

# RESULT REPORT 2021

## Preparing Future Teachers in the Western Balkan: Educating for Democracy and Human Rights

# BACKGROUND

All Western Balkans countries have made important steps to modernize their curricula for school education, in line with European standards and approaches. Governments call for a more competence-oriented approach, which reflects values and principles such as democracy, participation and inclusiveness.

The transition from a traditional education approach to a modern competence-oriented system also impacts how teachers work in schools and how future teachers are trained. A change in the learning and teaching culture at teacher education (TE) institutions is needed, including changes in the methodology for TE and modifications in design and content of university courses, as well as ongoing teacher training. The emphasis on theory in TE in the region still predominates over the acquisition of practical teaching competences.

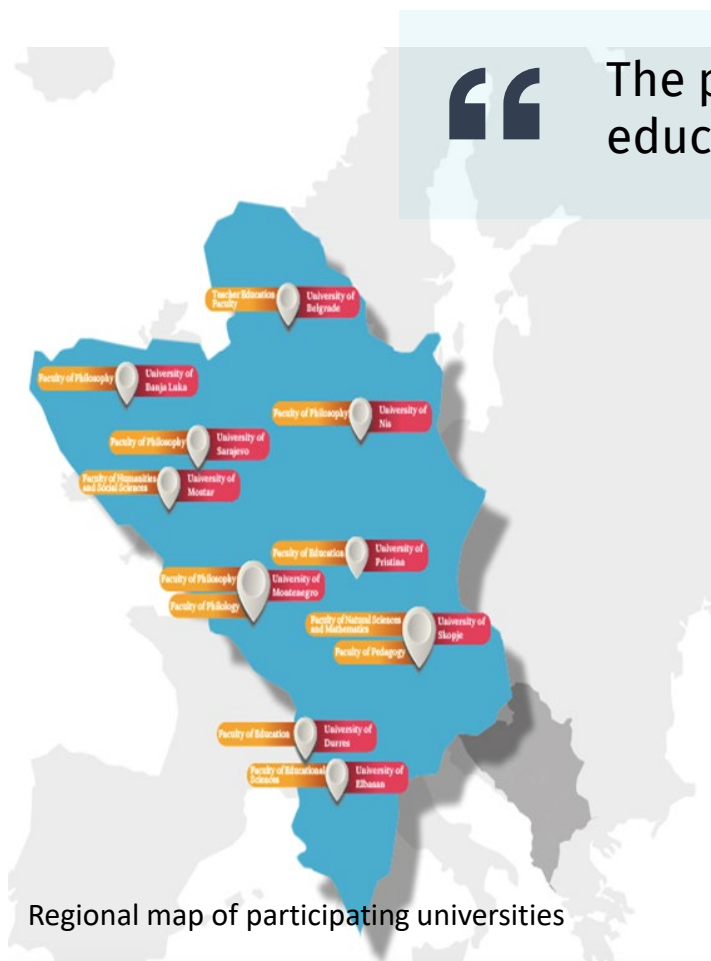
Preparing future teachers in the Western Balkans aims to contribute to the quality of initial teacher education in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, through facilitating cooperation among universities and higher education institutions with a teacher training focus and schools. A key endeavor is to develop and integrate new university courses at BA / MA level emphasizing practice-oriented teaching promoting democracy, human rights and citizenship.

The project «Preparing Future Teachers in the Western Balkan. Educating for Democracy and Human Rights» has been designed and is being implemented by the European Wergeland Center, in close cooperation with partners in the region, including education authorities and key actors in teacher training to reach a systematic impact. It is financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway.



The project is already changing teacher education in the region.

Professor Maja Raunik Kirkov,  
University of Skopje



Regional map of participating universities



6

PARTNER  
INSTITUTIONS FROM 6  
COUNTRIES



12

UNIVERSITIES



16

UNIVERSITY COURSES

The project's primary focus was to *foster change* in the learning and teaching culture at the level of teacher education institutions, targeting methodology for teacher education, specifically, the design and content of the teacher education courses delivered at the university including the ongoing teachers' professional development.



# RESULTS

## Increased regional cooperation & new networks

### Regional network of practioners

- The network of 12 universities is an important online platform, particularly during COVID-19, for support, sharing of experiences and collaboration on new ways of teaching and learning. It helped to deal with common challenges such as how to transfer education into a digital environment.
- The network connected schools and universities to support the sharing of experiences and to facilitate communication between all parties involved in the project
- Regular webinars and online activities have facilitated sharing of experiences, collaboration and peer-to-peer learning.
- Strong relationships among education institutions built, in a region scarred by conflict and where cooperation is not that common, working on peace pedagogy, conflict resolution and democracy building.
- The Peace Education Hub, a new teacher training institute at the University of Sarajevo, is utilizing the regional network to disseminate information, research and opportunities for training and professional development.
- The network of practice schools and future mentors has been established in the region, providing space for connecting theory and practice. As for today, it includes 36 schools in which students conducted their teaching practice and 71 mentors who supported them.

There has been little negative impact on the project progress and results due to Covid-19, as most activities have been transferred online. It is evident, the pandemic has increased the project relevance in the region as highlighted by universities and partners. Its focus on building democratic and inclusive learning environments is more relevant than ever.



36

UNIVERSITY  
PROFESSORS,  
TEACHER  
TRAINERS



38

NETWORK  
MEETINGS &  
WORKSHOPS  
ONLINE



36

PRACTICE  
SCHOOLS



71

TEACHER  
MENTORS



249

TEACHER  
STUDENTS

Cooperation among universities in the Western Balkans is not very common. Prof. Dr. Larisa Kasumagić- Kafedžić, University of Sarajevo / Peace Education Hub, points to the benefits of being a member of EWCS' regional network of universities:

*„The greatest lesson so far and most important experience is the possibility of working collaboratively with colleagues and associates from the region. That is a wonderful group who have dedicated their teaching and learning to create critical learning possibilities for their students, and to be the change agents in their communities. This project enables teacher educators and prospective teachers of different subject to disseminate innovative practice in their classrooms and in their professional development, which makes participation in this group of learners and teachers a unique, inspiring and precious experience“.*

Change Story 2020



Training for teacher mentors, University of Nis, Serbia.

# RESULTS

## New semester courses developed, tested and accredited

16 new or adapted semester courses was tested covering different subject areas, all integrating democratic competences:

- metodics and didactics of teaching mathematics, chemistry, biology, visual arts, languages, history, civic education, culture of speech, skills for democratic communication, civic education.... and many more.



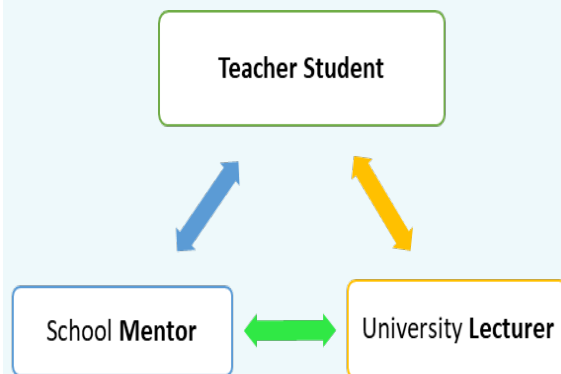
## Increased teaching skills by students

All semester courses had focus on practice, which included EDC/HRE and competence-based teaching and learning. Teacher students were encouraged to plan and deliver mock-lessons. Following mock lessons, students had practice teaching in real schools, where mentors supported their performance and liaised with the universities.

Practice by teacher students increased, despite the challenges connected with Covid 19. Lecturers and teacher students were creative and bridged the lack of possibilities for teaching in the real classrooms by introducing more mock

## Reflective practice

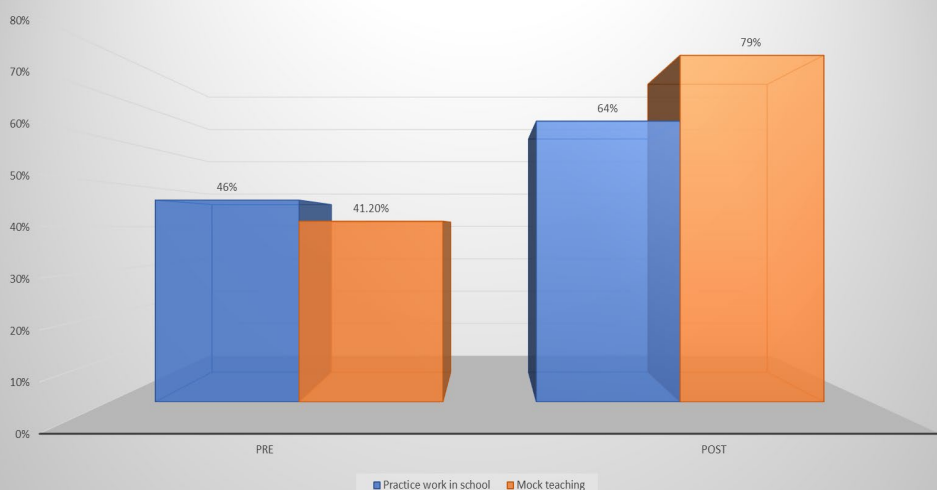
help create confident teachers – at all three levels – teacher student, university lecturer and school mentor



## A learning triangle

A collective, self-reflective, and empowering process is at the heart of this triangular process, where all participants at the different levels understand and improve the practices in which they participate and the situations of which they receive feedback, or in which they find themselves. Quality feedback enhances learning, understanding and encourage ongoing participation.

Teaching practice by teacher education students



## Change story

„A project gave me the direction of what a teacher should be like in a democratic society“.

Teacher student from Belgrade

„The cooperation established between mentor teachers and students was effective, as at all times the support of students' teaching in the classroom environment was provided“

Teacher mentor from Skopje



# RESULTS

## Materials and manuals developed

### New university courses available

- 16 new university courses have been developed, piloted and implemented. Several contextualise human rights issues addressing e.g. segregation in education, cultural diversity, conflict resolution and minorities.
- The new courses are implemented in a variety of subjects such as social sciences, chemistry, mathematics, pedagogy and visual arts - at BA and MA level.
- Several courses are accredited or are in the final stages of the accreditation process.

### New manual for mentor training available

- A new manual for training teachers mentoring teacher students during practice work in schools was developed, responding to the lack of adequate materials.

- It is easily accessible: free for download and available in 4 languages. The manual is already used beyond the region.



### Improved teaching skills of teacher students

- A first group of 140 teacher students from 4 countries completed the new courses with 20 - 25% more practice work. Due to Covid 19 measures, practice in schools was slightly reduced, but mock teaching increased.
- 85% of the teacher students carried out practice work in schools, in a blended learning format and supported by newly trained mentors.



The practical assignments helped me to better master the concepts related to citizenship and human rights, to better understand teaching and learning for competences and to put them on the right track for becoming a good teacher of the future.

Teacher student, Serbia



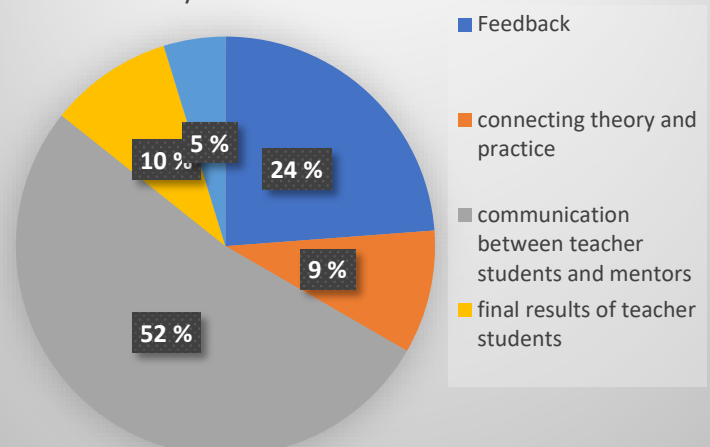
Teacher mentor school activity in Durres, Albania

„Participation in this project has greatly increased my competences for mentoring. I got the opportunity to be in the role of someone who not only transmits knowledge related to the content being processed, but also the form. This includes many details that I was not even aware of, which I now realize is crucial in the process of knowledge transfer, not only for students but also for future teachers.“

Jelica Stosic, teacher mentor from Nis, Serbia

### The most successful elements of the mentoring process and working with students

by teacher mentors





# ACTIVITIES

## Moving online due to Covid-19

- Monthly webinars were organized creating a space for new knowledge brought in by network members as well as regional and international experts.
- Two rounds of trainings were organized online for mentors from the region. The format was blended learning, with translation into local languages.
- A working group was providing local expertise when developing the manual for mentors to ensure it was relevant to the needs in the region.
- Regular meetings with the 12 university teams were organized. The network remained vibrant and fully operational during the lock-down, sharing knowledge, advice and supporting each other.
- The Steering Group, with partners from the region, provided valuable guidance especially on the transformation process of teaching and learning online.

# CONCLUSIONS

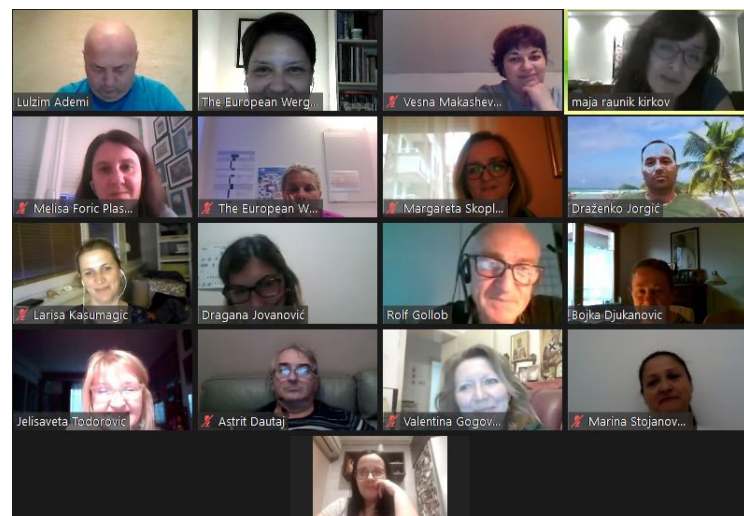
After three years, the project shows first sustainable results:

- The university network is a space for dialogue and collaboration for quality teacher education in the region. It is a strong platform of agents of change, with members implementing values of democracy and human rights in their daily teaching and learning and promoting these changes in their communities. As a result, we see a high interest from other universities to join.
- New partnerships and cooperation among universities in the region have been established, beyond the scope of the project. Several universities of the network are partnering across countries e.g. promoting student exchanges.
- The new university courses are available as an open source for a wider audience, with several translated into English. The manual for mentors is already used in other countries through other international education programs.

Write 1-3 words or phrase to describe today's presentation.



Mentimeter



- The Center for Lifelong Learning, University of Nis, Serbia has accredited and is using a course, developed within the project, for their ongoing training of teachers' programme supported by Ministry of Education in Serbia.
- The University of Skopje, North Macedonia is setting up a quality professional development scheme for school mentors, linking to the ongoing curriculum reforms in the framework of the integrated pilot project QUAMEN (Quality Teaching through Classroom Mentoring for future Teachers).

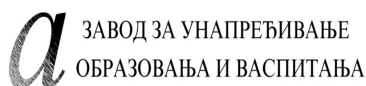
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Evaluations show that we can already now see evidence that the new courses reflect a change in teaching practice, moving away from the more traditional to a more active learning approach with inclusion of students and new means of engaging students actively. These are the exact issues and methods encouraged within the framework of the project.

# PROJECT PARTNERS



AGJENCIA E SIGURIMIT TË CILËSISË  
SË ARSIMIT PARAUNIVERSITAR  
Ministria e Arsimit, Sportit dhe Rinisë



Министерство за образование и наука - Биро за развој на образованието  
Ministria e Arsimit dhe Shkencës - Byroja e zhvillimit të arsimit  
Ministry of Education and Science – Bureau for Development of Education

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is a resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship.

Our work builds on Council of Europe recommendations and policies, such as the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, which was developed to make sure that the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law are promoted in and through education.

EWC's main aim is to strengthen the capacity of individuals, educational institutions and educational systems to build and sustain a culture of democracy and human rights.

The "Preparing Future Teachers in the Western Balkans" -project has been financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## CONTACT



Marianne Haugh  
Senior Advisor  
[m.haugh@theewc.org](mailto:m.haugh@theewc.org)  
[+47 98232110](tel:+4798232110)



Regional project coordinator  
Bojana Dujkovic Blagojevic  
[b.dujkovic@theewc.org](mailto:b.dujkovic@theewc.org)  
0387 65 651 614



EWC regional office  
Brace Potkonjaka 4  
78 000 Banja Luka  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

EWC international office  
Karl Johans gate 2  
0154 Oslo  
Norway



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