

**Advancing Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe**  
**National survey of school directors in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

B&H, BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
ESP	Education Support Program
GO	Governmental Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	National Plan and Program
OSF	The Open Society Foundation
OSI	The Open Society Institute

## Executive Summary

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This report presents the results for Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) of a survey on elementary school principals' attitudes towards and views on parental participation in schools. For the purposes of this report, "parental participation" means the involvement of parents in decision-making, in extracurricular activities, and in the education of their own children. ....6

This research is part of "Advancing Educational Inclusion and Quality in South East Europe", a project of the Education Support Program (ESP), which is financed by OSI (Open Society Institute). The project aims to address the problem of rising disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes continue in the South East European (SEE) countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.....6

Similar surveys were carried out in the other seven countries and will be reported separately.....6

An impetus for this study was provided by some recent empirical evidence which has highlighted improving parental involvement as a very promising strategy, not only to improve student educational outcomes overall but as a factor especially suited to helping socially excluded children and children with special needs to overcome educational disadvantage. ....6

The sample was designed to be representative for B&H with due regard to each of the areas of different ethnic majorities and to the urban/rural distinction. ....9

The questionnaire used contains a broad range of questions on parental participation and its background as well as specific questions on exclusion. It also provides ample opportunity for open-ended answers. ....9

Questionnaires were actually completed by 237 principals. ....10

At the end of the general questionnaire which was used for all the countries, an additional set of questions was added on topics specific to BiH. ....11

A "path diagram" has been produced as an attempt to summarise the more detailed findings and in particular to answer the questions about "what influences what?" .....44

Forms of participation in BiH schools do not extend to parental influence over education or the running of the school in anything but extracurricular matters. Parental involvement is very much focussed on organisation of events, renovating buildings, tidying the school yard etc. But these forms of engagement are not to be disparaged, especially in the context of limited educational resources. ....48

Principals are very aware that less well educated and otherwise socially excluded parents participate less in all forms of school life.....48

Quite a large number of principals feel themselves drastically under-resourced and cut off from support from the Ministries. Their schools tend to have lower levels of parental participation. ....50

Many schools have quite frequent, but limited, contact with parents. However this contact is very much one-way, from school to parent, with the most frequent activities being sending information about pupil performance and school activities. Parents are also invited to parents' meetings, at which attendance is relatively good overall. However there are some groups of parents who attend much less frequently. ....50

In general principals are not convinced that parents should have much influence in their schools, and if so, primarily in areas such as social activity planning. They do not see parents as being competent to influence educational decisions. Parents' councils on the other hand are given more powers at least over general policy but again only a very small minority of principals consider them competent to influence for example the content of lessons.....50

In BiH, parents participate more in bigger schools who consider themselves to be relatively well resourced and in which the principal is convinced of the value of participation. These schools are better at encouraging and assisting parents to support their own children's education, with a range of activities which can be called "home-school activities" or "parenting services". Surprisingly, principals who spend more of their time teaching seem to be more open to home-school activities, even though it is larger schools which tend to encourage these activities and principals of larger schools tend to spend less of their time teaching. ....50

These schools in turn more frequently communicate with parents and more frequently invite them to to the school. These activities seem to be a bridge between school and family. Unfortunately, the majority of principals are not convinced of the value of such activities. Such schools also give more power to the parents' councils, which function as another such bridge. 50

The first piece of good news is that these schools, in which parents' councils have power and parents are invited more frequently to participate, actually experience a higher level of participation as measured by the proportion of parents participating in meetings and other events, and as measured by the influence which principals attribute to parents and their Council.....	50
The second piece of good news is that principals in these schools are also in general satisfied with parental participation and the influence of the Council and in turn are more convinced of the importance of parental voice, which in turn feeds back into their perception of the benefits of participation. ....	50
A very important variable is the negatively-expressed indicator "perceived barriers to school support for parents" which perhaps expresses a fatalistic or cynical view of the possibilities. There are two-way negative connections between this attitude and frequent and inclusive participation. ....	50
Recommendations are as follows:.....	50
Investigate further why principals who spend a larger proportion of their time teaching seem to be more open to home-school activities, a key prerequisite for participation. Consider ways to encourage principals even in large schools to spend some time teaching. ....	50
The most important link in the chain is probably the extent to which a principal is convinced of the potential benefits of parental participation. So consider ways to demonstrate to principals how parental participation can benefit them and their schools. This could be done by disseminating best-practice stories produced by other principals.....	50
It is probably too early to hope to introduce genuine participation of parents into a school-level decision-making on many levels at this stage. Realistic initiatives which could work and gain the support of both parents and principals are: .....	51
Including parents in home-school activities around the education of their children .....	51
Including parents in activities which can visibly benefit the school .....	51
Encouraging principals to widen the remit of the Parent's Council .....	51
Finding ways to extend participation to parents who are otherwise excluded, especially the poor .....	51
Finding ways to include parents who are very busy, i.e. provide opportunities which do not demand much time but could be useful in other ways.....	51

