



Funded by
the European Union

unicef 
for every child



Transforming Education in Kosovo with the Learning Passport

The case of Shkollat.org

Policy Brief

UNICEF INNOCENTI – GLOBAL OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND FORESIGHT

UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight tackles the questions of greatest importance for children, both current and emerging. It drives change through research and foresight on a wide range of child rights issues, sparking global discourse and actively engaging young people in its work.

UNICEF Innocenti equips thought leaders and decision makers with the evidence they need to build a better, safer world for children. The office undertakes research on unresolved and emerging issues, using primary and secondary data that represents the voices of children and families themselves. It uses foresight to set the agenda for children, including horizon scanning, trends analysis and scenario development. The office produces a diverse and dynamic library of high-level reports, analyses and policy papers, and provides a platform for debate and advocacy on a wide range of child rights issues.

UNICEF Innocenti provides, for every child, answers to their most pressing concerns.

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF.

This paper has been peer reviewed both externally and within UNICEF.

Extracts from this publication may be freely reproduced with due acknowledgement. Requests to utilize larger portions or the full publication should be addressed to the Communications Unit at researchpublications@unicef.org.

Any part of this publication may be freely reproduced if accompanied by the following citation: Transforming Education in Kosovo with the Learning Passport. The case of Shkollat.org. UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Joaquín Cárceles Martínez-Lozano and Thomas Dreesen, under the supervision and guidance of Matt Brossard, Chief of Education, UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight.

The authors acknowledge invaluable inputs throughout the research by colleagues from UNICEF in Kosovo (Nona Zicherman, Larissa Brunn, Kozeta Imami, Timur Ramiqi, Teuta Halimi and Antigona Uka), UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (Nora Shabani and Christina Siina) and UNICEF Global Headquarters (Pragya Dewan). The research team is also grateful for the feedback of Marigona Morina (University of Calgary) and Bardha Qirezi (EduTask), who supported the peer-review process. Finally, we particularly acknowledge the inputs and research efforts of colleagues at the Institute of Psychology – University of Pristina, who led the needs assessment that underpins this policy brief (Diadora Cërmjani, Kaltrina Kelmendi, Linda Hoxha and Era Hamiti).

Correspondence should be addressed to:

UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight
Via degli Alfani, 58
50121 Florence, Italy
Tel: (+39) 055 20 330
Fax: (+39) 055 2033 220
researchpublications@unicef.org
www.unicef-irc.org

@UNICEFINnocenti on Twitter, LinkedIn,
Facebook, Instagram and YouTube

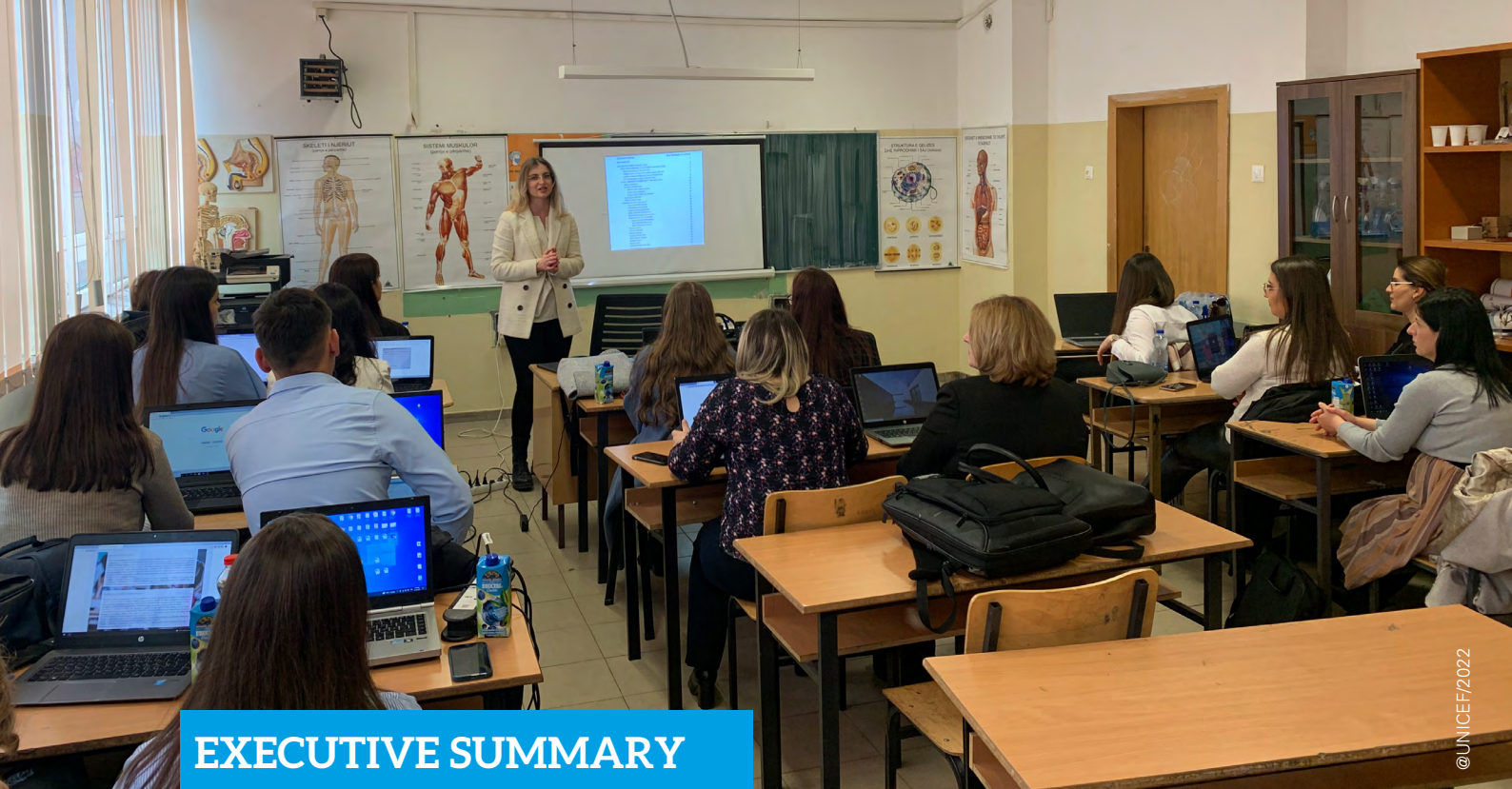
© 2023 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Cover photo: @UNICEF/2021/L.Aliu

This policy brief was prepared under the framework of the 'Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families in the Western Balkans and Turkey-project', financed by the European Union and implemented by UNICEF.

The materials, content and views expressed in this report are those of the experts engaged in the research and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Union.

Graphic design: Small World Stories



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the right implementation, digital learning is a powerful tool that teachers can use to provide students with interactive, fun and individualized learning, both inside and outside the classroom. This is particularly relevant in the context of Kosovo,¹ where in 2018, four out of five 15-year-olds (79 per cent) had difficulty comprehending a text of moderate length and complexity, a much higher proportion than the Western Balkans' average (54 per cent) (OECD, 2020). In Kosovo, digital learning is still a relatively new concept, generally associated with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, additional efforts are needed to ensure that teachers can use digital learning across Kosovo as a tool to deliver student-centered learning whether teaching happens face-to-face or remotely. This is recognized in the Kosovo Education Strategy (2022–2026), where digitalization in education is included as one of five core strategic objectives. The purpose of this report is to provide evidence and policy takeaways to strengthen digital learning in Kosovo, with a focus on scaling-up Kosovo's national platform for digital learning: Shkollat.org.

Shkollat.org, the localized version of the Learning Passport,² was launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) in collaboration with UNICEF. The learning platform combines the largest repository of curriculum-aligned video learning content in Kosovo with communication tools such as Microsoft Teams and access to the Office 365 desktop suite. Using Shkollat.org, teachers and students can communicate, share and engage with content, collaborate on team projects or create individualized quizzes and assessments. Developing and expanding the use of Shkollat.org is essential

to support digital learning in Kosovo. To do this, the Kosovo Education Strategy (2022–2026) recognizes the need to work across six areas (or pillars): digital learning platforms, content, teachers upskilling and support, connectivity, devices, and institutional support.

Evidence for this report is drawn from analysis of a mixed-methods needs assessment conducted by the Institute of Psychology (University of Pristina) and supported by UNICEF in Kosovo in January–February 2022. This research report presents key policy takeaways for MESTI and other education policymakers in the Western Balkans. These are organized around the six pillars of digital learning embedded within the Kosovo Education Strategy (2022–2026).

1. Digital learning platforms

Scale-up communication, advocacy and coordination efforts to position Shkollat.org as a digital learning solution that can be used by teachers to support student-centered learning inside and outside the physical classroom. In Kosovo, teachers are familiar with video-conferencing tools, such as Zoom, which became popular as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, digital learning solutions that combine digital content with digital tools are still widely under-utilized. To expand the use of Shkollat.org in both remote settings and in a blended approach in the physical classroom, there is a need to bring teachers onboard through advocacy, communication and training efforts. This includes encouraging all municipal education directories and school principals to endorse and promote the use of Shkollat.org, facilitating the process of teacher onboarding and providing sufficient support for new users.

1. All references to Kosovo should be understood in reference to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

2. The Learning Passport is an online, mobile, and offline platform delivered by UNICEF and powered by Microsoft Community Training.

2. Content

Prioritize developing quality digital content for Shkollat.org, engaging teachers and students in the process. More than half of the teachers in the sample (62 per cent) report searching the internet for educational content. Yet, teachers frequently report facing challenges to find quality curriculum-aligned digital content when browsing the internet. Developing additional quality digital content for Shkollat.org and promoting its use as a central repository of curriculum-aligned content would ensure that teachers can easily access and use diverse digital content to fit their teaching goals. Quality digital content is flexible, accessible, and engaging for different types of students. It follows curriculum goals in a structured way and can be easily incorporated by teachers within their teaching plans. Participatory approaches involving teachers and students in the process of content development can help ensure that digital content is relevant and motivating for teachers and students alike.

3. Teacher upskilling and support

Develop structured, quality, in-service teacher training programmes for teachers to progress at their own pace according to their learning needs. Teachers in Kosovo can often find teacher training opportunities in relation to digital learning. However, teacher training programmes can have varying degrees of quality across municipalities and schools, and do not always cater to teachers' learning needs. Teacher standards for digital learning can provide a framework to develop a structured curriculum on digital learning, covering foundational skills through to advanced competences for digital learning using Shkollat.org, including how to use the platform with other materials in a blended approach in a classroom. Additionally, developing standards for professional development programmes, and fostering centralized digital teacher trainings through Shkollat.org could help to standardize the quality of teacher training programmes across municipalities.

4. Connectivity

Strengthen connectivity infrastructure in schools (across classrooms), and develop best practice guidelines for managing technology in the classroom. While a majority of schools in Kosovo have some form of internet access, this is often not leveraged for digital learning. Efforts should be made to improve not only the number of schools connected to the internet, but also to improve the quality and reach of this connection.

5. Devices

Expand access to digital devices, especially among vulnerable students. As part of the Kosovo Education Strategy (2022–2026), MESTI has earmarked financial resources to strengthen ICT capacity at schools. In addition, MESTI is collaborating with UNICEF in Kosovo to develop digital equipment request forms, to be completed by municipal education directories to request digital equipment for their schools. In this process, particular attention will be given to schools with weaker ICT capacity relative to their student population. At home, sharing of devices and lack of access to internet continue to constitute barriers for students to engage effectively with digital learning. As a result, supporting vulnerable students with digital devices to engage with digital learning in and out of school should also remain a priority.

6. Institutional support

Coordinate and monitor digitalization efforts for successful implementation. The Kosovo Education Strategy (2022–2026) provides a window to modernize education delivery in Kosovo through digital learning. To ensure success, it is important to establish an implementation road map with clear targets and milestones, informed by baseline and monitoring data. This would enable tracking of implementation across different municipalities and help to identify support needs as they arise. Likewise, prioritizing the creation of a digitalization unit within Kosovo, and appointing digital learning coordinators within municipal education directories and schools could help to improve coordination of digital learning efforts in Kosovo, including teacher trainings programmes and ICT resource allocation. Consistent communication with teachers and parents would also be important to coordinate efforts, to increase their buy-in and motivation to adopt digital and blended learning, and to keep them abreast of innovations in the field, including developments in Shkollat.org and training programmes.

for every child, answers

UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight
Via degli Alfani, 58
50121 Florence, Italy

Tel: (+39) 055 20 330
Fax: (+39) 055 2033 220
researchpublications@unicef.org
www.unicef-irc.org

@UNICEFInnocenti on Twitter, LinkedIn,
Facebook, Instagram and YouTube

© 2023 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



**Funded by
the European Union**

unicef 
for every child