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македонско американска  
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macedonian american  
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## Status – quo Analysis Reports

Activity 1 of the



**Project:**

### **Equal Access through Service Learning for Persons with Disabilities**

Skopje, 2012

**Note:** The texts herein, in general, are included as originally submitted by the authors, i.e. they were not subject to contextual changes.

**Report of the accessibility  
of the  
Higher Education institutions and other relevant public  
institutions in Strumica and Gevgelija**

prepared by

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## **NATURAL FEATURES**

**Location:** The Municipality of Strumica is located in the southeastern part of Macedonia. Strumica is located at a distance of 22 kilometers from the border with Bulgaria.

**Population:** 54 636 inhabitants, Strumica itself : 35 311 Inhabitants (census 2002 )

**Founded:** First documented in the year 181 under the name Astraion.

**Mountains:** Belasica (1883 m), Ograzden (1746 m), Elenica ( 970 m )

**Rivers:** Strumica ( 34,50 km ) , Vodocha ( 20,50 km ) , Turija ( 9 km ) Trakajna ( 4.96 km ).

**Climate:** Mediterranean.

### **Education of people with disabilities in Municipality of Strumica and Municipality of Gevgelija**

In Macedonia, inclusion in education has begun as a model of including children with special needs (children with disabilities) into the education system. However, the social inclusion is a much wider concept, which incorporates the inclusion of all children in the education process, regardless of their origin, place of living, socio-economic characteristics of the family, and their physical and mental abilities. It generally encompasses the following indicators:

- Enabling all children to enroll in the formal education institutions
- Enabling all children to regularly attend and complete the formal education
- Enabling all children to attain to the maximum of their abilities

On the basis of these indicators, the following section analyses the most vulnerable groups, who for a variety of reasons have not been fully integrated in the education system. It is important to emphasize that the variables are usually intertwined which makes it more difficult to tackle each one separately.

#### **Children with special needs**

This group includes diverse categories of children: students with sensory impairment, speech/language impaired, autistic and chronically ill; as well as children with developmental disabilities such as mental disability, physical disability, combined mental and physical disability. Due to the specifics of each condition, they will not be discussed separately.

One of the main problems related to this vulnerable group concerns the systemic deficiencies of their early detection and timely inclusion in the education system. According to the latest data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, in Macedonia, 8211 children (up to 26 years) with developmental disability have been

detected, among which 4871 with mental disabilities, 2504 with physical disabilities and 836 with combined disabilities<sup>1</sup>.

However, the official numbers of these children are believed to be an underassessment of the actual situation.

Although the law enables inclusion of the children with special needs in the regular schools,<sup>2</sup> provided with the assessment that this would contribute to their better development, these children are still largely segregated in special schools or separate classes in regular schools, mainly because of the non-preparedness of the regular schools to provide them with the adequate spatial and learning conditions. When this is paired with the very strong stereotypes of the community as well as that of teachers, the initiatives for greater inclusion of these children in the regular schooling system mainly remain futile. This is mainly due to that fact that there is lack of customized (tailor-made) curriculum for these children included in the regular education system, as well as lack of training of teachers to work with these children.

### **System of education of children with special needs**

The **education of students with special needs** is mainly covered by the 2007 **National Strategy on Deinstitutionalization of the Social Protection System**, as well as the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Inclusion. However, not much has been done to improve the inclusion of these children either in special schools or in regular schools, where possible.

Specifically, a survey on the inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools conducted by the Ombudsman's office<sup>3</sup> indicates that while the majority of the surveyed schools have accommodated student/s with special learning needs (typically with mild intellectual or physical disability), about one third of these children have not completed their education in the specific school, mainly as a result of initiative of their parents, but also because of lack of conditions for continuation of the education. In addition, while about half of the school administration responded that the inclusion of these children results in positive effects, about one third of them believe that their presence in the regular classroom restricts the proper education for the rest of the children.

The vast majority of children with special needs are educated in special schools, although many children belonging to this marginalized group still remain deprived of formal education.

Several interviewed teachers reported to have been involved in a project for better inclusion of the children with special needs, which mostly focused on increasing

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1 National Strategy on Deinstitutionalization (2008-2018), MTSP, 2007

2 Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette of RM, 103/08 Art.6

3 Information of the Ombudsman on the inclusion of children with special needs in education, 2006

sensitivity for working with these children, and less on the specific methodologies for educating them. Hence, the majority of teachers do not feel competent to work with special needs children, and if a child is placed in their class they usually give up by paying less attention and going easy on them, thus not enabling them to realize their full potential.

A recent project implemented by the Association of Special Education Teachers aims to raise the issue of the need to employ special education teachers in regular primary schools.

Currently, the project is being implemented in 8 municipalities who are expected to get more involved in the problem and where possibly allocate funds for employing special education teachers where needed.

The financial constraints and the methods for budget allocation represent another serious problem. As a representative of the Strumica municipality mentioned: There is a formula being used at a municipal and country level according to which we allocate finances to schools. However, this year, although there is a real need for children with special needs, we won't receive any funds in the block dotation/transfers since in the state budget there is no category - children with special needs.

Additional serious problem are the spatial constraints in the schools (especially for students with physical disabilities) and the absence of special working aids needed for appropriate education of these children

Still, several positive examples of social inclusion were mentioned in some municipalities, indicating the sensitiveness of certain individuals and policy makers for the problem. For example, in Strumica, a case was mentioned where the municipality enabled free accommodation for a child and his mother who lived in a rural area and were receivers of social welfare.

However, Strumica Municipality remains a step ahead of all other municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia, in the area of creating conditions for better development of children and people with disabilities in general especially for children with autism.

On the occasion of International Day of Persons with Autism, April 2<sup>nd</sup> this year 2012, opened additional two newly built facilities for autistic students, who attend classes within the school "Sando Masev" in Strumica.



Two new modern classrooms have been built and equipped entirely with funds from the Budget of the Municipality of Strumica. Additional requirements for work with children,

help to equal education and children spend part of the day there. Full education with educational content, practical exercises and physical exercises that working professionals, who are fully committed to the education of these children and this center, which today marks 5 years since its inception, to children not only from Strumica but also centre for Southeastern Region.

### **Institute for Protection and Rehabilitation of Physically Disabled Persons “Banja Bansko” - Strumica**

The only public institution for sheltering physically disabled people with retained intelligence from 6 - 26 years.

The total capacity is 65 beds and in March 2008 there were only 56 beneficiaries, of which 6 are under age of 18. The Institute employs total 7 teachers, 1 pedagogue, 15 care givers, 3 special educators, 1 social worker, 1 sociologist, 1 nurse in charge, and 1 orthoprothetics.

The institution includes the following departments:

- General department;
- Department for primary and secondary education;
- Medical department;
- Department providing training for working skills;
- Department with 22 new apartments.

The personnel profiles include: special education teacher, teachers in different subjects, social worker, orthopedist, medical nurse, physiotherapist, nurse and masseurs are working with the beneficiaries.

The beneficiaries are provided with educational and training activities, rehabilitation (kinesis therapy, electro and hydro, paraffin therapy and massage) as well cultural and entertainment activities.

### **Higher education institutions in Strumica for university students with disabilities**

In compliance with the decision of the President and the Chancellor’s Board, in the academic year 2009/2010 FON University was started with dispersed studies in Strumica.

The department in Strumica is located in a new campus of 3000m<sup>2</sup>, which is digitally connected with the campus in Skopje and the lectures are held daily by professors and assistants coming from other FON departments.

At the moment, the lectures in Strumica are held in Macedonian and English language. The Department in Strumica has the following faculties:

- Law
- Economics

- Applied Foreign Languages
- Detectives and Security

FON University in Strumica is completely accessible for students with disabilities.

State University –“ Goce Delcev”-Stip was started with dispersed studies in Strumica. At the moment, the lectures in Strumica are held in Macedonian language.

The Department in Strumica has the following faculties:

- Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
- Faculty of Pedagogy

This campus is inaccessible for students with disabilities

Although the entrance there is a ramp inside the campus is completely inaccessible and photography was not allowed.



### Other relevant public institution in Strumica Banks



Although the entrance is accessible according to the fact that the bank is on the second floor without elevator the bank is completely inaccessible



Same is the case with complete inaccessibility of the Central Register of the Republic of Macedonia Strumica Registration Office



Figure 1 Center for Vehicle

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Municipality of Gevgelija is located in the southern part of the Republic of Macedonia, on the border with Greece, at an altitude of 64 meters and an area of 485 km<sup>2</sup>. In the municipality live 22,988 inhabitants, of which about 15,685 inhabitants in the municipal center Gevgelija.



Throughout the territory of the municipality of Gevgelija passes the primary axis of development that stretches towards the Vardar valley in the direction north-south and it is a part of corridor 10.

Very important is the border position of the municipality of Gevgelija with Greece, and the possibilities for locating of the economic facilities, which require a large transport of raw materials and finished products, where the port of Thessaloniki is an important comparative advantage.

Favorably influence should have the new planned "horizontal" connection - from Bitola by Mariovo to Gevgelija, like a traffic route which is linking the eastern and western parts of Macedonia and that also integrates the most important tourist areas.

## Accessibility of public institutions in Municipality of Gevgelija



Center for Social Work has accessible entrance on one side and inside is accessible. Within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy there is a daily center for people with special needs providing protection services for 20 children.

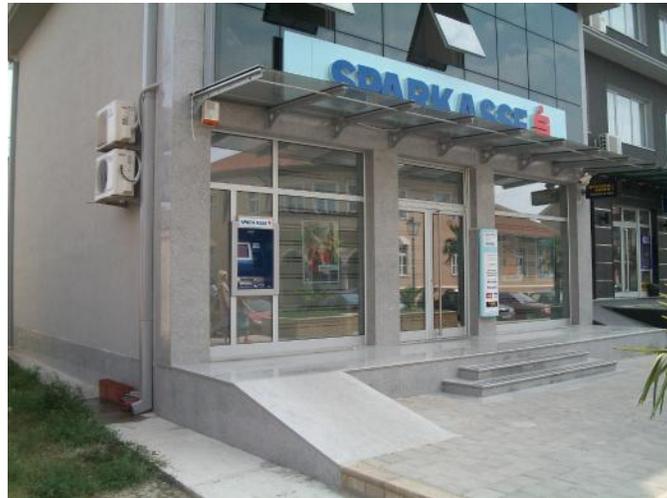
The Health Institutions in Gevgelija are completely accessible.



Department of Real Estate Cadastre completely inaccessible



A Library is completely accessible



Accessible Bank



But unfortunately municipal building where it is located is inaccessible at the entrance  
there is a large stair, tread