

ESF THEMATIC NETWORK ON SIMPLIFICATION

REPORT ON SCO PRACTICES

(Draft for the 6th Meeting of the Thematic Network - The Hague – 8-9 June, 2017)

References:

Member State / Region	Croatia
Reference number (TN's map of SCO practices)	n/a

Contact details:

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Type of SCO reported (Please choose one of these types of SCO: flat rate financing, standard scale of unit costs, lump sum).	STANDARD SCALE OF UNIT COSTS
Type of activities covered by the SCO (Please indicate what type of activities is targeted by the SCO).	SPECIFIC SUPPORT TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE LEVEL OF PRE-TERTIARY EDUCATION

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A1. Description of the type of operation (Please describe in brief what types of operations are covered by SCO)
<p>The aim of the operation to which the standard scale of unit costs is proposed is to improve access to education for disadvantaged students at pre-tertiary level by providing targeted professional support of pedagogical assistance. Pedagogical assistants can be assigned to student with developmental difficulties in order to help them master educational content and overcome socio-psychological obstacles. The assistants are provided to students having major difficulties with the following: motor functioning of the lower or upper extremities; communication, social interactions and sensory integration connected with autism spectrum disorder; intellectual functioning; sensory difficulties connected with vision disorders; behavioural problems which endanger their own safety and the safety of their peers (determined according to the Orientation list of difficulties as</p>

per Attachment 1. to the Regulation on Primary and Secondary School Education of Students with Developmental Difficulties (Official Gazette, No. 24/15). The current model for financing pedagogical assistants include combination of funding from several sources: funds secured by the local authorities (resources from local budgets), funds allocated to non-governmental organisations from a portion of proceeds from lottery funds (in accordance with Decree on the criteria for defining beneficiaries and the allocation of a portion of proceeds from lottery funds)games of chance passed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia), state funds secured by a joint policy measure and decentralised funds.

Main objective of the pedagogical assistants' support is to ensure equal opportunities for students with developmental difficulties in order to enable them to obtain appropriate education and to encourage an increase in self-reliance in the school environment. Pedagogical assistants are not involved directly into the teaching process and they are not entitled to plan the appropriate teaching programme. Their role is not to replace other forms of educational and rehabilitation support and they cannot provide information on the advancement of the student on their own. The primary role of pedagogical assistants is to support students in the following: communication and social inclusion (e.g. encourage communication with other students, assisting in following the work and/or play instructions); mobility (e.g. assisting with wheelchair use); toileting; meals. In cooperation with teachers and other education staff, the pedagogical assistants also provide support to students in carrying out their school work (e.g. assistance with using equipment, writing down teacher's instructions, reading written assignments). Pedagogical assistants are supervised and managed by the expert educational staff employed in the institution and appointed by the director (i.e. school principal). The staff appointed prepares the assistant's work plan, in cooperation with other teaching and non-teaching staff working with the individual student, and supervises implementation of the plan.

A2. Definition of outputs/results *(Please give a short definition of outputs and/or results)*

Indicator definition is as follows: monthly work of pedagogical assistant providing targeted professional support to students with disabilities at pre-tertiary level during academic year.

Aim of the operation is to ensure this specific type of support to students with disabilities who fulfilled prerequisites (specific level and type of disability).

Selection process is being conducted in two stages: In the first phase, Ministry of Science and Education, and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education assess the eligibility of the target groups (students with disabilities) and in the second, the same authorities assess the eligibility and quality of submitted project proposals. In the first phase, in order to qualify for the support provided by the pedagogical assistant, an official decision on the assessment of the difficulties that hinder their independent functioning must be submitted for each student. In the second phase, after being informed on the students' eligibility, the applicants (establisher of the primary and secondary education institutions in republic of Croatia) submit the full project proposals. The operation is specific, and is related and focused only on providing the targeted support to the certain categories of students with disabilities as eligible target group under the operation.

The operation is focused in terms of cost as well. Majority of costs are related to the work of pedagogical assistance during one school year and just minor part is related to selection process of candidates who apply for this working post and for implementation of short training programmes (training of selected candidates before they start to work as pedagogical assistant).

Output indicator defined within the Operational program counting number of students enrolled in schools who receive targeted support provided by pedagogical assistant.

A3. Beneficiaries *(please indicate the types of beneficiaries involved in the operations covered by SCO)*

Establisher of schools (regional and local administrative unit) in partnership with schools where students with disabilities are enrolled

A4. Target group(s) *(Please list target groups within projects covered by SCO)*

Students enrolled in primary and secondary schools and having major difficulties with the following: motor functioning of the lower or upper extremities; communication, social interactions and sensory integration connected with autism spectrum disorder; intellectual functioning; sensory difficulties connected with vision disorders; behavioural problems which endanger their own safety and the safety of their peers

B. METHODOLOGY AND CALCULATION METHOD

B.1 Methodology *(please indicate which methodology/ies has/have been used: Fair, equitable and verifiable method / use of existing EU schemes for similar types of operation and beneficiary / Use of existing own national schemes for similar types of operations and beneficiaries / use of rates and specific methods enshrined in the regulation or in a delegated act / use of a draft budget /combination of methodologies).
Please indicate if the concerned SCO has been covered by Art. 14(1) ESF)*

Calculation was conducted by the Intermediary Body level 2, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education. Internal historical data of IB2 were used in relation to the same operation awarded in previous years. Calculation is based on the historical data related to total documented number of gross salary costs and travel costs, local or public related to the work of disadvantaged students at pre-tertiary level in school year 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. Data were gathered from salary slip submitted by the beneficiaries and from internal records in order to extract approved, reimbursed amount to the beneficiary (eligible expenditure). Verified data were used in order to ensure only eligible expenditure have been taken into analysis.

Therefore, historical data from the previously implemented projects were used for calculation of direct staff unit costs of pedagogical assistant. From valid collective agreement (OJ, 14/2017) value of awards paid by the employer to the employees in public sector were applied as well. The analysis included a total of 130 pedagogical assistants working in school in two academic year 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 within the 26 completed projects implemented in the programming period 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. The scope of data analysis included all counties in Republic of Croatia based on NUTS II classification, with the exception of two counties (development index lower than 75% of the average in Republic of Croatia so gross value of salary is much lower and therefore can unduly and unfairly reduce the average under the sample).

Data included in the methodology and calculation is based on historical data of direct staff costs of pedagogical assistants from the completed projects (as already mentioned). The costs included wage contributions, mandatory social security and health insurance contributions paid by employers and travel costs. However, some legal rights deriving from the valid Collective Agreement (one -time payment for Christmas and regress) are included in addition to the data analysis and calculation beyond the historical data of total work cost including travel costs.

The concerned SCO is being in the process of submitting proposal to EC regarding use of article 14.1

B.2 Calculation Methods *(please describe how the calculations have been made)*

Data were gathered from payment documents /salary slips submitted by the beneficiaries and then from internal records by using a reimbursement approved amount of eligible expenditure. Verified data were used in order to ensure only eligible expenditure have been taken into analysis. Since the number of working hours of pedagogical assistant vary across the schools, an average working hour and average cost of work was calculated. Calculation of the cost of work for each of the selected assistant was conducted by dividing the total verified eligible expenditure and total documented expenditure of work from salary slips with the total number of months in which the person has worked in school during one academic year. As a result of the calculation is the average monthly gross cost of work of pedagogical assistants was defined.

B.3 Data source *(please indicate the type of data used and the data source)*

Internal historical data of IB2 were used in relation to the same operation awarded in previous years. Calculation is based on the historical data related to total documented number of gross salary costs and travel costs, local or public related to the work of disadvantaged students at pre-tertiary level in school year 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. Data were gathered from salary slip submitted by the beneficiaries and from internal records in order to extract approved, reimbursed amount to the beneficiary (eligible expenditure).

C. IMPLEMENTATION OF SCO

(Please describe in brief what implementation rules and conditions have been set out)

In the process of defining.
 Our plan is to include within GfA and under the specific provisions of the contract the following conditions:
 beneficiary will be obliged to submit quarterly implementation reports in a form of application for the reimbursement. IB2 will be responsible for verification of monthly progress/ result that the support is actually provided, and quality control based on reports submitted by the beneficiaries. Verification on progress will be based on the:

- work contract
- documentary evidence that assistant provided support to disadvantaged students in school (monthly work log followed with the declaration of the authorized person – school principle stating that support).

In addition to verification of data submitted under the implementation reports, the on-the-spot visits will include on site control that assistants is actually in school, providing support to the student; and control of the records that beneficiary has to keep at its premises (salary slips).

D. AUDIT TRAIL

(Please provide a brief description of the audit trail for the concerned SCO, including documents, key contents/conditions and procedures)

Has to be defined

E. ASSESSMENT BY THE AUDIT AUTHORITY(IES) INCLUDING EVENTUAL EX ANTE ASSESSMENT

(If relevant, please explain how the audit authority has been involved in preparation and assessment of the SCO).

Audit authority will provide an opinion regarding the quality of data/appropriateness of methodology used within Annex 1: Template for submitting data for the consideration of the Commission (article 14.1)

F. IMPACT OR ADDED VALUE FOR THE MA, BENEFICIARIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

(Please explain how you have perceived impact/added value of the SCO for the MA, beneficiaries and other stakeholders).

While taking into account the number of pedagogical assistants employed under the operation, the use of simplified cost option is of great importance. Not only that administrative burden will be less, management and control system can be focus more on result of the operation and that is additional benefit. The main condition for efficient project implementation, simplification of the management process and will help to achieve the purpose and objective of the operation and contribute to more correct use of the Funds by lowering error rate.

G. SPECIFIC ISSUES FACED WITHIN CALCULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCO

(Please indicate any issues/problems/challenges you have experienced when setting out or implementing the SCO, i.e. high workload, state aid, public procurement, national legislation, revenues etc.)

Demanding workload because there are no separate unit within the Ministry of education and the Agency for vocational education (intermediary bodies) in charge of SCO. Furthermore, the quality of data covered by the analysis conducted under the process of preparing SSUC for pedagogical assistants was very heterogeneous. Finally, due to the fact that some aspects of pedagogical assistants work still have not been adequately addressed (e. g. precisely defined work load per different categories of pedagogical assistants respecting the fact that students attending different type of educational programs) the duration of the process establishing SSUC was time consuming.

H. LESSONS LEARNED AND POINTERS

(Please indicate any unforeseen practical implications that have emerged and any key lessons you have learned from the development and implementation of the concerned SCO practice).

n/a at the moment (SSUC has not been in use yet)

Just few insights obtained so far:

- It is extremely important to start with the process early enough
- consultation with potential applicants and other relevant stakeholder is an obligatory factor
- checking in advance whether some obstacles within national legislation exist and could negatively affect use of SCO

I. ANNEXES OR LINKS TO ONLINE DOCUMENTS

(Please list documents or links to online documents like complete methodology, calculation methods, documents submitted to the Commission, guidance for MAs and beneficiaries, calls for proposals, audit trail, legal acts etc.).

Once after the Call will be published the link will be inserted