



'RIGHT TO EDUCATION'

Submission to the Universal
Periodic Review of the United
Nations Human Rights Council

4th Cycle – 43rd Session

Country Review: Montenegro

October 2022
by Noor Mousa



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Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020, which focuses on monitoring and minimizing human rights violations in education all around the world. Our goal is to contribute to promoting universal and equal access to education for all.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support achieving societal peace by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarization, and tackling inequalities in the field of education.

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I. Summary of recommendations Montenegro received in the 3rd UN UPR cycle (2017-2021)

1. Recommendations regarding the rights of the child:
 - a. (105.131) Austria recommended the state to ensure inclusive education to Roma women and children.
 - b. (105.94; 105.128; 105.81) Sierra Leone, Palestine, and Argentina recommended the state to increase the educational inclusion of Roma, Ashkaeli, and Egyptian children.
 - c. (105.127) The Russian Federation recommended the state to ensure equal access to education for people who belong to minorities.
 - d. (105.15) Indonesia recommended the state to combat discrimination against all minorities in all fields including the field of education.
 - e. (105.123) Croatia recommended the state to follow a new strategy that includes a monitoring system that protects children from violence.
2. Recommendations for Disability Rights:
 - a. (106.13) Ecuador recommended the state to provide training and increase awareness on the rights of people with disabilities.
 - b. (105.142) Chile recommended the state to strengthen institutional structures that guarantee the rights of people with disabilities.
 - c. (105.139) Venezuela recommended the state to implement more measures that prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities more effectively.
 - d. (105.96) Maldives recommended the state to improve the accessibility of quality education for children with disabilities.
 - e. (105.91) China recommended the state to adopt legislative and administrative measures that ensures the rights of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and persons with disabilities.
 - f. (105.95) Bulgaria recommended the state to widen the inclusivity of its education for children with disabilities.
3. Recommendations for Human Rights education and training:
 - a. (105.115.2; 105.115.1) Georgia and Albania recommended the state to promote women's rights and to further support raising awareness and education on gender-based violence.
 - b. (105.97) Morocco recommended the state to put more effort in the field of human rights education and training.

II. Educational challenges and the rights of the child

4. Montenegro's roughly 620 thousand population has somewhat multicultural assets with approximately 20 to 30 thousand Roma people and a significant Egyptian and Askhaeli community.
5. As the 2018 Civil Rights Defenders' report highlights, there is a systematic discrimination against minority groups in Montenegro which affects all aspects of their lives. This is reflected in high unemployment rates, low enrolment rates in educational institutions, and poor living conditions.
6. Roma and Egyptian children are disadvantaged in the education system, and their attendance rate and enrolment rates in educational institutions reflects this. For instance, only 190 Roma children were attending in preschool in 2017, although it is an improvement compared to the previous year where 103 was enrolled in preschool.
7. The high primary school drop-out rate of 11% among Roma and Egyptian children further demonstrates the seriousness of the issue, as only 49% of Roma children enrol in secondary education.
8. According to the National Platform on Roma Integration Montenegro report in 2018, the country was recommended to work more on the inclusiveness of Roma people in education and to enhance their social and academic chances to achievement. 1860 Roma children were enrolled in primary school in 2018, while their number was only 1622 in 2017 which shows positive patterns in terms of enrolment. As for secondary school, their number reached 142 in 2018, which also shows improvements compared to the 112 students who were enrolled in 2017. However, only 27 Roma students studied at the university level in 2018.
9. It is also common, that children from lower socioeconomic background have difficulties in accessing education and are more likely to drop out of school. Socioeconomic status also often collides with ethnicity, meaning that many Roma and Egyptian children have difficulties in accessing educational facilities and institutions. They often cannot afford to buy the necessary equipment for school, neither can they pay for transportation, while children having to help parents to make ends meet is not uncommon either.
10. To increase the number of enrolled students and to reduce dropout rates, it is important to support families and communities coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Providing free transportation to school and mediators, especially for Roma and Egyptian children, can have a significantly positive impact on enrolment rates.
11. Broken Chalk welcomes the government's efforts in taking measures to provide scholarships and mentoring programs to children from low socioeconomic background to enhance their enrolment rate in schools and universities.
12. Child labour in Montenegro is also a serious issue. Children are frequently forced to beg on the streets or are subject to sexual exploitation and all forms of human trafficking.

13. Montenegro has taken some steps to combat this issue, such as introducing a new labour law that regulates the working conditions of minors. The government has also increased the budget allocated for labour inspections to investigate the working conditions of minors. However, the research found that programs directed to stop children's work on the streets like forced begging are not effective. The state did take some steps to deal with victims of trafficking, such as establishing an identification team for victims and an operational team that helps to tackle human trafficking.
14. Despite all efforts, there is still a lot to improve, particularly regarding the legal system which would need special legal advisors who are equipped with the necessary skills to deal with human trafficking cases, especially when they involve minors.
15. Another crucial issue to address is corporal punishment against children in schools and in households in Montenegro. While laws and regulations prohibit such practices in all settings, it is still not entirely eliminated. To ensure the safety and rights of children, Montenegro adopted changes in schools, primary health care, and social services in this regard, especially after research showed that the suicide rates and drug abuse are higher among those who experienced physical abuse during their childhood.

III. Educational challenges and the rights of disabled people

16. Broken Chalk is pleased to note that Montenegrin education policy works along an inclusive education strategy between 2019 and 2025, which continues the implementation of measures included in the previous 2014-2018 strategy that worked on improving the Montenegrin educational system along the recommendations stated of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
17. The country shows major improvements in ensuring the educational inclusion of people with special needs which is reflected in the fact that, among other things, people with disabilities are entitled to compulsory education specifically designed to meet their physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. The education of disabled children is facilitated by trained specialists and special study materials, like textbooks in Braille.
18. These measures provide inclusive education for disabled Montenegrin children of all ages and work for eliminating discrimination against them.

IV. Educational challenges and women's rights

19. The Montenegrin government has shown the intention to work on tackling gender inequality and gender-based violence, including in the educational sector.
20. The ministry of education pursues campaigns to encourage professional education, training, and skill development programs, such as the *Professional is Essential - Learn, Earn, Build Your Self* campaign. This successful project had a significant impact on student enrolment numbers. Furthermore, the ministry of education continues to put significant effort into financing the lack of professions in vocational training.
21. Moreover, Montenegro has set a strategy to achieve a gender-sensitive education at all levels.

22. Montenegro's efforts in tackling gender inequality and gender-based violence are further reflected in, for instance, the work of the Women's Political Network, which provide education and training and promote gender equality. Campaigns are frequently carried out in Roma and Egyptian communities to promote education and to prohibit violence against women and forced marriages.
23. Measures were also taken to support women's entrepreneurship by carrying out various forms of training to provide the necessary knowledge to women for improving their skills and businesses.
24. Other campaigns were also pursued by the Montenegrin government, such as the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence* campaign. It called to end gender-based violence and included a TV spot and social media campaign.
25. Nevertheless, there are still major improvements to be materialised, especially regarding the advancement of the rights of women in education and the elimination of child marriages. Existing inequalities particularly concern women in Roma and Egyptian communities, where women are often marginalized.
26. Combating child marriage is important to increase school enrolment rates and decrease dropout rates. Approximately 20% of girls who only completed primary school were married before the age of 18. In comparison, only 1% of girls who finished their higher education were married before that age.
27. There are other factors that make a child more prone to marry at an early age, such as poverty, and religion, which factors particularly concern Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.
28. A stronger engagement with minority communities is essential to improve children's access to education from minority backgrounds. Mediators are facilitating parent-school relations and help prevent children from dropping out of school.
29. Broken Chalk is delighted to note that the government of Montenegro has declared its dedication to tackling the issue of child marriage by 2030. At the same time, Broken Chalk is concerned that Montenegro has not been reporting on its advancement regarding this issue.

V. Recommendations

30. Broken Chalk recommends Montenegro to allocate more resources to the educational sector with a particular attention to minorities. To prevent dropouts and increase enrolment, Broken Chalk recommends the Montenegrin government to provide free transportation for children from Roma and Egyptian communities, and to increase the number of Roma mediators who play a positive role in facilitating contact between Roma parents and preschools to help their access to education.
31. Broken Chalk urges Montenegro to develop new state-funded strategies and programmes with the goal of combating discrimination, violence, and exclusion minority groups face.

32. Broken Chalk recommends the state to intensify its intervention strategies to prevent academically underachieving children from dropping out of school.
33. Broken Chalk recommends Montenegro to implement effective strategies to stop and prevent child labour.
34. Broken Chalk recommends Montenegro to strengthen its legal system with experienced trained legal advisors who are prepared to efficiently deal with human trafficking victims, particularly when children are the victims of trafficking.
35. Broken Chalk recommends Montenegro to increase its effort in strengthening the rights of women in education, especially women who belong to marginalized minorities such as Roma and Egyptian peoples.

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