

Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)



Early Childhood Education and Care for Kosovo's Human Capital Project (P179656)

Republic of Kosovo

September 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction and Project Description	3
1.1. Introduction.....	3
1.2 Project Description.....	3
1.3 Project Context and Location	5
1.4 Project Beneficiaries	6
1.5 Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)	6
1.6 Objectives and Structure of the SEP	7
2. Brief Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities	8
3. Regulatory Legal Framework.....	9
3.1. National Legislation Requirements	9
3.2 World Bank Requirements	10
4. Stakeholder Identification and Analysis	11
4.1. Stakeholder Mapping	12
5. Stakeholder Engagement Program	23
5.1. Introduction	23
5.2 Purpose and Timing of Stakeholder Engagement Program	24
5.3 Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure	24
5.4 Proposed Strategy for Consultation	25
5.5 Proposed Strategy for Inclusion and Communication with Vulnerable Groups	26
5.6 Project Phases	27
5.7 Review of Comments	29
5.8 Planned Information and Communication Arrangements	30
6. Resources and Responsibilities for Implementing Stakeholders Engagement Activities.....	30
6.1. Resources	30
6.2. Management/Staff Functions and Responsibilities	31
7. Grievance Redress Mechanism.....	32
7.1. Complainant Feedback on the Resolution	32
7.2 World Bank Grievance Redress System	34
8. Monitoring and Reporting	35
Annex A: List of Ministerial Stakeholders in the ECEC Project Area.....	36
Annex B: Grievance Submission Form.....	37

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AVETAE	The Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ESF	Environment and Social Framework
ESRS	Environment and Social Review Summary
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESS	Environmental and Social Standards
ESS 10	Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure
ETI	Educational and Training Institutions
EU	European Union
GOK	Government of Kosovo
GM	Grievance Mechanism
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IA	Implementing Agencies
IE	Impact Evaluation
KAA	The Kosovo Accreditation Agency
KEC	Kosovo Education Center
KPI	The Kosovo Pedagogical Institute
LMP	Labor Management Procedures
MED	Municipalities and Municipal Education Directorates
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation
MOH	Ministry of Health
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NQA	The National Qualifications Authority
OIPs	Other Interested Parties
PEIP	Public Engagement and Information Plan
PHC	Primary Healthcare Centers
PI	Preschool Institutions
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
POM	Project Operation Manual
PPSD	Project Procurement Strategy for Development
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
UP	University of Prishtina
WBG	World Bank Group

1. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.1 Introduction

The World Bank Group (WBG) and the Government of Kosovo (GoK) are currently engaged in preparing an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Project aimed at improving quality and equitable access to early childhood education and care services in Kosovo. It is designed to address the primary challenges concerning early childhood development services in Kosovo. The initiative aims to enhance Kosovo's capacity to provide better access, improved quality, and greater equity in ECEC services. Additionally, it will support healthcare interventions aimed at tackling the health-related issues faced by the youngest children in the nation. The project will also focus on promoting ECEC activities to increase public awareness about the significance of early childhood development services for child health and overall development. This, in turn, is expected to result in improved parenting practices, early detection of developmental issues, and ultimately, reduced child mortality rates. Additionally, MESTI will be responsible for decision-making on the Project and Project implementation in coordination with the Ministry of Health (MOH), that will be in charge of implementation of the Component 2 (see below).

1.2 Project Description

Investing in high-quality ECEC offers both immediate and lasting benefits. Children who experience quality ECEC from birth to age five show significantly improved life outcomes, including better education, health, social skills, and reduced involvement in crime. These benefits extend to economic productivity, benefiting both participants and their parents, creating a positive impact across two generations. This cores the value of comprehensive early childhood interventions. Therefore, the Project's development objective is to improve equitable access to and quality of early childhood development services in Kosovo. The project consists of four key components. The first component aims to enhance the quality and equity of ECEC and childcare services in Kosovo. The second component is dedicated to improving the availability of health and nutrition services for children and families in Kosovo. The third component focuses on expanding access to ECEC and childcare. The fourth component is dedicated to supporting project management, monitoring, and project evaluation. The four interrelated components are as follows:

Component 1: Improving the Quality of ECEC Services. The objective of this component is to improve the regulatory framework and operational and implementation capacity of Kosovo to assess and improve the quality of ECEC services. This component will include three sub-components: (i) ECEC regulatory updates, assessments of ECEC service quality, and measurement of child development outcomes; (ii) building capacity of ECEC professionals; and (iii) digitalization and cross-sectoral integration of data to support data-driven decision making. Activities under this component will have impacts at the system and institutional level of the country, with aspects extending to the whole education system. Component 1 will have a nationwide scale by reforming the approach to ECEC, building the institutional and human capacity of the country. The component will target children from 0-6 years old.

- ***Sub-component 1.1. ECEC regulatory updates and development of the new ECEC quality and monitoring frameworks.*** This sub-component will support the advancement of the existing regulatory framework related to ECEC provision, the development of the national ECEC quality framework, and development of subsequent elements of the quality

framework.

- **Sub-component 1.2. Capacity building of ECEC professionals.** This subcomponent will finance development of a national continuous professional development (CPD) framework for ECEC professionals; improvement of existing in-service and pre-service ECEC teacher training programs, including developing new training modules; training, retraining, and requalification of ECEC professionals and their certification; and alignment of the existing teacher training system with the reforms of sub-component 1.1 to expand ECEC services provision. The training activities will cover professionals working with children of ages 0-6 in ECEC institutions.
- **Sub-component 1.3. Development and implementation of ECEC module for the EMIS and improvement of the core EMIS system.** This sub-component will finance the development of a cross-sectoral EMIS ECEC module with interlinkages between health, education, and social protection data, including infrastructure information. The module will be part of the existing EMIS that will also receive additional improvements. The Information Society Agency for Kosovo (ASHI) will also be engaged to link the EMIS with E-Kosovo platform.

Component 2: Fostering Multi-sectoral Integration in ECEC Service Delivery. The objective of this component is to support the Government in improving child development outcomes, particularly through encouraging stimulating development for the first 1,000 days of life, reducing stunting rates through promoting exclusive breastfeeding and healthy nutrition, enhancing child monitoring and early interventions, and cross-sectoral integration of services.

- **Sub-component 2.1. Early stimulation and promoting healthy nutrition.** This sub-component will build the capacity of healthcare professionals and institutions and help the government communicate to the public the importance of early stimulation, exclusive breastfeeding and complementary nutrition. The sub-component will also help scale-up the guideline on Planning for Healthy Nutrition for ECE Institutions, adopted by the Government in July 2022.
- **Sub-component 2.2. Child monitoring and early childhood intervention program.** This sub-component will support (i) interventions to improve the quality and standardization of early identification and child monitoring for ages 0-6 years, and (ii) development and implementation of the monitoring system at the national level.

Component 3: Increasing Equitable Access to ECEC Services. The objective of this component is to support the Government's priorities to increase access to ECEC services for families and increase enrollment rates. Interventions under this component will include (i) constructing, refurbishing, and repurposing facilities for the provision of ECEC services, (ii) providing innovative equipment and teaching and learning materials to ECEC centers, and (iii) providing vouchers to enroll children from families on social assistance system to join ECEC services. The voucher program will feature a performance-based financing mechanism.

- **Sub-component 3.1. Green and universal repurposing, building, and renovating ECEC facilities.** The objective of this sub-component is to maximize the impact of the investment into the expansion of center-based ECEC services, including interventions that could expand access to affordable childcare services. This sub-component will finance: a) the construction of at least four new ECEC centers using the offsite method (or modular), by

which building elements are prefabricated and mounted on a foundation at the construction site¹, b) rehabilitation of existing ECEC spaces (including annexes of buildings), c) repurposing/upgrading of other existing public spaces for ECEC use, and d) refurbishments of kitchens to implement new nutrition guidelines.

- **Sub-component 3.2. Equipping ECEC centers with new furniture and learning materials.** This sub-component will finance equipment, supplies, and learning materials to accommodate different teaching methodologies and play-based curricula in ECEC centers of Kosovo. The equipment will also include the tools and materials for early science, technology, engineering, and math skills development (thematically oriented to climate change adaptation). Under this sub-component, the project will aim to provide a universal package of innovative equipment (both indoor and outdoor) for Kosovo ECEC facilities. This package will be defined by the regulatory interventions under Component 1, and will consider previous and upcoming interventions in Kosovo (e.g., learning corners financed by the EU-IPA).
- **Sub-component 3.3. Supporting the participation in childcare of children from vulnerable families through a voucher program (ELP: US\$2.0 million).** This sub-component will feature a performance-based financing voucher program for vulnerable families.

Component 4: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation. The objective of this component is to support the day-to-day management of project implementation, the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation, and technical assistance and operational support for MESTI. This component will finance the necessary staff of a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) in MESTI and all necessary costs for project implementation. In addition, this component will include the design of an impact evaluation (IE) study relying on the observations and assessments supported under Sub-component 1.1. The component will also finance verification of the PBC 1, midpoint and endline evaluation of PBC 1 implementation, meaningful outreach and information activities to provide information support to vulnerable families to raise awareness on the ECEC benefits.

1.3 Project Context and Location

Kosovo has made progress since the 1999 conflict, with democratic improvements and social advancements, despite political instability and declining trust in institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted economic growth, resulting in a recession, but recovery is underway. Kosovo is actively pursuing reforms with a strong focus on human capital development, notably early childhood education and care (ECEC). ECEC is a top priority in the National Development and Education Strategies, emphasizing expanding preschool institutions, curriculum development, service quality enhancement, and cross-sectoral support. The Education Strategy 2022-2026 prioritizes ECEC as its foremost pillar, with a commitment to expanding preschool facilities, crafting a new ECEC curriculum, elevating service quality, and bolstering cross-sectoral backing for top-notch ECEC services. Additionally, the strategy encompasses other pivotal pillars such as enhancing the quality of pre-university education, aligning vocational education and training with labor market demands, improving higher education competitiveness, and modernizing the

¹ This ensures quality, speed, and cost predictability.

education sector through digitalization.² These efforts align with Kosovo’s aspirations to join the European Union, setting the stage for a brighter future.

ECEC services in Kosovo face significant challenges, with less than 5% of children having access to preschool and care centers. Many children, especially those from vulnerable communities, lack foundational education support early in life, affecting their lifelong prospects. The lack of suitable infrastructure, materials, financial support, quality assurance, and shortage of ECEC professionals and training opportunities further hinders ECEC services. Additional challenges include inadequate infrastructure tailored to children’s needs, a shortage of instructional and play-based learning materials, financial constraints, and the need for improved quality assurance in preschool institutions.³

International assessments reveal low foundational skills among Kosovo’s young children, impacting their human capital potential. The government recognizes these challenges and is prioritizing ECEC through legislative measures. Laws promote ECEC from birth and ensure pre-primary education from age 5.⁴ A new Law on Early Childhood Education, expected to be approved in 2023, will regulate all education services for young children, make pre-primary education mandatory, and facilitate multi-sectoral interventions to reform ECEC in Kosovo.

1.4 Project Beneficiaries

The project will directly benefit various groups, including all children attending childcare services, the staff, early childhood development, and health professionals working in supported childcare centers, preschool institutions, and ECEC facilities. Specifically, the project’s impact would reach 3,400 boys and girls, 2500 ECEC teachers and professionals, as well as 2500 PHC specialists who stand to gain from kindergarten renovations and new constructions. In addition to these direct beneficiaries, families and community members would also experience positive effects. Moreover, the project would enhance the capacity of MESTI and the Ministry of Health, which are essential education and health institutions.

On an indirect level, employers would benefit as well, as increased participation of women in the labor market would be promoted.

1.5 Purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

The project is being prepared under the WB’s Environment and Social Framework (ESF). The ESF specifies the WB’s commitment to sustainable development through its policies and number of Environmental and Social Standards (“ESS”). As per ESS 10 on Stakeholders Engagement and Information Disclosure, the implementing agencies (IAs) should provide stakeholders with timely, relevant, understandable, and accessible information, and consult with them in a culturally appropriate manner, which is free of manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination, and intimidation.

² Source: Kosovo Education Strategy 2022-2026. June 2022.

³ Source: The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI). 2022.

⁴ Sources: The Strategy for Children's Rights 2019 – 2023, The National Development Strategy – 2030, The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2022-2026.

The purpose of the present Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) is to outline the target groups, methods of stakeholder engagement and the responsibilities in the implementation of stakeholder engagement activities. The intention of the SEP is to activate the engagement of stakeholders in a timely manner during project preparation and implementation. Specifically, SEP serves the following purposes: i) stakeholder identification and analysis; (ii) planning engagement modalities and effective communication tools for consultations and disclosure; (iii) defining role and responsibilities of different actors in implementing the SEP; (iv) defining the project's grievance mechanism (GM) and (v) providing feedback to stakeholders; (vi) monitoring and reporting of the SEP.

1.6 Objectives and Structure of the SEP

Stakeholder engagement is an inclusive process conducted throughout the project life cycle. Where properly designed and implemented, it supports the development of strong, constructive and responsive relationships that are important for successful management of environmental and social risks identified in a project. Communicating early, often, and clearly with stakeholders helps manage expectations and avoid risks, potential conflict, and project delays. In addition, the plan assists in managing stakeholder expectations, which will have a bearing throughout the lifespan of the project. Hence, this SEP provides a plan to interact effectively with stakeholders to support project interests. To provide clear and smooth communication between all interested and affected parties, the MESTI PIU has developed this Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), which is carrying out stakeholder engagement in line with the laws of the Republic of Kosovo, as well as the requirements of World Bank (ESS standards).

The main objectives of the SEP can be summarized as follows:

1. Gain a deep understanding of the stakeholder engagement requirements outlined in Kosovo's legislation.
2. Offer guidance on stakeholder engagement that aligns with the standards set by the World Bank.
3. Identify and engage key stakeholders who can impact or are affected by the Project and its activities.
4. Determine the most effective methods, timing, and structures for sharing project information, ensuring that consultation is regular, accessible, transparent, and appropriate.
5. Develop a stakeholder engagement process that allows stakeholders to influence project planning and design.
6. Establish formal mechanisms for addressing grievances and resolving issues.
7. Clearly define roles and responsibilities for implementing the SEP.
8. Set up reporting and monitoring measures to ensure the SEP's effectiveness and conduct periodic reviews based on findings.

This SEP is a living document and will be continuously updated as the project starts being implemented.

2. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

During the initial stages of project development, both during the preparatory phase and leading up to pre-implementation, the project team, consisting of representatives from the PIU and the WB conducted a series of crucial stakeholder meetings and workshops. These gatherings served the purpose of fostering effective coordination, addressing concerns pertinent to the project’s activities and components, and integrating these insights into the project’s design and subsequent implementation phases.

Outlined below is an account of a previous stakeholder engagement initiative of the ECEC project, which will shed light on the primary issues that were deliberated upon during these interactions, as well as provide insight into the key stakeholders who participated in these meetings. This comprehensive approach to stakeholder engagement ensured that the project was developed and executed in a manner that reflected the perspectives of all relevant parties.

Type of engagement	Date/Place	Participants	Key issues discussed
Workshop - MESTI Working Group on Project Design	July 2023 Prevalla, Kosovo	8 participants (MESTI representatives, PIU, WBG)	Workshop to design Project Components and Results Framework
Donor meeting(s) with UNICEF	May, July, September 2023	3 participants (UNICEF, MESTI PIU, WBG)	Donor Coordination Efforts on ECEC interventions
Donor meeting with EU	May 2023	2 participants (EU, WBG)	Donor Coordination Efforts on ECEC interventions

The workshop with the MESTI working group held a pivotal role in the ECEC project’s development process. Its primary purpose was to thoroughly assess and discuss the various planned activities, components, and the results framework within the project’s design. This gathering served as an opportunity for participants to delve into the intricate details of the project, ensuring that all aspects were carefully planned and aligned with the ECEC’s overarching goals and objectives.

The other stakeholder meetings involving international donors, UNICEF, and the European Union (EU) were orchestrated to foster coordination and collaboration among key players involved in ECEC interventions. These meetings aimed to bring together influential stakeholders and donors to create a cohesive and synchronized approach to ECEC initiatives. By doing so, they aimed to avoid duplications, optimize the utilization of resources, facilitate synergy and coordination, as well as maximize the collective impact of expertise and funding in the realm of early childhood development.

3. REGULATORY LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 National Legislation Requirements

While Kosovo has taken initial steps toward modernizing its education system, there are still critical areas in need of immediate reform. In 2022, the government introduced a Comprehensive Education Strategy for the period 2022-2026, which encompasses various actions aimed at enhancing the quality and assessment of education.

This Education Strategy encompasses five priority areas that span the entire spectrum of education levels within the country. The foremost priority is Early Childhood Education. That is because the first strategic objective of the Education Strategy is geared towards enhancing inclusion and ensuring equal access to early childhood education. Early Childhood Education plays a crucial role in fostering a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, laying the groundwork for lifelong learning and well-being. Achieving equal inclusion and participation for all children in preschool education hinges on the establishment of appropriate infrastructure. To address this, MESTI will conduct a comprehensive financial analysis of this educational level. This analysis will inform the strategic plan to overcome the challenges that preschool education faces, including increasing the number of preschool institutions (PIs) and ensuring their equitable distribution, developing child-friendly infrastructure, and supplying the necessary educational materials to support effective teaching and learning processes.

Kosovo's legal framework governing various aspects and levels of education is underpinned by a set of fundamental laws, including:

- The Law on Early Childhood Education (No. 08/L-153)
- The Law on Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo (No. 04/L-032).
- The Law on Education in the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo (No. 03/L-068).
- The Law for Vocational Education and Training (No. 04/L-138).
- The Law on Adults Education and Training in the Republic of Kosovo (No. 04/L-143).
- The Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo (No. 04/L-037).
- The Law on Education Inspectorate in the Republic of Kosovo (No. 06/L-046).

In addition to these foundational laws, various aspects of the education sector are regulated by overarching legislation unrelated to education, as well as specialized laws pertaining to education, including those governing national qualifications, regulated professions, state Matura exams, textbooks, the education inspectorate, and scientific research activities.

The primary institutions responsible for the organization and management of education at all levels in Kosovo, in accordance with the prevailing laws and regulations, include:

- The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI).
- The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA).
- The National Qualifications Authority (NQA).
- The Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE).
- The Kosovo Pedagogical Institute (KPI).
- Municipalities and Municipal Education Directorates (MED).
- Educational and Training Institutions (ETI), which encompass kindergartens, primary schools, lower secondary schools, general upper secondary schools (gymnasiums),

vocational high schools, and institutions providing education and training for adults, among others.

- Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

The purpose of the relevant Law on Early Childhood Education (No. 08/L-153) is to establish a framework for delivering high-quality early childhood education and care to children from birth to age six. Furthermore, it aims to stimulate the healthy growth and achievement of children's potential. It regulates all forms of provision of education services for children from birth until entering the first grade of primary school, makes pre-primary education compulsory, and provides for integrated services in early childhood among the sectors of education, health, and social welfare. It outlines the standards and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in early childhood education. This law applies to all institutions providing early childhood education, ensuring the following:

- Guaranteeing every child's right to inclusive and quality education tailored to their individual needs.
- Promoting the health, well-being, and protection of children.
- Creating mechanisms for delivering integrated services.
- Defining the roles and responsibilities of early childhood education service providers.
- Implementing mentoring, monitoring, inspection, financing, and sanctions for service providers.
- Establishing mechanisms to set, monitor, and uphold quality standards across all levels of early childhood education.

Furthermore, this Law states that the purposes of early childhood education include promoting comprehensive child development (education, health, and well-being), fostering various aspects of development (physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and personality), instilling value-based education for interpersonal skills and emotional self-regulation, providing a safe learning environment through play, involving children in decision-making and responsibility, and identifying individual needs and potentials. Additionally, all children in Kosovo are entitled to protection from violence and quality early childhood education.

3.2 World Bank Requirements

The World Bank has established comprehensive Environmental and Social Standards (ESS) that projects must adhere to, with a focus on Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure under ESS 10. ESS 10 emphasizes the importance of open and transparent engagement between the Borrower and project stakeholders as an essential international practice. Specifically, ESS 10 requires the following:

- Borrowers should engage with stakeholders throughout the project's life cycle, starting early in the project development process to enable meaningful consultations based on project characteristics and potential risks.

- Borrowers must conduct meaningful consultations with stakeholders, providing them with timely, relevant, accessible information in a culturally appropriate manner, free from manipulation or discrimination.
- The stakeholder engagement process includes stakeholder identification and analysis, planning, information disclosure, consultation, addressing grievances, and reporting.
- Borrowers should maintain a documented record of stakeholder engagement as part of the environmental and social assessment, including stakeholder descriptions, feedback summaries, and explanations for incorporating or not incorporating feedback.

Borrowers are required to create a Stakeholder Engagement Plan proportional to the project's nature and impact, disclose it early, and seek stakeholder input on the SEP and stakeholder identification. Any significant SEP changes must be disclosed. Additionally, according to ESS 10, Borrowers must establish a grievance mechanism to address concerns from project-affected parties related to the project's environmental and social performance promptly.

Identifying stakeholders ensures broad project acceptability and design participation. To encourage citizen involvement throughout the project, a clear SEP outlines the consultation and information disclosure process for relevant stakeholders during project preparation and implementation.

4. STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

In ESS 10, the World Bank recognizes three main categories of stakeholders:

- **Project Affected Parties:** These are individuals or groups likely to experience actual or potential impacts on their physical environment, health, security, cultural practices, well-being, or livelihoods due to the project. This category includes local communities and those most likely to notice changes from the project's environmental and social impacts.
- **Other Interested Parties (OIPs):** OIPs are individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the project, often due to its location, characteristics, impacts, or matters related to public interest. Examples include regulators, government officials, the private sector, the scientific community, academics, unions, women's organizations, other civil society groups, and cultural organizations.
- **Disadvantaged/Vulnerable Individuals or Groups:** It's crucial to assess whether project impacts disproportionately affect disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups who may lack a voice to express their concerns or understand the project's impacts. In the context of this project, identifying and addressing the concerns of vulnerable individuals or groups is of particular importance.

4.1 Stakeholder Mapping

A stakeholder is described as an individual, institution, or organization that can have an impact on or be affected by the project. To establish effective communication with these stakeholders, we

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to ECEC research and use data for evidence-based advocacy. • Build partnerships with stakeholders to enhance ECEC efforts.
<u>Affected Party</u>	Private Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppliers of equipment; and • Contractors/Providers of consultancy services. 	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the implementation of the OH&S and environmental standards in all project phases. • Public participation according to the WB ESS 10 and national legislation.
<u>Affected Party</u>	Private Associations	Association of Private Preschool Institutions	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the significance of ECEC and lend support to ECEC initiatives. • Participate in the assessment of the ECEC project’s outcomes and effects. • Encourage active participation from the community in ECEC activities and programs. • Play a role in ECEC research efforts and utilize data to advocate for evidence-based practices. • Establish partnerships with relevant stakeholders to strengthen and improve ECEC initiatives.
<u>Affected Party</u>	Preschool Staff and Local Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood teachers • Childcare workers • Parents • Preschool leaders/decision makers 	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement in the development of a preschool improvement plan • Involvement in the preparation of preschool self-evaluation reports • Facilitation and active participation in focus group sessions
		<p>Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Early and Preschool Education 	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the PIU for efficient implementation of the ECEC project.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Other Interested Parties</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Government and Regulatory Bodies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of General Education • Curriculum and Teacher Support Division • Quality assurance, standards, evaluation, and licensing division • Division for school infrastructure planning and standards • Division of Inclusive Education • Division for school infrastructure and VET programs and for labor market analysis • Public procurement division • Public communication division • Financial Management Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ECEC project compliance with national legislation and WB requirements. • Establish a legal framework for ECEC project implementation. • Foster transparency by sharing preschool information with stakeholders. • Provide funding and technical support for preschool infrastructure upgrades. • Support the procurement of innovative equipment and age-appropriate furnishings. • Supply age and level-appropriate learning resources, including books, manipulatives, and posters. • Engage communities and promote parental involvement. • Perform an analysis of school optimization and funding formulas. • Provide municipalities with guidebooks and instructions. • Develop career pathways for preschool teachers and leaders. • Enhance teacher standards, assessment methods, and resource capacity. • Improve teacher support through learning resources and expert guidance. • Conduct a needs assessment to evaluate teacher knowledge and competence. • Create a preschool improvement framework targeting enhanced child learning outcomes. • Implement modules and monitor their effectiveness in improving teacher knowledge.
---	--	--	---

		<p>Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget/Financing Department <p>The Faculty of Education, University of Prishtina</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train preschool leaders in self-assessment using the framework to identify school needs. Engage in career development for preschool teachers, school leaders, nannies, and staff. <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget allocation. <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide expertise and conduct research to inform project design. Deliver training programs for teachers and caregivers. Contribute to age-appropriate curriculum materials. Apply technology and research findings to improve ECEC. Advocate for ECEC importance and raise public awareness. Collaborate on research for evidence-based decision-making. Include ECEC topics in academic programs and provide training for students/professionals specializing in ECEC.
<p><u>Other Interested Parties</u></p>	<p>Non-Governmental Organizations and International Organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education-related NGOs (for e.g.: Kosovo Education Center (KEC), Save the Children, Caritas, TOKA, QSHHZH, etc.) Media General Public 	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively involving parents and local communities in ECEC project programs, including awareness campaigns and parent education sessions. Providing training and professional development opportunities for ECEC

		<p style="text-align: center;">UNICEF Kosovo (and other small donors/partners)</p>	<p>teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with local schools, healthcare providers, and social services to create a comprehensive support system for children's early development. • Ensuring that ECEC programs maintain high standards of quality and are regularly assessed and improved. • Supporting research in the field of early childhood education and implementing innovative teaching methods and technologies. <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer input for ECEC improvement. • Assist MESTI in expanding the community based ECEC center network. • Conduct capacity-building initiatives for educators, municipal staff, and relevant personnel involved in ECEC. • Engage in advocacy and awareness-building activities.
<p><u>Disadvantaged/ Vulnerable Individuals or Groups</u></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children • Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian parents • Children and parents from low-income households • Children with disabilities • Children in rural or remote areas • Children in foster care or orphanages 	<p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in focus groups. • Collaborative participation in the preparation of self-evaluation reports for preschools. • Participation in preschool open day events.

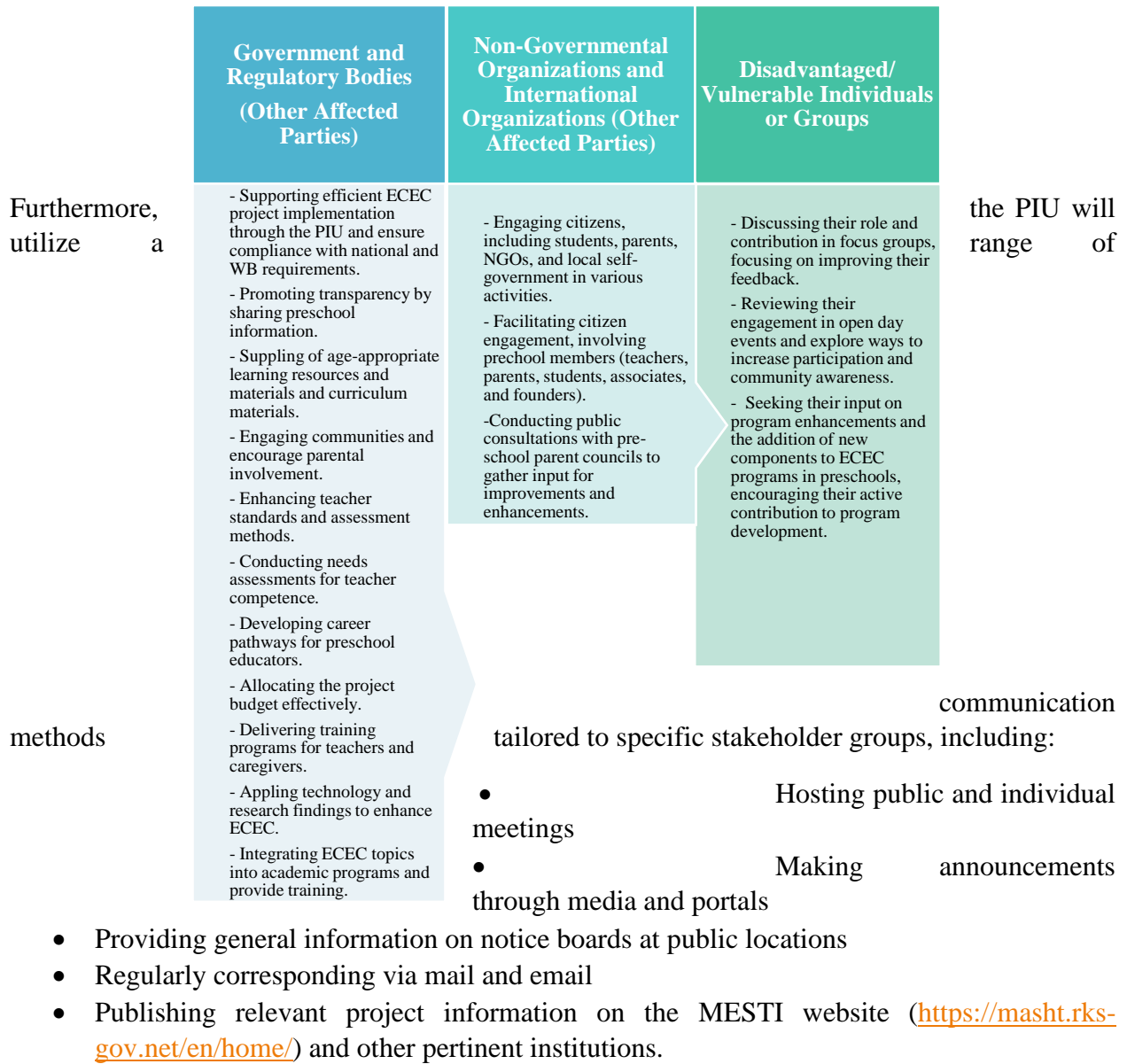
The list of stakeholders will be continually updated and incorporated into the SEP document as the project progresses.

The PIU will engage in discussions with various stakeholder groups, considering their respective roles, responsibilities, and levels of importance. The following figures (Figure 1 and 2) outline the primary topics to be discussed with different stakeholders, more points of discussion may be added as the project progresses.

Figure 1: Key issues to be discussed with different groups of stakeholders (Affected Parties):

Local and Regional Authorities (Affected Parties)	Private Companies (Affected Parties)	Private Associations (Affected Parties)	Preschool Staff and Local Community (Affected Parties)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing communication for improved cooperation with municipalities and public awareness. - Fostering school accountability through transparent information sharing. - Conducting a public information and education campaign. - Aiding national institutions in accessing essential data. - Assisting in organizing various events, such as focus groups, consultations, information sessions, and preschool open days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adhering to both national regulations and World Bank requirements. - Encouraging citizen and stakeholder engagement. - Enhancing/Contributing the quality of the preschool education system and children's learning outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring sufficient funding and resource allocation for ECEC programs. - Maintaining high-quality standards in preschools through teacher training and curriculum development. - Maintaining high-quality standards in preschools through teacher training and curriculum development. - Fostering partnerships with relevant stakeholders. - Prioritizing ongoing teacher training and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting focus groups with parents to develop effective learning strategies, promoting school attendance, active participation, and enhancing learning outcomes among minority groups, including Roma children (especially Roma girls), special needs children, and those from low-income households. - Hosting open days at schools to engage parents of vulnerable groups, such as Roma families, low-income households, and special needs students, to address concerns regarding potential discrimination and bullying. - Delivering online and in-person presentations/info sessions regarding project activities to ensure the inclusion of the needs of vulnerable groups.

Figure 2: Key issues to be discussed with different groups of stakeholders (Other-Affected Parties and Disadvantaged/Vulnerable Individuals or Groups):



The engagement strategy encompasses various techniques for relationship-building, information gathering, consultation, and disseminating project updates to stakeholders. The choice of consultation techniques should align with the purpose of engaging each stakeholder group. The table below outlines the most commonly employed techniques.

Table 2:
SEP Techniques

Engagement Technique	Relevant Stakeholders	Appropriate Application of the Technique
<p>Correspondences (Phone, emails, text, instant messaging)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Early and Preschool Education • Division of General Education • Curriculum and Teacher Support Division • Quality assurance, standards, evaluation, and licensing division • Division for school infrastructure planning and standards • Division of Inclusive Education • Division for school infrastructure and VET programs and for labor market analysis • Public procurement division • Public communication division • Financial Management Department ➤ Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers ➤ The Faculty of Education, UP ➤ Preschools; ➤ NGOs and International Organizations; ➤ Municipalities; ➤ Association of Public Preschool Institutions; ➤ Association of Private Preschool Institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information to government officials, NGOs, local government entities, and various organizations, agencies, schools, and associations. • Extend invitations to stakeholders for meetings and ensure effective follow-up.
<p>One-on-one meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Early and Preschool Education • Division of General Education • Curriculum and Teacher Support Division • Quality assurance, standards, evaluation, and licensing division 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather feedback and opinions. • Create an environment where stakeholders feel comfortable discussing sensitive matters. • Build relationships. • Keep records of meetings.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division for school infrastructure planning and standards • Division of Inclusive Education • Division for school infrastructure and VET programs and for labor market analysis • Public procurement division • Public communication division • Financial Management Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers ➤ The Faculty of Education, UP ➤ Preschools (public, private, community-based centers); ➤ NGOs and International Organizations; ➤ Municipalities; ➤ Association of Public Preschool Institutions; ➤ Association of Private Preschool Institutions. 	
Formal Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) ➤ With relevant departments within MESTI ➤ Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers ➤ The Faculty of Education, UP ➤ Preschools (public, private, community-based centers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share project information with a stakeholder group. • Encourage the group to provide opinions and views. • Establish professional relationships with high-level stakeholders. • Share technical details. • Document/record the discussions.
Online Meetings/ online surveys/social media correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI); ➤ Association of Public Preschool Institutions; ➤ Association of Private Preschool Institutions; ➤ Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share project details with a group of stakeholders. • Initiate discussions with the stakeholders. • Conduct surveys on various topics. • Encourage the exchange of feedback. • Disseminate information.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Faculty of Education, UP; ➤ Municipalities; ➤ Preschools (public, private, community-based centers); ➤ Parents and their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage the group to express their views and opinions.
Public/Online Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) With all relevant departments within MESTI, for e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Division of Early and Preschool Education ● Division for school infrastructure planning and standards ● Division of Inclusive Education ● Public communication division ● Financial Management Department ➤ Associations of Public and Private Preschool Institutions; ➤ Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers; ➤ Preschools (public, private, community-based centers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share project information and relevant legislative regulations with a broader stakeholder group. ● Encourage the group to share their views and opinions. ● Cultivate relationships with stakeholders, especially those affected. ● Disseminate non-technical information. ● Organize meetings with presentations and posters. ● Document discussions, comments, and questions.
Focus Group Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children; ➤ Parents; ➤ Parents of vulnerable group of children (Roma, low income households, special needs children); ➤ NGOs; ➤ Municipalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share project information with a group of stakeholders. ● Encourage stakeholders, especially vulnerable and disabled individuals, to share their views and opinions on targeted baseline information. ● Foster relationships with communities. ● Document the responses.
Website/Information Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) ➤ Associations of Public Preschool Institutions ➤ Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present project information and progress updates. ● Disclose SEP and other relevant project documentation.

	➤ Preschool Institutions (public, private, community-based centers).	
Radio/TV/portals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) • Associations of Public Preschool Institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize radio and TV broadcasts to raise widespread public awareness about the project. • Include a question-and-answer session to engage the audience.
Project Leaflet	➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief project information to provide regular updates. • Site specific project information.

5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

5.1 Introduction

During the preparation of the SEP, the team responsible for the project diligently crafted various communication and information channels tailored to the unique needs of each identified stakeholder group. The primary objective of this engagement process is to solicit valuable suggestions and comments regarding the Project's activities. Such input may profoundly influence the Project's design and result in extended benefits for the relevant stakeholder communities. MESTI acknowledges the pivotal role that timely engagement with diverse stakeholders plays in ensuring the project's success.

The project stakeholders have been comprehensively identified to address the varying consultation requirements. Stakeholders in this context refer to individuals or groups who:

- Are directly and/or indirectly impacted by the Project.
- Hold specific interests in the Project and its associated activities.
- Possess the capacity to influence both the Project itself and its ultimate outcome.

5.2 Purpose and Timing of Stakeholder Engagement Program

Stakeholder engagement activities will be a continuous and integral part of the entire ECEC project life cycle, spanning from its initial preparation through construction and operation phases. Early engagement with stakeholders will be prioritized, with ongoing involvement throughout the planning, implementation, and completion of the project. The nature and frequency of follow-up consultations will vary depending on the specific phase of project activities.

Before commencing the implementation of the project, all affected parties will receive comprehensive information about the projects scope and contact details for further inquiries. They will also be made aware of the publicly available information on the MESTI website.

Key communication principles encompass:

- Providing advance notification to the community and key stakeholders regarding project progress.
- Encouraging active participation from stakeholders.
- Ensuring transparency and avoiding unexpected developments for key stakeholders and the community.
- Actively listening to feedback, investigating suggestions, and incorporating them where feasible.

The PIU within MESTI will shoulder the responsibility for the overall implementation of the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), including this SEP. The PIU will consist of a Project Director and other relevant officers/managers.

The supervising consultancy engaged by the PIU will be responsible for implementing the SEP throughout the entire Project cycle and will be the primary point of contact for engaging with the communities.

Additionally, all contractors responsible for executing specific project activities will be mandated to adhere to the relevant provisions outlined in the SEP.

5.3 Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

MESTI aims to disseminate all pertinent information related to the Public Engagement and Information Plan (PEIP) to the public through various channels, including social media and national and local TV and radio stations. Interested and affected parties will have access to the following documents on the MESTI website (<https://masht.rks-gov.net/en/home/>):

- Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF), including the Environmental and Social Management Check Lists (ESMP Check Lists)
- Labor Management Procedures (LMP)
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)
- Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)
- Project Operational Manual (POM)
- Project Procurement Strategy for Development (PPSD)

These documents will remain accessible to the public throughout the Project's duration. The SEP will undergo periodic updates.

All information pertaining to the project will be accessible on the MESTI website and through social media platforms, serving as essential communication channels with the community. Details concerning the Grievance Mechanism will also be provided (refer to below). Stakeholders, including the general public, will have the opportunity to utilize the Grievance Mechanism.

Information before and during project implementation will be disseminated through brochures or leaflets distributed in schools.

In compliance with the WB requirements for environmental protection, particularly those projects classified with moderate risk, an ESMP Checklist will be meticulously prepared. The prepared documents related to environmental protection, including the ESCP and ESMP Checklist, will be publicly accessible on the MESTI website available for submitting comments within 14 days after the publications.

5.4 Proposed Strategy for Consultation

The PIU will announce the forthcoming public hearing event for the draft version of the Project Disclosure Package through multiple platforms, including the official MESTI website and selected local media outlets. This event is scheduled to take place during the 14-day period designated for the availability of this project package.

The PIU will oversee the organization of these public consultations, which will encompass public hearing events. To ensure effective preparation, a comprehensive Project Disclosure Package must be assembled, comprising the following essential documents:

- Public Announcement for the organization of public hearing events for the prepared project documents (published on the website of MESTI).
- Draft version of ESMF (including ESMP Check Lists), LMP, SEP, and ESCP.
- Agenda for public hearing events.
- Minutes of Meeting from the organized public hearing event.
- Final version of the ESMF (with ESMP Check Lists), LMP, SEP, and ESCP, including the meeting minutes for the public hearing event, list of participants, and public announcements.

The disclosure package will be promptly accessible to the public in both Albanian and English as soon as it becomes available on the MESTI website. Following the 14-day comment submission period for each prepared document, the received comments will be incorporated into the final version of the respective project materials. These finalized documents will then be posted on both the MESTI website and the respective local government websites.

5.5 Proposed Strategy for Inclusion and Communication with Vulnerable Groups

The project aims to support vulnerable groups, including but not limited to the following: Roma children, Roma girls, children with disabilities, and students from low-income households. The project is committed to actively reaching out to and assisting these groups.

As part of its communication strategy, the project will emphasize the societal benefits for disadvantaged individuals, such as those who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, or socially excluded.

Additionally, the project team will maintain an ongoing dialogue and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and interested parties throughout the various stages of planning and implementing the project.

The project is committed to ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups through a range of strategies and methods. These approaches encompass various initiatives, including but not limited to:

- **Engaging with Parents:** We will conduct focus group sessions with parents of vulnerable children to better understand their needs and perspectives.
- **Preschool Open Days:** Hosting open days for preschools to foster a welcoming environment and encourage participation from all backgrounds.
- **Online Presentations and Info Sessions:** Utilizing online platforms to deliver presentations, disseminate information, and hold interactive consultations.

To effectively address the associated risks, the PIU will devise a two-tiered approach:

- **Tier 1:** This involves an Environmental and Social Assessment, which includes a screening protocol for preschools with a higher proportion of children from vulnerable groups. This assessment will evaluate risks and recommend suitable mitigation measures. These measures will subsequently be integrated into project designs.
- **Tier 2:** The second tier focuses on stakeholder engagement within preschools, particularly those with a significant number of children from vulnerable backgrounds. The techniques mentioned above will be implemented, fostering proactive participation.

In particular, the ECEC project will actively seek input from parents and children within the vulnerable group, especially during the formulation of school improvement plans. Preschools with a higher enrollment of Roma children, children with disabilities, or those from economically disadvantaged families will receive more extensive and targeted activities, demonstrating our commitment to a proactive approach to inclusive education.

Target Groups	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roma children and parents • Roma girls • Children with disabilities • Children from low-income households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with local NGOs that specialize in assisting vulnerable communities at the grassroots level to facilitate the spread of information and coordinate consultations. • The PIU will plan distinct consultation sessions, including meetings and focused group discussions. • The PIU will employ diverse communication strategies, leveraging

	<p>women’s associations and organizations to effectively engage with female demographic segments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure inclusivity, the PIU will harness the capabilities of a range of relevant NGOs to connect with various vulnerable groups. • The project will allocate resources to offer comprehensive support services and counseling to address gender-related issues in education. These services will encompass workshops addressing gender concerns, advocacy efforts, and impactful media campaigns. • To foster community involvement, the project will arrange preschool open days tailored to meet the needs of vulnerable groups. • Diverse online activities, such as presentations and informative materials related to project initiatives, consultations, surveys, and meetings, will be made available.
--	---

5.6 Project Phases

Project Stage	Topic of Consultation	Method Used	Target Stakeholders	Responsibilities
Preparation	Communicate the project disclosure package including ESMF, SEP, LMP, and other relevant documents.	Public hearing	Preschools, Parents, Local community, Municipalities, NGO’s.	MESTI PIU
Implementation Phase	Keep stakeholders informed about the project’s plan and progress, emphasizing effective learning strategies aimed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Focus Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders involved in the project. • Parents and their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MESTI PIU • Preschools

	at ECEC and enhancing learning outcomes, with a focus on minority groups. This includes Roma children, particularly Roma girls, special needs children, and those from low-income households.			
Implementation Phase	Host open days at preschools to engage parents of vulnerable children, including those from Roma communities, low-income households, and special needs students. These events aim to encourage discussions and address concerns related to potential discrimination and bullying.	Open days	Parents and their children.	Preschools
Implementation Phase	Consultation and participation in preparation of self evaluation reports.	Meetings (in person or online).	Preschool teachers and other relevant staff, parents, children, local municipality).	Preschools
Implementation Phase	Consultation and participation related to ECEC activities.	Meetings (in person or online).	MESTI, Faculty of Education, preschools and the Association of Public Preschools,	MESTI and Preschools

			parents, local municipality).	
	Satisfaction with the ECEC project activities.	Citizen engagement surveys (baseline and follow-up).	Preschool leaders, Association of Preschools (public and private), parents, teachers, local municipality).	MESTI PIU
Completion Phase	Summary of work achieved, results and review/evaluation.	Surveys, focus groups, parent – children – teacher’s feedback.	All stakeholders.	MESTI PIU

Additional consultation topics will be incorporated as needed during the progression of the ECEC project.

5.7 Review of Comments

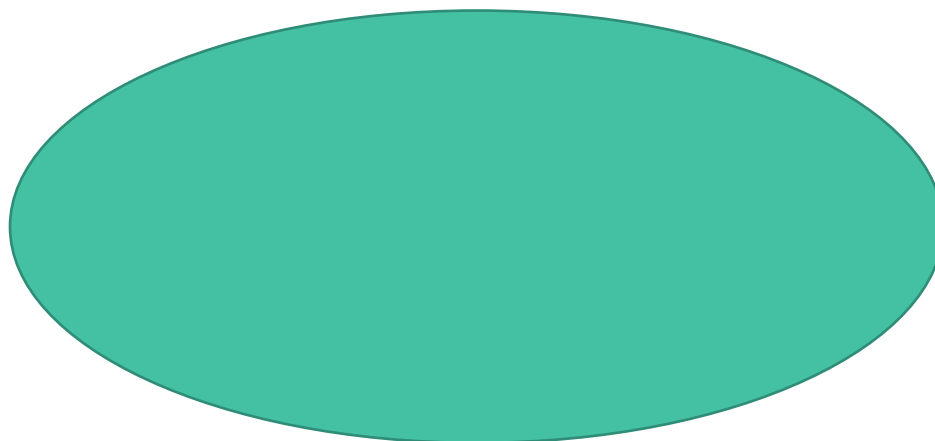
All project consultation activities will uphold the principle of inclusivity, actively involving various segments of the local community, including children with disabilities, Roma children, and those from low-income households. To facilitate participation, logistical support will be offered for individuals with limited physical abilities or insufficient financial/transportation resources to attend public meetings. In cases where large community meetings may not be suitable, the project will arrange smaller group discussions at easily accessible locations. Communication methods will be diverse, including written and verbal communication, and an advocate or translator will be available if necessary.

5.8 Planned Information and Communication Arrangements

MESTI has a track record of effectively communicating with the public through established channels on various previous projects. A dedicated MESTI team member will consistently maintain and update the project webpage with news, notifications, and reports.

Additionally, a grievance mechanism will be in place on the MESTI website specifically for addressing concerns related to the SEP for the ECEC Project. This mechanism allows citizens to submit any project-related concerns they may have.

Environmental and Social Assessment of the ECEC Project:



6. RESOURCES AND FOR IMPLEMENTING

ENGAGEMENT

After the analysis of the project activities, it can be concluded that the implementation of ECEC will have moderate environmental and social risks.

RESPONSIBILITIES STAKEHOLDERS

ACTIVITIES

The ECEC Project will be implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation of the Republic of Kosovo as the main responsible institution.

6.1 Resources

Budget Categories	Approximate Times/ Years	Approximate Total Costs	Remarks
1. Staff salaries and related expenses			
Environmental and Social Specialist	12 months	14,400	(12 months with a possibility of extension).
2. Events			
Public consultation events	2	1,000	(If needed, more public events will be organized).
Organization of focus groups	5	1,000	(If needed, more focus groups will be organized).
3. Communication Campaigns			

Dissemination of communication materials	2000	200	(If needed, more copies will be distributed).
Social media campaigns	1	5,000	
Citizen engagement survey	2	10,000	(If needed, more surveys will be crafted).
4. Trainings			
Training on social/environmental issues for PIU	1	1,500	
Training on Grievance Mechanism for GM committees in MESTI PIU	1	1,500	
TOTAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT BUDGET:		34,600 EUR	

6.2 Management/Staff Functions and Responsibilities

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) of the Republic of Kosovo is the primary governing body entrusted with overseeing the execution of the ECEC Project.

To facilitate the effective implementation of this project, a dedicated Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been established. The PIU operates within MESTI’s premises and is staffed by a team of experts and specialists. Its core responsibilities encompass the comprehensive execution of the ECEC initiative, including project planning, coordination, procurement, project activity monitoring, and reporting. Furthermore, the management, coordination, and execution of this SEP and its associated tasks fall under the purview of the PIU’s Social Specialist.

Additionally, MESTI capacity to manage and implement the project will be augmented in the following areas: overall management and coordination, procurement and financial management, project M&E, and translation services. For that, the MESTI will hire local consultants: Project Coordinator, Procurement Specialist, Financial Management Specialist, Disbursement Specialist, M&E Specialist, Secretary-translator, and other consultants to support implementation of the project components. The MESTI will also hire local consultants to support it in E&S management and ensuring compliance with the ESF and other related E&S documents. Each project subcomponent/activity will be implemented by the MESTI units which, as per the MESTI regulations, have primary responsibility for that activity. To support those units, the following consultants will be hired in MESTI and MOH.

7. GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

Within MESTI, a grievance mechanism will be established, including an online platform and grievance registry. The primary objective of this mechanism is to inform all relevant stakeholders about the procedures for submitting complaints regarding project activities and to ensure they receive a response to their grievances.

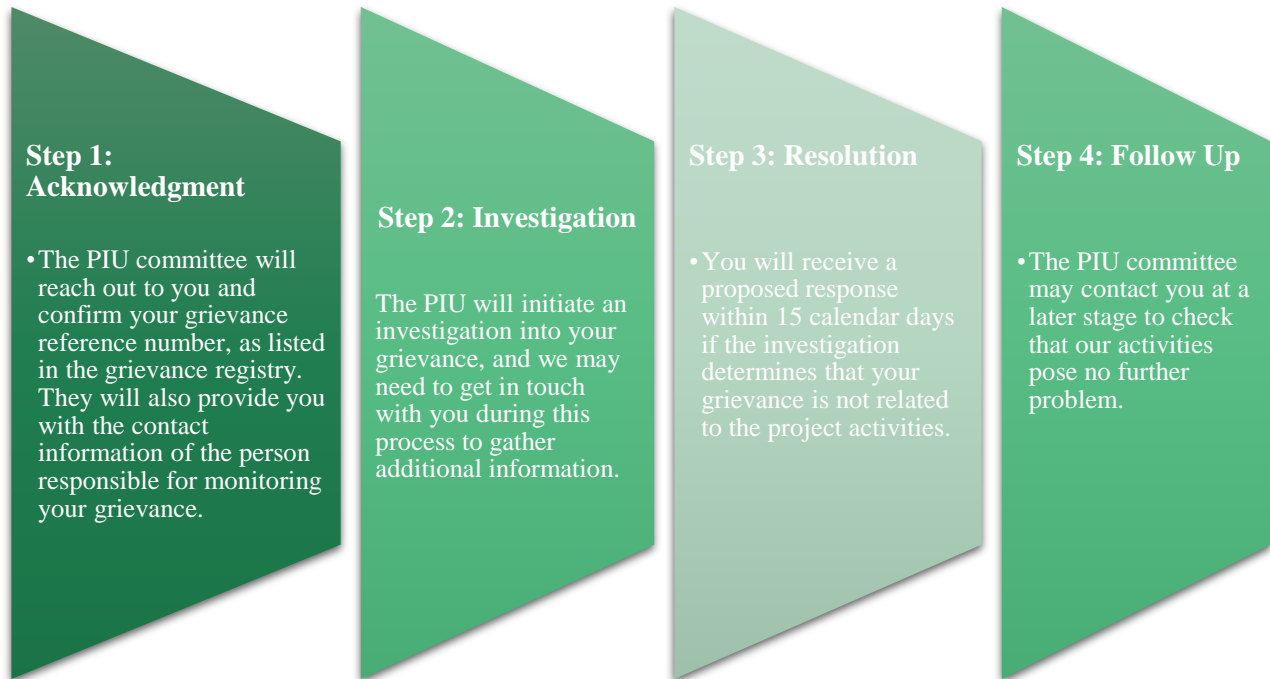
In addition to utilizing the online system, stakeholders have the option to submit comments, concerns, or grievances to MESTI either verbally (in person or by telephone) or in writing by completing the Project Grievance Form, which can be found in Annex B of this SEP document and then deliver it personally or via email to the designated MESTI contact person/committee. It is important to note that individuals who submit comments or grievances have the right to request that their identity remains confidential. However, if grievances are submitted anonymously, no response will be provided.

All comments and complaints will be addressed by MESTI PIU, and responses will be provided either verbally or in writing, depending on the preferred method of communication specified by the complainant, provided that contact details are provided. This ensures that stakeholders' concerns are heard and dealt with appropriately.

7.1 Complainant Feedback on the Resolution

The MESTI website will feature comprehensive guidance on how stakeholders can submit feedback, questions, comments, concerns, and grievances. Additionally, it will offer the convenience of electronic submission for grievances. The website will also provide detailed information about the functioning of the GRM (Grievance Redress Mechanism) Committee within MESTI PIU, including its processes and associated deadlines. The GRM committee will be established and overseen by representatives from MESTI PIU. Its primary responsibilities will include monitoring and addressing stakeholder issues and concerns, proposing suitable measures for resolution, and submitting semiannual reports to the WB in order to assess the effectiveness of the grievance resolution mechanisms.

The PIU committee will follow these steps in addressing grievances:



Furthermore, stakeholders are encouraged to bring forth any comments or concerns either verbally or in written form (via postal mail or email) or by utilizing a grievance form.

The project adheres to the following timeframe:

- Providing a written acknowledgment of the receipt of the grievance within 5 days of its submission.
- Offering a proposed resolution within 15 days of receiving the grievance.

To ensure an organized record-keeping process, specifically nominated and well-trained staff members within the PIU committee on GRM will maintain a grievance log. This log will contain:

- Stakeholder names and their respective contact details.
- Comprehensive details regarding the grievance, including the method and date of submission, acknowledgment, response, and closure.

All complaints will undergo verification by the PIU and be assigned a unique number within the Grievance Registry. They will be acknowledged within a 15-calendar day period. The Grievance Registry will contain essential elements for categorizing grievances by the gender of the complainant and the type of grievance. Each grievance will be meticulously documented in the registry, including:

- a) A description of the grievance.
- b) The date of receipt of the grievance and the date of acknowledgment sent to the complainant.

- c) Details of actions taken, including investigations, corrective measures, and preventive measures.
- d) The date of resolution and the provision of feedback to the complainant.

In cases where a grievance or complaint lacks clarity or is ambiguous, the PIU will offer assistance and guidance in revising the submission to ensure clarity. This step is taken to facilitate informed decision-making by the PIU, ultimately serving the best interests of those affected by the project.

If the PIU committee on GRM cannot promptly address the issues raised with immediate corrective action, a long-term corrective plan will be devised. The complainant will receive information about the proposed corrective action and the follow-up process within 25 calendar days from the acknowledgment of the grievance. In situations where the PIU committee cannot address a particular issue identified through the grievance mechanism, or if action is deemed unnecessary, a comprehensive explanation and justification will be provided for why the issue was not addressed. Additionally, the response will outline the steps for the person or organization that raised the complaint to proceed with the grievance in case the outcome is unsatisfactory.

It is important to note that complainants always have the option to pursue other legal remedies in accordance with the legal framework of the Republic of Kosovo, including formal judicial appeals.

7.2 World Bank Grievance Redress System

Communities and individuals who believe that they are adversely affected by a World Bank (WB) supported project may submit complaints to existing project-level grievance redress mechanisms or the WB's Grievance Redress Service (GRS). The GRS ensures that complaints received are promptly reviewed in order to address project-related concerns. Project affected communities and individuals may submit their complaint to the WB's independent Inspection Panel which determines whether harm occurred, or could occur, as a result of WB non-compliance with its policies and procedures. Complaints may be submitted at any time after concerns have been brought directly to the World Bank's attention, and Bank Management has been given an opportunity to respond.

For information on how to submit complaints to the WB's corporate GRS, please visit <https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service>. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank Inspection Panel, please visit www.inspectionpanel.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR ENQUIRIES AND GRIEVANCES:

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT FOR KOSOVO'S HUMAN CAPITAL PROJECT

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

STR. AGIM RAMADANI, 10000 PRISHTINA, REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

E-MAIL: _____

8. MONITORING AND REPORTING

Effective monitoring and evaluation of the stakeholder engagement process is crucial for MESTI to address identified issues and adapt the schedule and nature of engagement activities for better results. To achieve successful engagement, the following characteristics are essential:

- **Transparency:** All activities must be conducted openly and with clear communication.
- **Promotion of Stakeholder Involvement:** Encouraging active participation from stakeholders is essential.
- **Trust:** It is important that all relevant stakeholders have trust in MESTI and other key institutions involved in the process.
- **Adequate Resources:** Sufficient resources should be allocated to ensure the engagement process can be carried out effectively.
- **Inclusive Approach:** Key groups of stakeholders should be included in interactions.

Monitoring the stakeholder engagement process allows us to assess its effectiveness. This can be achieved by identifying key performance indicators that align with the objectives of the SEP and the specific actions and timelines set out in it.

Key performance indicators for monitoring include:

- The number of grievance files received.
- The number of grievances that have been successfully resolved.

MESTI UPI is obligated to produce an annual Monitoring Report that presents the results of the stakeholder engagement process, including the number of grievance files and grievances resolved, as well as updates on project implementation.

Furthermore, the UPI is also responsible for monitoring all stakeholder engagement activities related to the project, ensuring that the SEP is followed and updated as needed, and providing regular reports to stakeholders.

APPENDICES

Annex A:

List of ministerial stakeholders in the ECEC Project Area

Name of the organization	Website	Point of Contact for ECEC Project	E-mail
The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (Division of Early and Preschool Education)	https://masht.rks-gov.net/en/home/	Laberi Luzha	laberi.luzha@rks-gov.net
The Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers	https://mf.rks-gov.net/	Dije Rizvanolli	dije.rizvanolli@rks-gov.net
Faculty of Education, University of Prishtina	https://edukimi.uni-pr.edu/	Blerta Perolli Shehu	blerta.perolli-shehu@uni-pr.edu

Annex B:
Grievance Submission Form

Reference Number	
Full name (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> I wish to raise my grievance anonymously. <input type="checkbox"/> I request not to disclose my identity without my consent.	
Contact information. Please mark how you wish to be contacted (mail, telephone, e-mail).	<input type="checkbox"/> By Post: Please provide mailing address: _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> By telephone: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> By e-mail: _____
Preferred language of communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Albanian <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Description of Incident for Grievance	What happened? Where did it happen? Who did it happen to? What is the result of the problem?
Date of Incident / Grievance	
	<input type="checkbox"/> One-time incident/grievance (date _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Happened more than once (how many times? _____) <input type="checkbox"/> On-going (currently experiencing problem)

What would you like to see happen?

Please return this form to:

Attention: _____

E-mail: _____

The Committee for Stakeholder Grievances

*Early Childhood Development for Kosovo's
Human Capital Project*

*Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
of the Republic of Kosovo*

*Str. Agim Ramadani, 10000 Prishtina, Republic
of Kosovo*

Signature: _____

Date: _____