of Education, every action can be assessed as more or less effective, and

thus improved forthwith. The synergy that is created in the local level, according to the stakeholders, is the best seen in the drastic increase of children from deprived communities who receive social security and other material support. Some of these solutions should become permanent systemic solutions (e.g. hiring professional services in the provision of social security, more flexible procedures for social assistance, as well as preparing of evidence based local action plans in municipalities).