

RE:FINE GRANTS – Approved in 2005 Summary of Projects

1) School Autonomy – Every Stakeholder’s Responsibility (Sep 2005-Dec 2006)

Grantee: Education Development Association, Albania

Countries involved in the project: national project

Amount: \$38,250

The goal of this project is to encourage public discussion on development of an appropriate model for Albanian school autonomy. The government of Albania is starting decentralization reform of general education. Therefore, it is important to mobilize the education community to contribute to this process. The draft decentralization strategy already exists and it is critical to open it up for public debate. Outcomes of the project include: preparation of policy recommendations for development of the Albanian Model of School Autonomy; generation of intensive media coverage to cover public deliberations on development of the decentralization model; public debates on issues of school autonomy will be encouraged to aim at speeding up the process of school autonomy and encouraging the piloting of appropriate models.

2) Development of the Virtual Learning Space of Central Asia Education Cooperation Network (June 2005-Dec 2006)

Grantee: Education Center Bilim-Central Asia, Kazakhstan

Countries involved: Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan

Amount: \$146,050

Note: Conditional approval. Only the needs assessment component of this project received funding. The needs assessment will look into what courses could be of interest to the potential target group and what IT infrastructure exists for distance learning. The revised project will be resubmitted to the RE:FINE committee for final approval.

The Virtual Learning Space of the Central Asia Education Cooperation Network (CA ECN VLS) will offer specifically designed short online courses and open, online resources for self study to professionals and civil society leaders in education. The courses will be mainly based on OSI program products as well as materials developed by ESP Budapest, and also rely on a range of best practice cases in the region of CEE/fSU. The courses will be delivered in Russian, thus potential participants can also be from the whole region of the former Soviet Union. In the future, the courses will also be delivered in the national languages of the Central Asian countries. The project outcomes are: a group of 15 education professionals and civil society leaders will be trained in ICT-based teaching and course development; a number (to be specified in the revised proposal) of courses will be delivered to interested learners; open resources for self-study will be developed in connection to each course and published on the www.educasia.net portal.

3) Monitoring Dropouts and Private Tutoring: Public Awareness Raising and Policy Advocacy Campaigns (Sept 2005-June 2006)

Grantee: Education Policy Center at Vilnius University, Lithuania

Countries involved in Dropouts Study: Albania, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Slovakia, Mongolia, Tajikistan.

Countries involved in Private Tutoring Study: Georgia, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Azerbaijan.

Amount: \$109,700

Note: Conditional approval. The RE:FINE committee will need to review the final drafts of the studies before final approval can be given.

The aim of the project is to organize presentations and advocacy campaigns for the two monitoring initiatives at national, regional and international levels. The advocacy campaign for the Private Tutoring study will stress that private tutoring is present in educational systems and has to be recognized as an educational and socio-economical problem and therefore it should be analyzed and taken into account in educational system reforms. The common objective is to explain the scope, causes and impacts of private tutoring in the participating countries, trying to define similar problems and to find possible solutions to the problems as well as to force policy makers to change the situation. For the Dropouts study the project aims to raise public awareness and advocate for effective strategies to decrease the numbers of students left out from education at an early age. During advocacy campaigns the importance of an improved monitoring of school dropout rates will be stressed. Examples of policies and programs aiming to reduce school dropout rates were collected and they could serve as valuable information for others to identify such problems and search for decisions to be implemented.

Outcomes of the project are: attention of the education community, education decision makers and broader society being drawn to the existing problems in education; policy recommendations will be prepared to outline issues and solutions to inform and improve the effectiveness of national policies in these two issues; a virtual platform for storage of databases and continuous updates on private tutoring and drop-outs will be created.

4) A Future for our Children. Involving Communities in Social Integration of Children from Disintegrated Families (Sept 2005-Dec 2005)

Grantee: Educational Center PRO DIDACTICA, Moldova

Countries involved: Romania

Amount: \$67,918

This project aims at increasing the level of social integration of children from disintegrated families through developing the professional skills of rural communities' school teachers, representatives of local educational authorities and representatives of active community groups. The objective is to ensure the integration of children into society and protection of their rights, and to decrease exposure of this new group of youth to risks such as drug and alcohol abuse, AIDS, crime, human trafficking etc. Six communities that are seriously affected by the family disintegration phenomena will be selected for the project. Schools and community representatives from the identified areas will receive necessary expert support to be able to provide necessary assistance to children at risk.

As a result of the project: 76 school teachers from rural communities (class tutors) are trained to apply (during usual classroom hours or extracurricular activities) counseling techniques and strategies for developing their students' skills for efficient communication, interpersonal relationships building, tolerance and acceptance; a team of 12 national experts is trained to be resource people in the country; a practical tool-kit for teachers is developed (approximately 200 pages) and translated into Russian and English; a guide that explains how to offer support to this category of children is developed and published (2000 copies in Romanian and 1000 copies in Russian); six rural community groups trained (36 community members in total) to offer support to children at risk; a permanent rubric within the educational magazine „Didactica Pro ...” will be established that will cover the project.

5) Academic Success for Roma Children (Sept 2005-Aug 2007)

Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, Romania

Countries involved: Slovakia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, and Moldova

Amount: \$122,340

The goal of this project is to develop diagnostic assessment and teaching procedures that have a high likelihood of success with Roma children, and which will be disseminated to other projects across Central Europe who are dealing with the education of Roma children, both within the public education systems and the NGO sector. The following outcomes are expected: diagnostic instruments that can be used to assess children's literacy concepts will be developed in the five languages of the partner countries; tutoring procedures, written up in training manuals (five languages), that are related to the diagnostic information revealed by assessments are developed; the assessment and tutoring strategies will be field tested with at least twelve students in each participating country (total 84 students); the findings, including all training materials will be disseminated to groups concerned with the education of Roma children in each country, including Step by Step, Roma centers and RWCT programs; an average of 105 primary school teachers will be trained to deliver remedial education (assessment and one-on-one tutoring of students aged 6-8); a total of 190 students will be assessed and assisted with remedial education activities.

6) Gender Sensitive Textbooks and Classroom Practice in the Balkan Region (Sept 2005-Sept 2007)

Grantee: NGO Women's Action, Serbia and Montenegro

Countries involved: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Amount: \$100,359

The project's aim is to contribute to ensuring equity in primary education in the region by establishing a collaboration between professional organizations to bring about changes in textbook content so that they will be gender sensitive and provide a balanced portrayal of men and women and their roles in the public and private spheres of life. It will also bring about changes in classroom communication and raise awareness among teachers on their roles in reproducing gender stereotypes, and influence teaching practice so that classroom communication is not in any way gender insensitive or an agent for reproducing gender stereotypes. Results of this initiative: a handbook for textbook authors and teachers will be developed which will contribute to a gender sensitive approach to primary schooling (this will also be a guide for Ministry officials who decide on which textbooks are to be selected for classroom use; a network of teachers and textbook authors will be established who would promote the developed recommendations further.

7) Promotion of Inclusive Education in Serbia and Montenegro (Dec 2005-Apr 2007)

Grantee: Association of Students with Disabilities (ADS), Serbia and Montenegro

Countries involved: national project

Amount: \$66,430

This project is focused on the promotion of human rights of youth with disabilities in the education field. One of the most important steps towards development of inclusive education and promotion of a social model of understanding disabilities is to empower youth with disabilities for self-advocacy, continuing education, and the pursuit of their rights. Within the framework of the project, a survey on high school students with disabilities in regular and special (state) secondary schools in Serbia and Montenegro is to be conducted to promote results in a lobby campaign for solutions leading to inclusive education and the promotion of possibilities for obtaining higher education by youth with disabilities. Outcomes of the project are: secondary school students with disabilities are empowered to pursue their equal rights; the survey that examines educational opportunities and obstacles for youth with disabilities in secondary schools is produced and widely disseminated; a number of young persons with disabilities who actively participate in the disability movement and the promotion of inclusive education is increased.