Education reform and regional level educational administration in Serbia

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Content

I. Introduction

1. This report has been written in the framework of the programme „*Regional decentralisation of education management in Serbia: twinning of ministry of education regional departments with European counterparts"* initiated by the Austrian Government in April 2002. It is based on a one-week fact finding mission accomplished in Serbia between the 13th and the 19th of October 2003 (for the visited sites and persons see Annex I). It is a follow up of a first report (*Halász, 2003*), which was presented in Belgrade at the meeting of the participants of the Twinning Program on the 28th of February 2003. *Although this report can be read and understand without the knowledge of the first one, a simultaneous reading is strongly recommended.*[1]

2. The aim of this report is to analyse the progress of the educational decentralisation process in Serbia in the perspective of the ongoing reform of education, and, in particular, the development of the *Regional School Authorities* (RSAs) of the Serbian Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES).[2] The report provides, in this context, first evaluation of the impact of the Twinning Project on the development of regional administration of education in Serbia and, particularly, on the RSAs as organisations. It also aims at contributing to the creation of a sound basis for the continuation of the policy of educational decentralisation of the Serbian government and to support the Twinning partners in the understanding of the education policy context of their work. This report, similarly to the first one, has two potential audiences: the *international reader* outside, and the *national partners* within the examined country. Within this latter group the report addresses both those who have an overall strategic policy responsibility for the whole of the reform of the system of educational administration and those who are responsible for the smooth and efficient daily operation of the RSAs.

3. This report provides an overall evaluation of the situation of educational decentralisation policy and Serbia, with a special regard to the emerging new functions of the RSAs and their future development. Following the consultations with the Serbian partners during the second visit three specific themes were defined as requiring particular attention in this report:

- the new educational role of municipalities, the co-operation between municipalities and educational authorities, the risks of the transferring educational responsibilities to municipalities and the questions of how to minimise these risks,
- the questions of inter-sectorial cooperation (in two respects: within the education sector between different sub-sectors, and between the education sector and other sectors),
- reflection on the whole of the reform process, so that the report could contribute to an overall evaluation of the reform

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[1] The report – similarly to the previous one – has been prepared with the active and highly competent assistance of *Gordana Miljevic* from the Serbian Ministry of Education, and of the Local Project Management Team led by *Snjezana Mrse*, as well as with the high level cooperativeness of all visited institutions and persons. The author expresses here his special thanks to all them.

[2] In the first (2003) report we used the term Regional Department (RD) but the 2003 Education Law renamed them as Regional School Authorities (*Skolska Uprava*).

II. Recent developments and new challenges

4. Since the previous report, based on the field visit in autumn 2002, a number of important changes have occurred and also new challenges have emerged, which may have significant implications on the development of regional educational administration. Educational reform, parallel to reforms in other areas that are closely related with the education sector, has progressed with an extraordinary speed, which has rapidly transformed the context in which the reflection on regional school authorities has to be followed up. The reform impetus we could witness one year ago has *not* slowed down. On the opposite: significant progress has been made in the implementation of the reform, as the process has moved from the conceptualisation and legalisation phase to the implementation phase. Energies are now concentrated on the realisation of the reform goals in practice at all levels. This move from conceptualisation and legalisation to implementation did not weaken at all the reform dynamism, but it naturally created new challenges.

5. In summer 2003 the national Parliament adopted a new law on education (*Law on the foundations..., 2003*), which not only created a fresh legal basis for the operation of RSAs but also defined new functions and tasks for them. The deployment of new personnel for the execution of the new tasks was immediately started and it has significantly progressed. The ministry of education has also adopted a new national curriculum for basic education and started its implementation. The introduction of the new basic education curriculum is now being done in all first grade classes and will continue next year in all second and seventh grade classes. It is natural that this is the reform element that requires the most concentrated energies on the part of the RSAs, which play a key role in this process.

6. The new education law also radically transformed the system of education inspection, which used to be the key function of the regional authorities. Not only the content of inspection was redefined but also the tasks related with this function were redistributed among national, regional and local level authorities (see the details below in the section "*The reform of the system of inspection*"). The internal organisation of the ministry of education was restructured so that it provides a better support for the implementation of the education reform. Decentralisation and local-regional level administration of education have remained key issues in the reform. Educational decentralisation does not seem to be challenged seriously; opinions differ mainly on how fast this process should go further.

7. The active reform policy of the state accompanied by massive capacity building and the relatively rapid development of the new instruments of central steering also have a positive impact on the acceptance of decentralisation policy, which seems to be viewed less in this country than in others by local actors as a tactic of the state to transfer responsibilities for unsolvable problems form the national to the local level. The various development programs supported or coordinated by international donors and creditors in the education sector, which have, in this period, a determining impact on the educational development of the country, also progressed considerably. The knowledge basis of education policy has developed: both domestic and international actors have produced new, relevant document and analyses.

8. The progress of the reform processes outside education, which has a direct impact on this sector, is still slower, although there are important developments to be noticed here, as well (*World Bank, 2003*). The accession of the country to EU has become a marked longer-term political goal, and, consequently, the impact of European approaches and requirements is increasing. With the organisation of local elections in a few localities the implementation of the law on self-governments has started. Privatisation and the restructuring of industry has become central political goals, which started creating new obvious challenges for vocational

and adult education, significantly increasing the public attention towards these sectors and opening the way for their upgrading. Related to this, we could observe the clear signs of the emergence of a new labour market policy, with a stronger regional dimension, which necessarily will influence the regional policy of the educational sector. The new Law on Employment, adopted in Summer 2003, created a new labour service and puts the stress on active measures.

9. In spite of the relatively favourable external and internal conditions, the process of the education reform and the development of regional administration continue to be exposed to serious constraints. A document of MoES lists five major constrains and risks, as follows: (1) the too fragile political situation, (2) the lack of financial resources and the related to strong dependence of external donors, (3) the too short time for building supportive political coalitions and social support for sustainability, (4) the difficulties to find appropriately prepared personnel for the new reform-related tasks, and (5) the well known resistance of people and organisations to changes and innovations (*Miljevic, 2003*).

10. Although the part of the uncertainties, strongly stressed in our previous report (*Halász, 2003*), has reduced significantly since what we could observe one year ago, the situation is still extremely open and the sustainability of the reform is still threatened by many factors. The grave legacy of the decades of inefficient economic management, that of years of violent regional conflicts and the international isolation of the country following the break-up of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991 cannot be rapidly effaced. The creation of political stability is a long process. Although in February 2003 the Yugoslavian Parliament adopted a constitution for Serbia and Montenegro as a federal state the new state resembles more to an alliance of two independent states than to a real federation. Within Serbia, the openness of the political situation is symbolised by factors like the particular status of Kosovo or the murder of the head of government in Spring 2003 and the emergency state following this event or the series of failures of presidential elections. The instability of the political situation was not altered by the 2003 December extraordinary parliamentary elections.

11. Since the first report there has been no change regarding the uncertainty of the status of regions, either, although – following the so called "omnibus law" in February 2002 – there have been significant developments in the establishment of autonomous regional jurisdictions and in the creation of appropriate institutional conditions for their exercise in the autonomous province of Vojvodina. The evidence collected during the second visit confirms that the reform of the system of state administration did not progress at all. Significant development seems to have happened in the area of territorial development, as a new law regulating urban and spatial planning was adopted in Spring 2003 (although this law focuses mainly on those aspects that are the most immediately relevant for foreign investors and does not create a new framework for territorial development). Property relations are still unclear; the legal basis for clarifying the differences between national, local-communal and institutional properties has not yet been created.

12. From the perspective of regional administration the too slow advancement of the reform of public administration and public financing has to be stressed particularly. Although improving the efficiency and the transparency of the public sector is a high political priority, legislative reforms are particularly slow in the area of public management and administration. As a consequence the regulatory framework is not transparent, and its stability is low. The slowness of reforms in this area seems to be a major continuous concern also for the international donor and creditor community (*Donor Coordination Meeting, 2003*). As a World Bank report evaluating the state of reforms states "the availability of significant donor

funding without related conditionality has left Serbia with a largely unreformed public administration system which hampers its ability to implement economic and social sector reforms." (*World Bank, 2003*). In the area of public financing more progresses can be observed. The implementation of the new Law on the Budget System, adopted by the Parliament in 2002, has started. This law (1) made the budgetary process inclusive of all public revenues and expenditures, including those of local governments and other funds, (2) set a clear budget calendar, (3) introduced a treasury system at the level of the central and local governments and (4) encouraged multi-year strategic financial planning by linking the government budget framework with strategic government policies (*The World Bank, 2002*).

13. The education sector is still ahead of other sectors in implementing a coherent reform strategy in line with the goals of building a competitive market economy and a democratic pluralistic society. The rapid reform of educational administration is still not followed by similarly progressing reforms in the overall system of public administration and in the implementation of the new legislation on local governments. *This gap between the reform speed of education and other sectors may still increase the risks evoked in the first report*. In the light of the recommendations of the first report there is a significant progress in some areas while in others no real advancement can be still be observed (for the analysis of this see *Annex 2. The implementation of the recommendations of the first (2003 February) report*). Given the very short time since the start of the Twinning Program and since the appearance – triggered also by this program – of a strategic reflection in this area, the pace of progress can be evaluated as more than satisfactory. The importance of the territorial/regional dimension of educational development seems to be better recognised, the expectations towards the RSAs have clearly risen, and their professional image has significantly improved.

III. The context of the reform

14. The development of regional level educational administration and, specifically, that of the RSAs continues to be conditioned by the development of the broader context of governance and administration and by the specific sectoral trends. In this part we try to give a glance to the most recent developments as they appeared during the second visit.

Public administration and public policy reforms and the education sector

Public administration reform

15. As stressed in the first report, the system of governance and public administration is in a state of transition in Serbia. Decentralisation has remained a key policy objective of education policy as it was first expressed in the reform strategy document of MoES in 2002 (*MoES, 2002*). This appears clearly in the new law on school education adopted by the Parliament in Summer 2003. In spite of the legislative progress in the education sector, the legal frameworks of the decentralised system are still uncertain. The basic laws establishing the legal frameworks of the new system of pubic administration and public financing have not yet been adopted except for the law on *Local Self-Governments* in 2002, which will transform the 147 local municipalities into politically autonomous self-governments, and will entrust them with the responsibility for primary and lower secondary education. It also will clearly separate national state and local municipal administration following the local elections. There was no advancement in the establishment of legal frameworks for territorial (regional) administration.

The education sector still is a forerunner of the overall policy of administrative decentralisation, the sustainability of which has remained an open question.

16. Given probably to the fact that Yugoslavia – differently form other countries of the region – had significant experiences with decentralisation and self-governing in the past, the decentralisation process seems to be more easily manageable than elsewhere. Although the memories of local and regional autonomy may be loaded with certain negative elements (political-ideological interference into professional matters and inefficient operation), concepts and operational forms related with local-regional autonomy seem to be easily understood and applied. While fears from national and ethnic conflicts, that characterize the whole region, may slow down decentralisation, there are no signs of fear that decentralisation will make the system less manageable.

Middle level (territorial) governance and human resource development policies

17. One of the cornerstones of the reform of governance is the definition of the role of the middle level between the national and the local (municipal) levels. This role, which is still in a process of evolution, will be strongly determined by the development of various sectorial policies, including education, and their specific needs for middle level (territorial) functions. In this respect the development of policies of territorial planning and the territorial dimension of labour policies deserve a particular attention.

18. Since our previous visit there was a clear advancement in the area of territorial planning with the adoption of a new law on construction and urban planning.[3] Although this law seems to show a clear shift towards an integrated perspective of spatial planning, it is still, as stressed above, basically oriented by the immediate needs of privatisation more than by the longer-term perspectives of territorial social and economic development. Its main objective is to give a more secure legal environment for investors buying or building physical infrastructure. However, as the donor community has already perceived, „ the government recognises that most European countries (especially within the EU) manage programmes of regional development which involve providing subsidies for investment in public infrastructure and economic development. The establishment of regional development funding, which will be in line with European norms, is an important priority for the Government." (*Donor Coordination Meeting..., 2003*).

19. The development of labour policy also seems to strengthen territorial dimensions. As this policy area shifts towards putting more and more stress on active measures that have strong educational and training components, this development will soon become highly relevant for the policy of the education sector, including its regional or territorial dimension. The growing stress on active measures means that fostering adult learning will become an increasingly important part of labour policy and this will put a pressure on the education system to take a more active part in training and retraining adults. Although a recent expert report on adult education still states that „at this moment, adult education and learning in Serbia is not recognized as developmental potential and instrument of social and economic growth" (*Mediae et als, 2003*), we could see clear signs of this being recognised by various key actors.

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[3] The law was published in the Official Herald of the Republic of Serbia no. 47/2003 of 5 May 2003. See also the article by Dragoslav Sumarac, Minister of Urban Planning and Construction (http://www.emb-serbia-montenegro.org.cn/business/legal_environment/real_estate_regulations.htm)

20. The Ministry of Labour, for instance, is working on a new national employment strategy, which seems to be strongly influenced by the vision of the employment strategy of the European Union. A new Law on Employment was adopted in Summer 2003 by the Parliament with its stressing active measures being presented as its most important innovation.[4] While previous legislation contained only passive measures, the new one increases the responsibility of the individual in seeking for new jobs and provides assistance to this through counselling and training. On the basis of this law the whole employment service will be restructured. A new information system is being created with the goal of covering not only data on vacancies and job seekers but also on needs in skills and competencies. We perceived in the labour administration a strong commitment to cooperate with the education sector: this is seen as a strategic issue and concrete steps have been taken in order to improve coordination.

21. As decentralisation is on the agenda of the new labour policy, its related strategy will also have to be negotiated with the administration of education. In the vision of the Ministry of Labour a strong and active national policy seems to be combined with the use of decentralised measures and agencies. The regional and local employment agencies will have a key role in the implementation of the new labour policy. The intention is to maintain the existing Okrug level labour offices but also to establish new ones and to strengthen those already operating at municipal level.

22. The development of the training system and the opening of new training opportunities for adults who change or seek for jobs is a key element of the new labour strategy. It is expected that private training providers will play an important role in meeting the prospective explosion of training and retraining needs, but the intention of the Labour Ministry is to involve the already existing infrastructure, that is the institutions of the VET sector, also in the training and retraining of adults. As this latter operates under the supervision of the MoES, the need for cooperation will certainly grow and most of this will require territorial level coordination. The appearance of private trainers will probably soon represent also a challenge of competition for the formal sector. This will put a new demand on local and territorial administration, both educational and labour, to play a role in solving conflicts related with the recognition of training needs, the accreditation of training providers and the distribution of human and financial resources among them.

23. This process can be facilitated by the fact that the territorial dimension and the perception of the need for more inter-sectoral cooperation seems being clearly strengthened in the vocational training policy of MoES. This is harmony with the recommendation No. 1 of the Peer Review of VET in Serbia by the European Training Foundation in 2003 on putting more emphasis on the structured involvement of other government bodies and social partners interested in VET at both national and sub-national/local level (*European Training Foundation, 2003*).

24. Our second visit reinforced our impression gained during the first one that the challenges of privatisation and industrial restructuring are better perceived by the territorial, than the local players. We met again leaders of Okrugs, who expressed very clearly that vocational training and adult education should be placed on an entirely new basis with regard to increasing uncertainty and openness of the labour market and to the expected new massive need for adult retraining. The president of one of the visited Okrugs stressed that the lines of education reforms should be better adjusted the needs of economic restructuring, and this

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[4] **Law** on employment and unemployment insurance adopted by Serbian Parliament
(http://www.mrz.sr.gov.yu/eng/aktuelnosti_opsirnije.htm#8)

should be reflected in the budget of the various ministries. He supported the regional dimension of the VET policy of MoES, evoking that the ministry is organising regional meetings in order to create better linkages with VET schools and the key players of the regional economy.

25. The awareness of RSAs concerning regional economic and social development seems to have improved. The head of an RSA, for example, expressed that the VET sector should be restructured on the basis of the need expressed by the regional players of economy (for example the regional chamber of commerce), and agreed with the statement that this may have a positive impact on basic general education, as well. This head also expressed the need for local and regional development strategies, which could give orientation also to the educational administration. Not all regions present the same level of involvement and activity in overall territorial planning, and in integrating the education sector into this planning. We saw, however some clear signs of this type of activity. According to the report of its leaders, one of the visited Okrugs, has adopted a twenty-year strategic development plan for the region, and education appears in this as an independent chapter. The region also created a development fund, which gives an opportunity to aggregate monies arriving from different sources. This fund offers development resources also for the education sector.

26. As a conclusion, it can be stated that although the openness of the education sector towards the processes related with the broader social and economic transformation has increased, the operation of the sectoral administration is still too much determined by the traditional narrow sectoral needs. The reform of the education sector has started transforming the old paradigm: the new general functions related with development and evaluation will certainly improve the capacity of educational administrators for inter-sectoral cooperation.

The new role of local self-governments

27. As stressed in the first report, the adoption of the Law on Local Self-Governments in 2002 and its ongoing implementation[5] is creating a new administrative and political environment, which will have a major impact on educational administration, including the regional level. This law, although Serbia is not yet among the signatory countries, follows in many respects the principles of the Council of Europe's *European Charter of Local Self-governments*.[6] If implemented, it will entrust municipal self-governments with significant political autonomy. The law gave important jurisdictions to local self-governments also in the areas of primary and lower secondary education. According to the new regulations they will have the right to establish institutions and organisations at ISCED 0 to ISCED2 level education, and in other related areas (such as culture, child care, social welfare, sports). They also will have an overall responsibility for urban planning, which includes the planning of educational infrastructure development. They will have, furthermore, the freedom to form their internal administrative structure, including the establishment of administrative units responsible for education, and nominate the heads of these units.[7]

28. The broadening of the responsibilities of local self-governments and the extension of their jurisdiction into the area of education is a major challenge for countries with a tradition of centralised and separated sectoral administration of education. Given to the fact that Yugoslavia, as already stressed, had operating experiences with decentralisation and self-

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[5] The new law is applied in municipalities following local elections held after the adoption of the law.

[6] See: http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/122.htm

[7] *Article 154* of the Education Law limits the power of municipalities in this area as it gives the right to the education minister to determine the number of employees in the municipal administration for the performance of the tasks of educational inspection.

governing, the involvement of self-governments may be more easily manageable than elsewhere, although this process might be perverted by ethnic tensions. The increasing of local autonomy and the concomitant integration of the administration of education with that of other public services will transform the field of forces in which public service policies (including education) are planned and organised. It may happen, for instance, that this transforms the centralisation/decentralisation debate into a debate between the paradigm stressing the autonomy of schools, on the one hand, and that stressing the role of local communities, on the other. The compromise between institutional autonomy and local community control is generally not easy to find.

29. The 2003 Education Law has taken into account the enlarged responsibilities of municipal self-governments. There are several references in the law to municipalities. *Article 15* of the law recognises the overall responsibility of municipalities in shaping education policy by giving them (to the association of cities and municipalities) the right to delegate two members to the new Council for Consensus Building in Education. *Article 31* confirms the disposition of the Law on Self-governments that educational institutions can be established – beyond the Republic, the autonomous province and other legal or natural persons – by the municipal governments, although, according to *Article 49* the land, buildings and other assets of the institution, even if established by the municipal government remain state properties.[8] *Article 53* regulating the composition of Institution Governing Bodies says that the chairperson and members of the governing body shall be named and dismissed by the assembly of the municipal government, and from the nine members of the governing body three will represent the municipal government (three others the employees of the institution, and three the parents). According to *Article 72* municipalities may even have a role in curriculum, as the school curriculum should secure, beyond the realisation of the general and specific curriculum frameworks and the needs of pupils and parents, also those of the municipal government. *Article 90* gives a role to municipalities in the process of enrolment: beyond their duty to register enrolment they also have to set up a special commission to examine the readiness for enrolment of pupils if demanded. *Article 44* defines the new role of municipal governments in the area of protection and safety of children and pupils.

30. The new Education Law also regulates the role of self-governments in the area of inspection and financing. *Article 134* on Governance and Pedagogical Supervision stipulates that legal inspection over the institution's work shall be conducted by the municipal authority as a delegated duty, and the ministry will conduct direct legal inspection only if the municipality does not do it (the ministry also decides on complaints against the resolutions of first instance of the municipal government passed in conducting legal inspection). *Article 141* on financing says that the funding shall be provided from, on the one hand, the budget of the Republic or the autonomous province, and, on the other, the budget of the municipal government. *Article 143* on the resources from the budget of the municipal government says that this will provide resources, in the area of primary and secondary education, for (1) the professional development of teachers; (2) the transportation of teachers and pupils, (3) construction and maintenance of buildings and equipment; (5) other current expenditures. The budget of the municipal government provides also resources for the protection and safety of children and pupils. In the area of pre-school education municipalities have to finance from their budget also the costs of programmes, food and care, including the relevant salary costs.

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[8] *Article 32* also holds out the prospect of an institution network act which would regulate the establishment of institutions according to (1) the number and age of pupils in a specific area; (2) the peculiar characteristics of the area (hilly-mountainous, border area, underdeveloped area, nationally heterogeneous area); and (3) the developmental peculiarities of the area, based on determined labour demand.

31. In the new legal environment local (municipal) self-governments will have to develop new capacities in a number of areas, such as legal inspection, technical maintenance, infrastructure development and financing. They will probably develop these new capacities in a sector-independent way, that is, they probably will use their general capacities in all the sectors they are responsible for, including education. Some of them may be tempted to use the new administrative manpower for legal educational inspection for administrative tasks outside education. Even if they have a new duty in this area and they also dispose of the resources for it, they will not be committed automatically to support the professional development of teachers (as it was reported in one of the visited municipalities: a great proportion of the resources for the professional development of teachers had not been used). Without clear national standards they may feel uncertain about the concrete way they should operate the new municipal inspection, and some of the new municipal inspectors may feel a temptation to interfere into classroom level professional matters of teaching and learning. RSAs will have to establish a new type of working relation with the municipalities and follow closely the evolution of their work.

32. Although as in most of the municipalities local elections have not yet been achieved and therefore the law on self-governments is not yet formally applied, the implementation of the related regulations of the new Education law has been started and municipalities began to develop their new educational profile. They are gradually recruiting the new inspectors, and developing their internal organisation according to the new administrative needs. Contrary to the earlier expectations (see the *first report*), the typical way of recruiting municipal inspectors is not done through the transfer of RSA personnel to city councils: municipalities tend to employ new staff. They think they have a quite large freedom in determining the job of the new municipal inspectors within the broad framework set by the national legislation. In one of the larger urban municipalities we visited, for instance, a relatively large educational department were already operating within the "secretariat for public services" with six employees (the head, one lawyer, two financial accountants and two persons for secretarial tasks). The head of the department expected that five further personnel (the administrative inspectors) would be transferred from the RSA to his unit.

33. Municipal educational departments already have an active role in local educational management. The fact that they operate in an integrated local public service has major impacts on their way of working. For example, in one of the visited municipalities a number of social issues were mentioned which require an inter-sectorial approach, including the active participation of educational institutions (e.g. taking care of the children of war victims). It is not yet clear, however, how municipalities will exercise their new educational jurisdictions. So far they did not have any role in curricular matters, but if the administrative inspection is transferred to them and if the curriculum remains an area under strong and detailed legal regulation they inevitably will have such a role. As one of our municipal interlocutors noted, "the curriculum is the very essence of the education system", and he also expressed his hope that following the new legislation "the specificities of the region, especially in vocational training, will be taken into consideration also in the curriculum".

34. Municipal actors, even if they are highly committed to the area of education do not necessarily perceive yet all the challenges that privatisation and industrial restructuring may represent for education. For instance, the municipality of Nis, which seems to do many efforts to improve the school system of the city (see *box* below) is still concentrating almost all of its efforts to the development of the formal system of general education and is still little concerned by the problems of adult education, vocational training or cooperation between

schools and the economy. However, they reported on an action of collecting data about unemployed people, and they also started thinking on *retraining* as a function of the school system.

Municipal responsibility for education in Nis

The municipality of Nis is among those municipalities, which show a high level commitment for the development of schools operating in its area. They have a two-year plan for renovating schools with the most dilapidated buildings in the centre. They conduct various developmental actions following a coherent conception. They buy, for instance, computers for schools. For the next year their target is to buy 200 machines, but they also encourage schools to complete this figure by what they purchase by themselves. They contributed to the opening of a "skills development centre" in a nearby village where talented pupils can spent periods of time with intensive learning based on project work. They help the education of talented children also by giving rewards to the most successful. The municipal authority is in favour of devolving responsibilities further to the schools. For instance they think of transferring their new resources for INSET to the budget of the schools and authorise school leaders to use this. They are in the process of reorganising the municipal office structure: their plan is to create a new, separate unit responsible for education. Municipal leaders in Nis think, they have to invest in school buildings and equipment even if the municipality is not the owner of them, in order to create a good starting position after a national arrangement of property rights.

Source: *Interview with municipal leaders*

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35. Perhaps the most important channel for municipalities to influence the work of schools is the *school board*, the operation of which became compulsory in every institution by the 2003 Education Law. According to the regulation in force the school board consists of nine members, three representatives of the parents, three of teaching staff and three of the municipal self-government. It has a key role in the selection of principals: the municipality can influence this through the board. Through this channel it also may influence school development planning.

36. It is important to note that municipalities are not always supportive of the educational reform process. The leaders of one visited municipality, for instance, had very clear ideas on the reform and they also clearly expressed their reservations regarding the line of changes: as they said, "the reform does not build enough on the national traditions". They were convince that Serbia had, in the past, an advanced educational system which produced better results than those western school systems that are admired by the reformers and the elements of which are now being imported into Serbia. They think that the implementation of the reform carries too much risk, and that the reformers did not take the financial conditions of schools and local governments into account appropriately.

The reform of educational administration

General trends

37. The conceptual foundations of the reform of educational administration and governance have significantly developed since the first visit in 2002. The discourse is not any more about just devolving responsibilities to lower administrative levels but to allocate specific functions to various levels according to the evaluation of where they are the best located. This is clearly reflected in the way decentralisation is presented in various ministerial documents, such as the

one edited by Miljevic (2003). This identifies *eight key functions* and *four administrative levels* and links *specific ways of assuming the various functions* to certain levels (see *Table 1*). This defines the tasks of RSAs in the overall context of system governance and administration.

Table 1.
The allocation of function related tasks to different administrative levels

	National	*Regional*	*Municipal*	*School*
Curriculum	Framework	Support for implementation	Cooperation in the preparation of the school curriculum	School curriculum
Teacher professional development	Accreditation, licensing	Support for the Coordination, support	Funding	Selection, Implementation
Evaluation and assessment	Assessment system, Monitoring	Coordination, Support		Implementation
Quality assurance – inspection	Guidelines	Implementation		Self-evaluation
Legal Inspection	Second level	Implementation	First level	
Information System	Development, Use	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
Funding by pupil	Formula, guidelines		Implementation	
Facilities			Ownership, maintenance	

Source: Miljevic, 2003

38. The conceptual framework of the decentralisation policy of MoES, as it is reflected in the 2003 Law on Education creates a well-balanced framework sharing responsibilities adequately between the national, the territorial, the local (municipal) and the institutional (school) levels. In a context characterised by the uncertainties related with property rights, public financing and public administration reform MoES went as far as possible ahead with its sectoral policy of decentralisation. The assignment of tasks and roles to the four levels of governance form a coherent and logical structure, which can orient appropriately to further progress of sectoral governance reform.

39. At national level the reorganisation of the internal structure of MoES as laid down in a ministerial regulation on the internal organisation of the ministry[9] issued following the adoption of the new Education Law already reflects the emerging new national level strategic steering functions. New administrative units have been created under the supervision of the vice minister responsible for the reform, with tasks related with the specific functions presented in *Table 1* above. These new units are responsible not for specific educational levels or school types, what used to characterise the administrative logic of the past, but for the new general professional functions. As we shall see below, the tasks of the regional level have also been redefined and the deployment of the new personnel according to the new professional tasks has significantly progressed. The MoES continues actively the programs aiming at developing the competencies required for the exercise of the new tasks.

40. As seen above, the transformation of the functions of the local (municipal) level has also greatly progressed with the adoption and the implementation of the new Education

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[9] Regulation on the internal organisation and systematisation of posts in MoES (110-00-14/2003-09)

Law. The deployment of the new personnel for legal inspection to the municipalities has been accomplished or came close to accomplishment in many cities (see in more detail below). The weakest point here is the unsettled problem of property rights, which – in spite of the positive example we could see – unavoidably reduces the willingness of self-governments to invest into school buildings and equipments. There are still very few experiences on the operation of municipal administration of education and the possible changes of local power structure following the first free local elections may significantly transform the nature of this. The empowerment of schools, and their becoming a third pole between the national/territorial and the local level is, from this respect, particularly important.

41. The new Education Law entrusted schools with a high level autonomy, which was in harmony with the decentralisation concept of MoES. In this concept schools are professionally autonomous institutions, which are, at the same time, strongly accountable. School boards, with a balanced representation of teachers, parents and the local community were given significant power, and also a role of mediating between the institution and its founder (the municipality). *Article 43* of the new law specifies the key elements of *institutional autonomy* as follows: (1) schools pass a number of regulatory documents, such as their statute, their educational programme, development plan, annual working plan and the institutional rules of conduct; (2) they plan the qualification and professional development of teachers, preschool teachers and professional support staff; (3) they select employees and employee representatives in the governing body and the professional body; (4) they regulate the internal organisation and work of professional bodies; (5) they cooperate with other institutions, companies and organisations.

42. The emerging new responsibilities of schools and those of local self-governments may collide in the future. It is therefore particularly important that these collisions are, if possible, avoided or at least minimised. For instance, the financing capacities of self-governments may put a restriction on the professional autonomy of schools if school level professional decisions have measurable financial implications. Municipalities may demand a greater role in deciding on the statute of the school, if this document defines the basic profile of the institution. As the distinction between legal and professional matters is not always easy, municipal legal inspectors may interfere into matters seen as purely professional by schools. In these cases regional school authorities may be demanded to play a mediating role.

The reform of the system of inspection

43. One of the most visible changes that have affected regional level administration in Serbia was realised in the area of inspection. The inspection function was radically reshaped in several dimensions, with changes touching upon (1) its content, (2) its location and (3) its targets. The transformation process could be summarized as follows:
- The separation of legal and professional inspection was fully realised
- Legal inspection was shifted up to the national and down to the local (municipal) level
- Municipalities became a new target for state inspection
- The visitation of individual teachers by subject inspectors was almost completely stopped.
- Many subject-inspectors have been replaced by new specialists with responsibilities that differ fundamentally from the traditional functions of inspection

44. The separation of legal (administrative) and professional (pedagogical) inspection was already started in 2002 with the amendment of the Education Law. This amendment made a clear distinction between the two types of inspection, defining the latter as having

three components: (1) the "following and control of educational professional work of schools", (2) the „instructive and advising work with teachers" and (3) the „evaluation of the quality of the work of schools and teachers." The implementation of this new regulation has not yet been completed. Although many elements of the new professional inspection have already appeared in the work of RSAs, their way of working is still largely determined by the previous rules. The 2003 Education Law went much further with a detailed specification of the two types of inspections and with removing references to the professional activity of teachers from the definition of legal inspection. Many posts, that had been fulfilled earlier by subject-inspectors, are now occupied by specialists, who have been recruited for such new tasks as school development, quality assurance or teacher professional development. These new specialists have a completely new professional profile that has very little in common with subject inspection.

45. A further major development concerning legal inspection was its delegation (from the regional school authorities of the ministry) to the *municipal self-governments* and the creation of a new national level inspection service called republic inspection. The delegation of legal inspection to municipalities was also started with the 2002 amendment of the educational law, which specified that "administrative inspection (…) shall be achieved by the municipality and/or city administration." This arrangement was reinforced by the 2002 Law on Local Self Governments which authorized self-governments to "establish inspection services", and particularly by the 2003 Education Law, which said that "legal inspection over the institution's work shall be conducted by the municipal or city authority". The implementation of this regulation is already in an advanced stage: as many municipalities recruited new education inspectors, also from among the personnel of the regional school authorities. By the end of 2003, 66% of the 196 municipal inspector posts were already fulfilled, although great discrepancies could be observed between regions regarding the pace of the creation of this new service (see *Table 2*). According to data collected from the RSAs, from the 131 new municipal inspectors only 32 were transferred from the RSAs, that is, municipalities seem to tend to recruit people outside the previous inspection staff. The new municipal inspectors have legal and financial control duties and are not entitled to interfere into professional-pedagogical issues. As the law says, they "perform control over the actions of the institution (…) except for the control referring to pedagogical inspection of the institution's work."

Table 2.
The number of municipal inspectors recruited by the end of 2003

	Municipality inspectors		
	Number of employees recruited	Number of Vacant posts	**Total**
Sombor	10	1	**11**
Novi Sad	13	9	**22**
Zrenjanin	20	4	**24**
Valjevo	5	11	**16**
Pozarevac	6	4	**10**
Kragujevac	7	10	**17**

Zajecar	6	2	**8**
Uzice	10	1	**11**
Kraljevo	11	8	**19**
Nis	13	7	**20**
Leskovac	10	5	**15**
Belgrade	20	3	**23**
Total	**131**	**65**	**196**

Source: LPMT

46. The 2003 Education Law also created a new national level service, the *republic inspection* with the main task of supervising at second level the fist level legal inspection exercised by municipalities (see box). At the time of our visit the new unit responsible for republic inspection was already operating. According to the organisational regulations of the ministry the unit will employ 36 inspectors, from which 31 was already recruited by October 2003. Some of these new republic inspectors have also been recruited from among the staff of the regional school authorities.

The tasks of the republic inspectors

For the minister, preparing proposals of decisions on appeals to the decisions in first instance of the municipal or city government made in the performance of legal inspection;

Implementing direct supervision over their work;

Issuing compulsory instructions for the implementation of laws and other regulations, for the performance of activities and controlling their implementation;

Withdrawing the authority of individual inspectors who do not perform activities in a timely, professional, lawful and conscientious manner, and proposing the determination of liability at the body delegated with the performance of legal inspection;

Organising joint actions with the inspectors at the bodies delegated with the performance of legal inspection;

Seeking reports, data and notifications on the performance of the tasks of legal inspection delegated;

Conducting other tasks, in accordance with the law regulating legal inspection in a general way.

Source: 2003 Education Law

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47. Although republic inspectors report directly to the national authorities some of them are allocated to specific regions and have their workplace in the office of the RSA. Since their nomination following the new Education Law they have already achieved many tasks. They were dealing with complaints against schools or municipalities, and they visited municipalities and schools. In the 2003 December survey of RSAs by the local project management team (LPMT) seven republic inspectors nominated in July 2003 and deployed to RSAs reported on a relatively high number of cases dealt with (see *Table 3*)

Table 3.
The activities of republic inspectors in selected RSAs (2003 December)

Seat city (or RSA):	Number of Complains received since nomination	Number of Municipalities visited since nomination	Number of Schools visited since nomination
Valjevo	20	6	10
Loznica (RSA Valjevo)	18	7	20
Pozarevac	/	5	14
Kragujevac	75	5	13
Zajecar	6	3	7
Nis	71	8	35
Leskovac	1	6	43

Source: 2003 December survey by the LPMT

48. The clear separation of legal and professional dimensions of inspection was expressed, by the fact that the 2003 Educational Law not only used different terms for these two aspects (inspection – supervision) but it also assigned the professional activity to a new category of specialists the "educational advisors". These new advisors are supposed to evaluate *schools* and to give assistance to *teachers and schools*. The way their task is defined in the law excludes that they inspect individual teachers, as they did in the past.

49. In fact, the 2003 Educational Law abolished the traditional subject-related inspection of individual teachers (what the earlier "pedagogical-professional inspection" was supposed to do). But it is even more important that the number of inspectors employed in this function has already decreased to such a level that makes its traditional operation technically impossible. Since the number of subject inspectors is now very low, it became practically impossible to organise the regular inspection of subject teachers by inspectors specialised in their area. In most regional school authorities there are several specialities that are not covered at all by relevant inspectors, and even if they are covered, there is only one person who, being responsible also for other tasks, is not capable to visit individual teachers regularly. In fact, in some RSAs and in certain subject areas the inspection of individual teachers has already been stopped completely. While, in the past, this was the dominant form of inspection now this function is on the way of disappearing.

IV. The development of regional school authorities

The legal definition of new functions

50. The new law re-defined the tasks (1) of the regional school authorities, and (2) those of the inspection in a way that is essentially in line with what was recommended in our first report (for the tasks of the RSAs see box 1. below). A major step was made by the introduction of the distinction between "supervision" (*nadzor*) and "inspection" (*inspekcijski nadzor*). The latter function, which has a legal-administrative character, has been removed

from among the functions of the RSAs, and has been transferred down to the municipal, and up to the ministerial level. Legal and professional inspection/supervision responsibilities have this way been separated from each other and the RSAs were, in a sense, transformed from organs of state inspection (regulated in the Law on State Administration) into organs charged with professional duties (defined in the Education Law).

The supervision tasks of the "Regional School Authorities"

- Conduct pedagogical supervision in institutions;
- Coordinate the professional development of teachers, preschool teachers, professional support staff and institution principals and secretaries;
- Provide support to school development planning, the development of the curriculum and education quality assurance;
- Participate in the preparations of the education development plan for the area for which the regional school authority has been organised and monitor its implementation;
- Maintain and update the education database and take care of uninterrupted data flows within the unique Ministry information system;
- Perform other duties, in accordance with the law and other regulations.

Source: Law on the foundations of the education system, 2003; Article 28

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51. The new supervision functions reflect clearly the needs of the reform, as they are oriented at support, development and quality assurance. Three new functions have clearly been defined in the regulations following the new Law: (1) school development - SD, (2) professional development of teachers - PD, and (3) quality assurance – QA. Besides these (1) new posts were created for the new function of national (republic) level legal-administrative inspection, and (2) also the number of posts for the transitional "old type" subject inspection was defined. As far as the latter (sometimes called *Inspection "A"*) is concerned the MoES made it clear that this function is going to disappear. As formulated in an information booklet published by the ministry "subject inspection (…) is necessary during the transition period (i.e. until the new curriculum is not implemented in all grades of primary and secondary school) to preserve the continuity of the existing system and will gradually cease to exist."[10]

Staff

52. The already mentioned regulation on the internal organisation and systematisation of posts in MoES (110-00-14/2003-09) provided new job descriptions for these new functions and also defined the number of people to be employed in these new jobs. This regulation defined not only the number of personnel to be employed in the different functions but also the number of those who have to be deployed to the regional level. For instance from the 52 posts allocated to the function of school development (SD) 43 is to be transferred to the RSAs (see *Table 4*).

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[10] A brief tour through the education system reform in the republic of Serbia, January 2001- August 2003 and beyond. MoES (http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/edutour2001-03-ser-yug-srb-t05.pdf).

Table 4.
The number of posts allocated to different support and inspection functions (2003 September)

	All		From this to be deployed to the regional level
SD - School development experts	52		43
PD - Teacher professional development experts	26		22
QA - Quality assurance experts	29		24
Subject inspection (*Inspection "A"*)	Pre-school	15	12
	ISCED1	26	22
	ISCED2-3	70	62
	VET	21	11
Republic inspection	36[11]		-

Source: MOES regulation on the internal organisation and systematisation of posts (110-00-14/2003-09)

53. According to data from the second survey conducted by the local project management team (LPMT) in December 2003 RSAs employed 183 persons and they had 53 vacant posts. This means that 23% of the posts authorized by the 2003 September regulation of MoES on the systematisation of its internal organisation were still vacant. Almost exactly half of the personnel were employed in the RSAs already before 2000, that is, under the Milosevic regime, and approximately 20% joined the department offices during the last year (after January 2003). This shows a serious renewal of staff, as one year ago, according to the 2002 survey of the LPMT, still more than 77% of staff were recruited, on the average, before January 2000. The recruitment of new personnel was accelerated following the adoption of the new education law in Summer 2003. There is a significant difference between RSAs in recruiting new personnel. While, in Uzice, for instance, 41% of the staff was recruited after July 2003, in Valjevo only 1 of the 37 staff joined the RSA office after this date (see *Table 5*). The proportion of "old" and "new" personnel will naturally rapidly change with new recruitments to the vacant posts.

Table 5.
The number of personnel of RSAs recruited in different periods according to regions (December 2003)

	Before January 2000	Between January 2000 - January 2003	Between January 2003 - July 2003	After July 2003	Total	Number of Vacant posts
Sombor	4	2	2	1	**9**	**8**
Novi Sad	11	5	0	6	**22**	**2**
Zrenjanin	1	4	0	2	**7**	**3**

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[11] In fact, some of the republic inspectors are regionally located. Organisationally they do not belong to the RSAs (their tasks do not figure among the RSAs tasks), but logistically they may be linked with them

Valjevo	19	17	/	1	**37**	**2**
Pozarevac	4	2	2	1	**9**	**8**
Kragujevac	13	2	/	1	**16**	**/**
Zajecar	7	4	0	1	**12**	**6**
Uzice	1	2	4	5	**12**	**/**
Kraljevo	14	3	/	6	**23**	**/**
Nis	1	9	1	3	**22**	**3**
Leskovac	9	2	/	3	**14**	**24**
Belgrade	/	/	/	/	**/**	**/**
TOTAL	**92**	**52**	**9**	**30**	**183**	**56**

Source: 2003 December survey by the LPMT

54. The employment of the new support personnel (advisors) for the new functions seems to progress relatively rapidly. According to the 2003 December survey RSAs already employ 42 experts for school development (SD), 20 for quality assurance (QA) and 15 for teacher professional development (PD). The number of staff qualified subject inspectors (57) is still relatively high, although this number does not allow any more a serious exercise of traditional subject inspection on a larger scale. It might be an important asset that in some RSAs there are also inspectors specialized for pre-schools. The number of people qualified by RSAs as specialists in financing, planning and statistics is relatively high (18) but their distribution among RSAs is extremely uneven, which seems to have historic reasons (while, according to data from the 2003 December survey, one of the RSAs employs not less than 5 persons specialized in this area, 4 of them have no specialist in this area, at all). Although the new republic inspectors are managed directly from the national level, 14 of them, being responsible for specific regions, are deployed to the corresponding RSA offices. The survey data show that a relatively high number of staff recruited before the political-social transformation could be transferred into the now functions (see *Table 6*).

Table 6.
The number of personnel of RSAs recruited in different periods according to functions –
including republic inspectors deployed to RSAs (December 2003)

	Before January 2000	Between January 2000 - January 2003	Between January 2003 - July 2003	After July 2003	Total
Advisers for School Development (SD)	6	18	5	14	42
Advisers for Quality Assurance (QA)	6	12	2	0	20
Advisers for Teacher Professional Development (PD)	3	4	0	8	15
Subject inspectors /advisers	41	10	1	5	57

(SI)					
Pre-School inspectors/ advisers (PSI)	5	1	0	2	8
Advisers for Finances, planning & statistic (F)	15	3	0	0	18
Operational/Technical administrators (OT)	5	3	0	1	9
Republic Legal Inspectors (RI)	11	2	1	0	14

Source: 2003 December survey by the LPMT

Organisation and operation

55. Since the previous report RSAs went through significant changes. According to what the ministry officials responsible for the overall management of RSAs reported, they became more self-reliant than they used to be in the past. They behave in a more independent way, their activity is being more professionalised, and their problem-solving capacities have significantly developed. They became "equal partners between the ministry and the schools". The ministry encourages consciously the RSAs to act autonomously and to solve problems on their own, using their own skills and creativity. This was tested the last time when they had a key role in managing the problems accompanying the introduction of a new computerized system of regulating the transfer of pupils from ISCED2 to ISCED3 level schools. It is not surprising, however, that they are not always happy when they have to exercise the delegated responsibilities given their poor organisational conditions and the lack of appropriate resources.

56. The role of the RSAs seem to be strengthened not only by legislation but also by the fact that they are one of those "natural places" where the various reform elements carried by international development programs (school development, quality assurance, teacher professional development and others) meet. So far the chances for the realisation of the "*optimal scenario*"[12] seem to increase, that is (a) the responsibility for the administration and governance of the education sector is being increasingly shared between the national, the regional, the local and the institutional level, according to their respective potential and capacities, (b) RSAs are becoming professionally stronger organisations which are active and committed partners in the realisation of the education sector reform agenda, and (c) they operate with clearer and more coherent functions in line with the modern definitions of public administration and public policy. The probability of the scenario of *"loosing the RSAs"* clearly diminished with the new professional profile of RSAs, as the new professional functions cannot be detached any more from the education sector. Since the re-definition of regional government responsibilities require constitutional changes, and since there are no signs of progress in this area, the current probability of the "loosing scenario" is low. The fact that the personnel of the RSAs belong to specific MoES departments, which creates from another respect great organisational problems, also diminishes the probability of this scenario. Although only within the internal organisation of the RSAs, one may observe some elements of the "*fragmentation scenario*" (see the last part of the paragraph below on the current organisational status and working conditions of RSAs). The greatest threat is still the realisation of the "*low profile RSAs*" scenario (see more on the scenarios in the section "*The future of the RSAs"* below).

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[12] See first report: "The reform of regional level educational administration in Serbia"

57. The legal inspection as a "delegated task" of municipalities was defined in the new Education Law[13], and municipalities started to create this new function through recruiting their inspectors (see also the section on "*The reform of the system of inspection*" above). Some of those who have already been recruited came from the RSAs, but it seems that most of them came from other jobs. According to the evidence we received from municipalities and from the new municipal inspectors we met they are already working according to the job definition laid down by the law. There are clear signs of the increasing role of local self-governments (LSG) or municipalities, although the evidence we could gather during the visit did not give a sufficiently clear picture (1) about the commitment of the government to transfer them further responsibilities in the education sector, (2) about their own commitment and (3) about their real capacities to take over these responsibilities. There are a number of uncertainties related particularly to (1) *financing* (the abolishment of some taxes that used to be the key income sources for LSGs, and the introduction of VAT as a centrally collected and redistributed tax) and (2) *property rights* (LSGs investing into property that is still owned by the central state). Our field visits gave evidence on the willingness and capacity of RSAs to cooperate with LSGs as their new and increasingly important partner, although we also could see some signs of tension.

58. We found some evidences of a growing inter-dependence between the emerging new employment policy (receiving an increasing attention related with the expected start of massive privatisation and closures of factories) and education (facing new tasks, related with lifelong learning and massive re-training needs). We saw some clear signs of a growing awareness of this new challenge at both national and regional-local level. However, the role of RSAs in realigning education according to the emerging and urgent needs related with lifelong learning and VET restructuring is still unclear. National level decision-makers seem to be aware of the need for developing regional (territorial) level competencies and actions in this area, and there are good examples of regional level co-operation between education, employment and economy (one of the Twinning pilot projects also helped to create a working cooperation between an RSA and the regional chamber of commerce). However, while the building out of new functions related with pedagogical development and curriculum reform are progressing appropriately, we could not see much progress in the development of the functions related with economy, planning, VET restructuring and financing.

59. The current organisational status of RSAs and their working conditions show an ambiguous picture, due probably to the transition period. We saw signs of extraordinary developments, but also serious contradictions. On the basis of the field visits and the interviews at national and regional level the following main, preliminary conclusions could be formulated:

(1) With the restructuring of RSAs with new functions a new, strongly task-oriented organisational climate seems to emerge, that encourages dynamism and constructive problem solving. As the result of this development, the RSAs we saw this time are already very different of those seen the last time. They are on the way to become the front-line actors of the reform.

(2) The dynamic change situation in which RSAs find themselves (including stimuli from the Twinning Program) and their unequal capacity to react to the new challenges have created huge disparities among them. We saw RSAs that seem to be already

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[13] „Legal inspection over the institution's work shall be conducted by the municipal or city authority as a delegated duty." (Article 134)

strongly committed and efficient reform agents, but also others, that have not yet been capable to catch up with the speed and the dynamism of the reform.

(3) With the emergence of the new functions and the lack of perspective for those employed in the old ones RSAs became strongly divided organisations with two divergent organisational cultures and related organisational behaviours. As this division may become a major threat, there is a growing need to create bridges between the two sides and to give more support to help the adaptation of the old staff to the new functions.

(4) There is a disquieting contradiction between the front-line role of RSAs and their working conditions. The type of work the most strongly committed staff members are doing (in terms of both quantity and quality) in the implementation process cannot be sustained if there is no significant improvement in their working conditions (in terms of equipment, budget background, office room etc.).

(5) In the case of the QA function, a gap seems to appear between the time scale of the international development project on which its development is based and the time scale of the reform.

(6) One of the most problematic features we saw is the transitional organisational regulation of RSAs. The employees holding different types of jobs (SD, PD, QA, Inspection "A") are, in fact, members of the staff of the appropriate department of MoES, who are deployed to the regions. Those fulfilling the new and the old functions work for departments operating under the supervision of two different deputy-ministers, and the heads of the RSAs are not subordinated to any of them.

60. There is one particularly delicate organisational and management problem, faced by all RSAs, that has to be pointed at in this report. This problem is related with the question of how to share responsibilities for managing and coordinating the various new functions between, on the one hand, the national functional departments, and on the other hand, the local manager of the organisation (the head of the RSA). This is not a new problem but the reform process has shed a new light on it. The various function-related staff, as presented above, operate in a kind of double subordination: on the one hand, they have to follow the instructions of their direct boss, the head of the RSA, and, on the other, they are also instructed by the head of the national MoES department who coordinates the reform process in the area of the given function (for example school development or quality assurance). This situation makes the management of the RSA as an organisation an extremely complicated task. It is impossible to manage, in a responsible and efficient way, staffs who are instructed continuously by various external actors, and who, therefore, escape from under the responsibility of the manager of the organisation. Heads of RSAs find themselves often in a position where they do not know exactly what kind of instructions their staff received from their ministerial instructors; therefore they cannot take appropriate responsibility for the activities of this staff.

61. As already stressed, the organisational and management problem of double subordination cannot be solved entirely. This is partly the simple reflection of the well known inherent problem of all systems organised according to the two contradictory logics of the *sectorial* and the *territorial*. Decentralisation does not mean the disappearance of national sectorial responsibility but only a redefinition of responsibilities and roles between the sectorial and the territorial actors. From the perspective of the success of the reform a strong national leadership is needed in all key reform areas (related with the functions of school

development, professional development or quality assurance). However, again from the perspective of the success of the reform, the isolation of these functions from each other and the weakening of their synergies may also become a major threat. One of the most important motives behind decentralisation is that the operational linkages and the real synergy between the new reform functions can be created only at local (regional) territorial level. Only the local (regional) units, where the experts responsible for the different functions do their real work, are in a position to organise the various functions into a unified, homogenous and efficient reform action. It is within the organisation of the RSAs that school developers, professional developers, quality assurance experts and experts responsible for planning can share their concrete experiences and can elaborate concrete coordinated answers to the challenges they face.

62. Although the double subordination problem cannot be solved entirely if the problem is clearly perceived and concrete efforts are done management also in these circumstances can be made much more effective. Some of the RSA heads still seem to be in the "complaining phase", that is they perceive the problem, they formulate it clearly but they come to the conclusion that no efficient and responsible management is possible in such conditions. Others seem to have already gone beyond this phase and started elaborating new cognitive schemes that could be used for the solution of management problems stemming from the double binding organisational conditions (such as matrix management, for instance) and started redefine their role (as the facilitator of cooperation between the staffs responsible for different functions). It is, however, important to note: heads of RSAs will not be capable to treat the problem presented here if they do not get strong support from MoES (for example if MoES departments continue communicating with their function-related experts working in RSAs without involving the heads).

63. It is important to stress that most of the coordination problems described here are clearly perceived by the national level administration, which has already made significant efforts to solve them. For instance, according to a communication from MoES, a rotated function of Department Head Coordinator with a three-month mandate has been established in September 2003 in MoES, with the task to coordinate and facilitate the flow of information between different MoES departments and the RSAs and also to facilitate communication between RSAs and high rank ministry officials. The communication is facilitated also by the „identity cards" created by each MoES department heads with the names, functions, actual job assignments and contact details for all employees of their department (these data were sent in a user-friendly electronic format, among others, to all heads of RSAs). MoES departments also send regularly (weekly) their work plans, together with other documents to regional heads using an electronic group address ("*skolska uprava*"). In October 2003 two deputy ministers co-signed a letter sent to all regional heads with the definition of a communication procedure between central ministry officials and regional heads. According to this the latter will receive requests and queries only from the minister and deputy secretaries. No request for *data* is authorised unless endorsed by the Education Information and Statistics Unit. In addition to this MoES organised in November 2003 a workshop for all MoES departments and regional heads on the theme of „Communication, Teams and Networking" with the main objective to deepen understanding and dialogue about the complex communication situation of regional offices interconnected with MOES in leading education change and to identify where and how improvements might be made.

64. In spite all the efforts it is clear that the organisational context in which RSAs are currently operating does not allow them to develop into efficient and coherent organisations as required by the education reform. On the one hand, it has to be stressed again, that on the

sort term, this problem cannot be solved entirely. It probably would be pre-mature to give greater organisational autonomy for RSAs until their professional and organisational development and their management reaches a higher level. For the time being, with a greater organisational autonomy, not all of them would be able to manage the transition process from inspection to professional support. On the other hand, it has to be born in mind that in the current organisational situation characterised by fragmented external control and by a leadership position having no full control over what happens in the organisation the development potential of RSAs remains rather limited.

The development of the new functions

65. One of the most striking new features, as compared to the previous visit one year earlier, is the visibility of the concrete operation of the emerging new functions. This is particularly conspicuous in the case of school developers and professional development experts who are the most involved in the implementation of the ongoing curriculum reform. Their real tasks are strongly influenced by the needs of the reform implementation process, and, as a result, their activity is a mixture of the original ideas and concepts of their functions, on the one hand, and the daily constraints of the pressed reform agenda, on the other. This latter places them in a job situation characterised not only by interesting new professional challenges but also by very high workload and by the frequent occurrence of situations demanding high level conflict management skills and capacities to tolerate frustrations.

66. On the basis of interviews on the field we can state that schools perceive the shift of RSAs from organisations of administrative control towards support organisations. The leader of a Nis school, which took part in the Twinning activities said, for instance, that they see the RSA as a "cooperative partner" in the implementation of the new curriculum and in the overall improvement of the teaching-learning process. The attitude of teachers towards the inspectors (that is the RSA staff who visits them) has become positive; the earlier feelings of fear or rejection towards the holder of administrative power have disappeared. Teachers expressed clearly their interest of having more visits in the school by the RSA staff.

67. The reform implementation process has had the strongest impact probably on the *teacher professional development experts* who are in charge of organising the preparation of teachers for the use of the new teaching programs and materials, now in the first grade, but from the next year, also in the second and the seventh grades. They are in the frontline of the reform, meeting the most teachers who have to take the new programs and materials in use. The two professional development experts employed in the Nis RSA, for instance, share their time between organising training courses with invited trainers and offering training themselves. They created a database of those who attended training and they provided them with a certificate attesting their participation. Beyond this they are frequently called by schools and teachers, and asked to answer various questions related with the new programs.

68. The direct involvement of the teacher professional development experts, selected and trained with the support of the Swiss lead INSET development program, has already had a significant impact of the reform implementation process. These experts, using modern training methods based on the principle of active learning, seem to be capable to raise the motivation and involvement of teachers in adopting the new teaching programs. They rely strongly on the instrument of horizontal learning, using the most advanced schools and teachers to transmit their knowledge to the others. The professional development experts of the Valjevo RSA, apply a method what they call the "2 waves – 3 colours" method (a training approach developed by group of Serbian experts in MoES and applied by all RSAs), based on a complex cascade training approach. In the first wave 25% of schools were selected and

some of them have already took part in school development programs and are familiar with the methods of active and democratic learning. They helped these schools to develop their new school level program, and transfer their experience to the second wave. In 2003 some of these teachers will be trained to become the trainers of the others. In this, they cooperated closely with the school development experts of the RSA.

69. The team of *school developers* was the first new professional group that appeared within the organisation of the RSAs as responsible for the implementation of the World Bank school development program. According to data from the 2003 December survey since January 2003 in all the regions 476 schools applied for the World Bank assisted school development program. From these 195 participated in the planning assistance programs, and 127 already received a school grant. This means, that, in the average, school development experts had to evaluate 43 applications and had to work with 17 schools by regions (it has to be stressed that there is separate Evaluation Team who does the final evaluation and selection of such projects).

7. Table
Number of schools that have applied and participated in school development by regions (2003 December)

	Number of schools		
	Applied for SD program	Assisted in SD planning	Received School Grant
Sombor	45	23	18
Novi Sad	68	25	19
Zrenjanin	56	18	13
Valjevo	27	15	9
Pozarevac	22	15	8
Kragujevac	36	18	12
Zajecar	34	13	9
Uzice	/	/	/
Kraljevo	110	24	19
Nis	78	44	20
Lesokvac	26	15	9
Total	476	195	127

Source: 2003 December survey by the LPMT

70. Although they were recruited for this specific program, is natural that they became quickly involved in the implementation of the curriculum reform. We saw some signs of identity problems among school developers, especially among the members of the original "*Team 26*" (see the *first report*) who, originally, used to have a different status than the other staff of RSAs and used to work in a flexible time table before becoming civil servants and being integrated into the normal public administration staff recently.

71. The involvement of the school developers into the implementation of the curriculum reform does not mean that they gave up their original approach. As one of the SD staff expressed they help the schools to implement the new curriculum "with a school development approach" that is they look at the entire school and they relate the change of teaching programs in the first grade with the overall organisational development of the school. We could see good examples of school development and professional development experts working together on the implementation task (as quoted above). On the contrary, no

signs of real cooperation could be depicted between the school developers and the subject inspectors. It is not surprising, that this team, trained in modern communication and team-building techniques have a different working style than administrators and have problems with adapting themselves to the "habitual" or "normal" operation of the public service. We could see a case where the school developer, overloaded with various administrative tasks could do very little of the types of activities she originally had been recruited for.

72. The third new type of personnel, recruited during the past year, consists of the *quality assurance experts*. This group is still less involved in the daily operational routines of the RSAs than the two other new types of staff, as their new assignment (school evaluation) is still not operationalised, and the development of the instruments to be used for this new task is still in progress. This group is still in a learning phase; their direct involvement in the daily work of the RSA is therefore limited. They are supposed to execute the first pilot evaluations only during 2004. However, it is natural, that they cannot stay away from the existing tasks of the RSAs. In the RSA of Nis, for example, the two new quality assurance experts reported on organising meetings for schools in order to inform them about the education law and the new curriculum. In Valjevo the QA expert was charged to evaluate the program of 70 primary schools from the perspective of the implementation of the new curriculum, and she had to write a 2-3-page report on each of them.

73. The tasks of the QA experts, as they are still in the phase of developing competencies and techniques is much less clearly defined than that of SD experts. It is not yet clear, when they will shift from the pilot phase to regular school evaluation, and how much capacity they will have to have for this tasks. There are very divergent views about what amount of work a standard school evaluation will require and, according to this, how many schools they will be capable to evaluate in one year. The answers given by QA experts during the 2003 December survey show that while in certain regions a relatively high number of school evaluations can be expected already in 2004, in other regions no such activity is yet planned (see *Table 8*). The survey also reveals that while in certain regions the active participation of the present subject inspectors (SI) in whole school evaluation is already expected, in other regions this is not yet taken into account.

Table 8.
The opinion of QA experts on whole school evaluation perspectives in selected RSAs (2003 December)

	The expected date of first regular evaluation	The expected number of working days needed for the evaluation of 1 school	The expected number of schools to be evaluated in 2004
Sombor	2006	20-25	-
Novi Sad	2007	21 (7x3QA) + SI	3 pilot (Primary, Gymnasium, special school)
Zrenjanin	It depends on MoES plan and instruction	/	/
Valjevo	March 1, 2004	10 (5x2QA)	15
Pozarevac	Pilot phase February	12	10 pilot school

	- March 2004		
Kragujevac	September 2004	5	8
Zajecar	2006	Procedure for evaluation is not established yet	-
Kraljevo	31.06.06/07	3 x 5 QA + preparation of the material	2-4 schools
Nis	2006	10-20	External evaluation not planed (only training and support of schools for self-evaluation)

Source: 2003 December survey by the LPMT

74. One of the most critical elements of the current reform is the management of the transition from the traditional external *subject inspection* to the new self-evaluation based whole-school evaluation. This raises the question of the status of the subject inspectors, who are still working in the RSAs, and their relationship with the new quality assurance experts. These two groups of people are affiliated with different administrative lines: while the work of the quality assurance experts is coordinated by the vice-minister responsible for the reform and international cooperation, that of the "inspection A" is supervised by the vice-minister with the overall responsibility for school education. The status of the subject inspectors is not simple. They know that their original task is not demanded any more by the administration, and they form a body in a process of disappearing. As one of them said: they have a "feeling of being left behind". Although they are not left without new perspectives (they can become QA experts, and some of them have already became, in fact), many of them cannot shift easily from the identity of a subject specialist to that of an evaluator of organisations. The communication between these two lines is rather poor, cases of cooperative actions are rare, and according to what was reported during our field visit, it may happen that the two lines convey contradictory messages towards the schools.

75. Most of RSAs have one person dealing with questions related with *financing*. Their work is coordinated from the national level by the head of the MoES department responsible for financial accounting. Although the role of RSAs in financing has been significantly reduced in favour of the municipalities and the financial administration controlled directly by the ministry of finance, they continue helping schools in budget planning and controlling whether their budget claims are justified. These persons could also play a role in analysing statistical data and helping the network planning functions of MoES but this functions is not exercised by them. Statistical data are not aggregated at regional level, therefore the possibilities for regional level network planning are low.

76. Since the last report there has been a significant improvement in the personal capacities of the staff of RSAs. According to the 2003 December survey more than half of the staff had an at least basic level proficiency of English (the same figure was 35% one year ago), 80% was capable to use Microsoft Word program (against 70% one year ago) and 59% used internet and e-mail (against 47% one year ago).

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9. Table
The number of staff with foreign language and ICT competencies in RSAs (2003 December)

	English Language			Other foreign language	ITC Literacy		
	Basic	Advanced	Fluent		*Microsoft Word*	*Microsoft Excel*	*Internet & E-mail:*
Sombor	-	5	-	8	5	5	5
Novi Sad	7	2	2	14	16	12	15
Zrenjanin	3	1-2	1-2	-	6	3	4
Valjevo	4	1	1	5	18	11	10
Pozarevac	6	8*	2	8	16	10	12
Kragujevac	9	6	3	6	17	17	16
Zajecar	3	1	1	7	12	12	12
Uzice	10	1	1	12	12	12	7
Kraljevo	6	1	1	1	18	6	8
Nis	1	4	4	1	19	14	14
Leskovac	1	2	-	1	8	4	5
Belgrade	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
TOTAL	50	32-33	16-17	63	147	106	108

Source: 2003 December survey by the LPMT

77. The second visit directed our attention to an important phenomenon, which deserves a serious reflection as it may have major implications not only for the future operation of RSAs but also for the follow up of the Twinning Program. This phenomenon could perhaps be called the "frontline syndrome". Since the adoption of the amendment of the Education Law and the new curricula school developers and professional developers are not any more doing small scale pilot experiments but, as already stressed earlier, they work with full engagement on the frontline of the reform. They meet not only schools and teachers who volunteered for a challenging professional experiment, as they did before, but also those who have no professional ambitions and resist changes. As they are not numerous, and many of those staff that, in principle, could be deployed to assist them do not possess the necessary skills and competencies, they are often overloaded with work. The quality assurance experts, who still are in the phase of developing their working instrument and who have not yet been deployed into „live" school evaluation, have not yet joined them. Both our visit and the 2003 December survey by the LPMT confirmed that the involvement of the "old" subject inspectors into the implementation of the reform is uneven: in some RSAs their activity has remained very limited. Those bearing the bulk of the work on the frontline of the reform need particular support, otherwise they may be exhausted and loose their dynamism. The organisational integrity of the RSAs may also be seriously threatened by the fact that one part of the staff works with full exertion while the other rests in reserve.

The future of the RSAs

78. In the first (2003) report we introduced an analytical framework in order to better understand what sort of factors determine the future development of RSAs and what perspective they may have in the future. As we stressed, some of these factors are fully under the control of the education sector administration, a few of them are partly under its control and some are beyond of it. Among those that are partly or entirely under the control of sectoral policy the following were stressed: (a) the capacity of the sector to define relevant new functions for RSAs, (b) the capacity of RSAs to adapt themselves to the new requirements related with these functions, (c) the current international development programs and (d) the impact of VET policy. As far as those beyond the control of the policy of the education sector we mentioned the following (a) the development of the pubic administration reform, (b) the development of territorial planning policy, (c) pressures exercised by the international community, especially the EU and (d) domestic politics. We strongly stressed the openness of these factors and the uncertainty that naturally accompanies this openness.

79. Taking all these factors and also the openness of the situation into consideration we proposed a way of thinking in *alternative scenarios* on the possible future of RSAs. This thinking was to be based on three assumptions: (a) the regional policy of the education sector is based on the analysis of the factors mentioned above, (b) the sectorial policy defines an optimal scenario but, at the same time, remains compatible with other, less favourable ones, and (c) the definition of the optimal scenario is accompanied by concrete sectorial policy measures that enhance the realisation of this scenario. The second visit brought us to the conclusion that these assumptions had been relevant. Education policy, deliberately or not, has clearly been enriched by regional dimension. This manifested itself in the amendment of the education law and has also been confirmed by the interviews conducted during the second visit. Although this has not lead to a profound and systematic analysis of all the factors determining the probability of the different scenarios, the idea of alternative paths of development, and the conviction that some of these are more favourable than other for the reform policy line of the education sector can clearly be perceived. What decision makers have adopted is close to what we called the "optimal scenario", and a number of concrete policy measures, enhancing the realisation of this scenario, have been taken by them.

80. We presented as an optimal scenario the following form of development: (1) the responsibility for the administration and governance of the education sector becomes shared between the national, the regional, the local and the institutional level, according to their respective potential and capacities, (2) the RSAs become professionally strong organisations which are active and committed partners in the realisation of the reform agenda of the education sector, and (3) they operate with clear and coherent functions that are in line with the modern concept of public administration and public policy. We assumed that in this optimal scenario RSAs would become responsible for the following key functions: (a) quality assessment and evaluation, (b) institutional development, (c) teacher professional development, (d) planning and development of the education and training network (including VET), and processing data and information for this, (e) general policy implementation.[14] It was also stressed, that the realisation of this scenario can be achieved only if RSAs assure efficiently their own internal financial, administrative management.

81. Besides the optimal scenario the first report suggested three others (1) the "fragmentation scenario", (2) the scenario of "loosing the RSAs", and (3) the scenario of "low profile RSAs". In the fragmentation scenario the various sub-sectors (e.g. curriculum

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[14] The 2003 report contains a detailed elaboration of these functions

development, evaluation and assessment or teacher development) develop separately their own territorial units and communicate separately with their own local/regional partners. The "loosing the RSAs" scenario is realised if new regional self-governments are created and the territorial agencies of the national government, including education, are incorporated into these new territorial governments. In the "low profile RSA " scenario, which is a kind of non-change scenario, RSAs remain low profile organisations and MoES cannot rely on them as on active reform agents.[15]

82. From this respect, the most important lesson of the second visit is that *although the probability of the realisation of the optimal scenario has increased tremendously, the realisation of any of the three others cannot yet been excluded.* The management and organisational problems presented in the previous section show that the forces that reinforce fragmentation are still stronger than those that favour organisational and managerial coherence at the regional level. The level of the representation of RSAs within MoES and the weight of their heads (which is fundamentally determined by their real professional competencies, their managerial skills and their commitment to the reform) is still low. The Voivodina case seem to indicate that the probability of the "loosing the RSAs" scenario is lower, if the tasks of the RSAs are clearly defined and they are distinct from those of the autonomous regional government. If the professional profile of the RSA is high, as it is the case in Voivodina, and if it has a clear mission to achieve tasks that remain national even in the decentralised context (e.g. evaluation and development), the idea of abolishing the regional unit of MoES, because its doing similar things than the educational unit of the regional government, does not emerge. The increasing gap, as referred to earlier, between the most ambitious and dynamic RSAs and those lagging behind, on one hand, and the still unclear organisational and financial status of all RSAs (including the most dynamic ones) show that the "low profile" scenario cannot yet been excluded. Even the those RSAs, who are the most committed and most successful partners of MoES in the implementation of the reform may fall back to a lower level, if their management and staff does not get the necessary support (staff on the frontline may be taken by what is often called reform-fatigue and managers may become tired of being deprived of full managerial responsibility and management appropriate tools).

The impact of the Twinning Program

83. As far as the impact of the Twinning Program on the development of RSAs is concerned, it is too early to draw conclusions. The Twinning partnerships were created only half a year ago and only a few elements of the projects could yet been realised. However, the evidence we gained in the four visited RSAs, as well as the data from the 2003 survey by the LPMT confirmed clearly that the program has already contributed to the development of the RSAs. It is not surprising that this impact is very uneven, depending on the content of the given common project, on the starting position of the Serbian partner and on the capacities and commitment of the foreign partner. For this reasons the Twinning Program has probably contributed also to the widening of differences between the RSAs.

84. The 2003 December survey indicates that the RSAs drew benefits from the Twinning partnerships in three dimensions: (1) it has helped them to understand the broader (national and international) context of educational reform and, thereby, contributed to their development to become a key partner in the implementation of the national reform policy, (2) it has contributed to their development into organisations striving for stronger professional identity and higher level professional efficiency, and (3) it has made contribution to the

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[15] For a more elaborated description of these scenarios see the 2003 report

development of specific work areas. More specifically the major benefits the RSAs gained from the cooperation with their Twinning partners is that (1) it brought them new knowledge and new ideas, (2) it shaped their attitudes and values, (3) it helped them to acquire new skills, (4) it taught them new practical techniques, (5) it contributed to the improvements in the organisation and functioning of the RSA, and (6) it induced the introduction of concrete new activities. The reports of the RSA staff demonstrates clearly that the Twinning Program boosted the development of RSAs from clumsy executive bureaucratic organisations towards professionally committed, active units with a potential of becoming one of the most important agents of the reform policy. This is, off course, a long and difficult development, which is far from being completed, but some of the first results of the Twinning Program show that the potential is there and, with sustained internal efforts and appropriate external support it can succeed.

85. Many RSA staff reported on the positive impact of the Twinning partnership activities on the development of their general professional and organisational skills, which – it has to be stressed – are fundamental in the new functions they now assume. For instance, in the answers given to 2003 December the questionnaire of the LPMT the improvement of communication and presentation skills, the capacities to work in teams of mutually supporting members were very often mentioned. A number of new ideas and techniques have been learnt, such as knowledge management, using networking for professional development, concept mapping, quality management or using the contract principle. Some reported on better understanding the meaning and the importance of the lifelong learning paradigm.

86. According to what RSAs reported, one of the most significant impacts of the Twinning Program has been the strengthening of their organisational profile, their internal coherence and, through this, their organisational efficiency. These highly fragmented organisations, with persons and functions operating in various separated vertical hierarchies started behaving as unified organisations in the Twinning partnership. It was following the visit of its Twinning partner, for instance, that the community of the Nis RSA, came to the conclusion that they need a strategic conception on the future of the department, otherwise they cannot answer the questions of their partner and they cannot commit themselves to cooperative projects. The staff of the RSA of Valjevo stressed that since they have been involved in the Twinning Program, they started "working as an organisation" and started "thinking in an inter-sectoral way". The representatives of every "sector" (SD, QA, PD) expressed its needs towards the others.

87. The Twinning Program seems to have had an influence on the thinking of the RSAs also in terms of priorities and orientations. Those cooperating with the Norvegian partners reported on a "message" that came out of their dialogue: regional school authorities should (1) become financially more independent, (2) establish a more intensive cooperation with local governments and (3) put the pupils into the focus of their attention.

88. One of the most remarkable impacts of the Twinning Program is the opening of the perspectives of RSAs and the reinforcement of their willingness to establish communicative contacts with actors outside the educational sector. In the current period of rapid social and economic transformation, and in the perspective of what was stressed earlier in the section in "*Middle level (territorial) governance and human resource development*" this attitude of openness has to be highly valuated. As an RSA staff member, participating in the Twinning cooperative partnership with Norway noted, it was this program that helped her to understand that education could be a major tool in solving social problems, and to understand the importance of the education of adults. One conclusion drawn was that the RSA should have an expert in adult education within its staff.

89. It seems that beyond the change of the overall education policy environment the Twinning Program itself also has contributed to the willingness of RSAs to cooperate with municipal governments. The RSA of the Nis region, for instance, under the influence of the cooperation with the Norwegian partners decided to improve its communication with the municipalities. They organised a meeting for the majors and educational administrators of municipalities. The main goal of the meeting was to present the educational reform to municipal leaders, but it was also used for presenting the new functions of the RSAs. There was a discussion also on the new functions, related with inspection, of the municipalities, and their role in enhancing the implementation of the reform. From the 38 invited municipalities 20 attended the meeting and 16 remained till its closure. The personnel of the RSAs, strongly influenced by their discussion with the Norwegian colleagues, are convinced that they have to intensify their contact with the municipalities and they have to enhance the activation of municipal actors. The city of Nis itself was highly supportive in the organisation of the Twinning partnership: without their moral and material support the visit of the Twinning partners could not have been realised.

90. The need for cooperation with municipal and business partners was also strongly expressed by the staff of the RSA of Valjevo, working with Austrian Twinning partners. Together they established a diagnosis that the level of cooperation between the RSA and the potential local-regional partners was very low and started planning improvement. Municipalities did not react appropriately, but they have received a particularly open reaction from the Chamber of Commerce. The president of the regional chamber, who is a trained expert in quality assurance, gave direct assistance to the RSA for internal organisational development, and helped them to establish contact with economic organisations. She accepted being involved directly in the Twinning partnership, and was inspired by the meeting with the Austrian Twinning partners. This cooperation had an important impact also on the selection of the theme of cooperation, which has both economic and educational relevance: career guidance and orientation. The Chamber of Commerce supports the RSA in developing a project on the "open school", where openness means mainly openness towards the economy. Under the inspiration of the cooperation they formulated the goal of establishing a regional council for educational development, an idea enjoying also the support of MoES. The willingness and commitment of the business community in this region is related with the fact, that is has characteristic concepts and ideas not only about what the VET sector should do, but also about general basic education. They want to encourage schools to focus better on those key skills and competencies that make the individual more successful on the changing labour market. Under the influence of this cooperation the staff of the RSA has started thinking actively on the needs of the transforming economy, which did not characterise at all this organisation before.

V. Recommendations

91. Most of the recommendations presented in the 2003 February report can still be seen as valid. However, the progress of the reform and the related achievements during 2003, as well as the new evidences gathered during the second visit in Autumn 2003 makes it necessary the updating and completion of the recommendations. In the following, similarly to what was done in the previous report, two separate sets of recommendations are formulated: one for the overall policy of the further development of regional education administration (general recommendations), and another for the continuation of the Twinning Program.

General recommendations

1. Increasing the involvement of the education sector in the reform of public administration and in the shaping other related sectoral policies

92. It is recommended that MoES follow closely what happens in the area of public administration reform and in those policy areas, which have an interest in territorial policy, in particular territorial (spatial) development and labour and social policy. As it is expected that the development of these policy areas will be strongly influenced in the future by the regional and employment policies of the European Union, it is also recommended that the education sectors follows closely European developments in these areas. MoES should take part actively in all relevant inter-sectorial government bodies in the areas of (1) public administration reform, (2) territorial planning, (3) human resource and labour policy; delegate well prepared specialists into these bodies, and ask them to report regularly on this. The former expert group on decentralisation, completed with experts (1) in local and territorial government, (2) public financing, and (3) school management should be invited to prepare an evaluation of the decentralisation policy of the education sector and to make further suggestion for continuation.

2. Developing further the instruments for influencing the educational activities of municipalities

93. With the growing educational role of municipalities the behaviour of these latter will have a decisive impact on the quality of education, and they will become the most important partner of MoES in shaping education policy. The creation of republic inspection gave a new, powerful tool to MoES to exercise legal control over the activity of municipalities, but this instrument in itself is not sufficient. MoES should make more intensive its communication with municipalities through the Council for Consensus Building in Education and through other channels. It also should use (1) evaluation instruments such as the regular monitoring of the achievement of municipalities through general and thematic surveys, (2) capacity building instruments such as the training of municipal educational administrators. RSAs also should play an active role in this process through maintaining and strengthening active communication with municipal administrators.

3. The strengthening of the role of RSAs in the territorial planning of education and related information management

94. The second visit gave evidence that while the conditions of functions related with school development, the professional development of teachers and quality assurance have significantly improved, no similar improvement can be observed in the functions of network planning and the management of information and statistics. If RSAs are to play a key role in the planning of the territorial development of education and training, the special competencies needed in this area must be developed. It is recommended that one person with relevant competencies and qualifications (such as statistics, economics, sociology, territorial development, public management etc.) is employed in all RSAs. This person should be responsible for the analysis of the social-economic development of the region, the analysis of the conditions of human resource development, the collection and analysis of the relevant statistical data (including data of demographic changes and migration) and the organisation of communication with the relevant territorial actors. On the basis of these analyses and data proposals for the rationalisation of the school network should be elaborated by all RSAs.

MoES should develop further the personnel resources and the technical (ICT) facilities in this area. The staff responsible for this area should receive intensive professional support.

4. Improving the communication and cooperation between RSAs and territorial social-economic partners

95. RSAs should play a key role in enhancing the capacity of the educational system to respond the challenges related with economic restructuring (growing need for the training of adults, the restructuring of the VET system, growing demands for education being more responsive to local/regional economic and social needs). This task is closely related with the planning function stressed in the recommendation on strengthening of the role of RSAs in the territorial planning of education and related information management. Efficient territorial planning can be achieved only in a framework of close cooperation and communication among all interested actors, including the social partners. RSAs already initiating this type of cooperation should get strong support from the national authorities and those, which are not yet involved in this type of activity, should be encouraged to do so. The MoES should initiate government measures to enhance the institutionalisation of territorial inter-sectoral dialogue, through, for instance, by initiating the creation of regional consultative bodies for the development of human resource or education and training with a clear role assigned to the RSAs. These bodies should have a strong consultative role in the following areas: (1) the territorial planning of educational and training infrastructure, (2) the planning of VET school profile restructuring, (3) the distribution of funds for the development of vocational training. In a few areas these bodies could also decision-making rights. The composition of these bodies should allow the representation of the major actors of the social dialogue. The represented public authorities should include the municipal self-governments. The heads of the RSAs should represent the MoES in these bodies.

5. Accelerating the development of the system of quality evaluation and the transformation of subject-inspection into quality assurance and professional development service

96. The pace of the development of the quality evaluation system through the related international cooperative program is too slow. Parallel to this program, other developmental activities are needed in this area. The elaboration of national standards for school evaluation, based on the ongoing international development program and the transformation of subject inspection into standard professional school evaluation should be accelerated. All inspectors involved in quality evaluation should become member of a sub-unit within the RSAs, lead by a responsible person trained in school evaluation. A plan, based on the calculation of the estimated working time needed for the evaluating of one school, for the evaluation of all schools, should be elaborated and submitted by every RSA. Extra resources should be allocated to RSAs in order to allow them to buy the services of professional evaluators. It is recommended that RSAs make the results of qualitative school evaluations public in a standard format.

97. As the new system of administration does not recognise subject inspection as function, and as the remaining number of staff still qualified as belonging to this category is already too low to exercise this function seriously, the process of transforming this service into a service for quality assurance and professional development should be accelerated. It is recommended that the number of posts in quality assurance be increased and the present subject inspectors be offered the opportunity to apply for these new posts. Those who meet the requirement should get a job of quality assurance expert, the others should leave the

service. A limited number of school development or professional development post also could be offered to subject inspectors according to their professional interests.

6. Making the MoES- RSA communication more efficient and more coherent

98. The internal reorganisation of MoES and the efforts already done have not yet solved the problem of the coherence of MoES supervision above RSAs, and the internal operational and organisational rules of MoES did not make the sharing of responsibilities for the supervision of RSAs sufficiently clear. Although coordinated at a higher-level then previously, various MoES departments still supervise *directly* the activities of various parts of RSA staff, often without respecting the overall management responsibility of the head of the department. MoES should continue its efforts to improve its communication with RSAs according to the following requirements: (1) the operation of RSAs should be regulated as much as possible by general rules and not by direct discrete instructions, (2) RSAs should report only to one high level MoES administrator and only this person should have the formal authorisation to issue direct instructions to them, (3) the high level MoES administrators who have no authorisation to issue direct instructions to RSAs but need the direct cooperation of them the should be continuously informed on what RSAs are doing and have the possibility to determine the MoES task assignments to them.

99. Communication between the ministry and the RSAs should be kept as intense as possible with the aim of (1) keeping RSAs well informed on every details of the national policy of education, and (2) keeping the leadership of MoES informed on local/regional processes. Within the framework set by the Education Law and other regulation MoES should issue one coherent ministerial level regulation on RSAs with the aim of assuring a stable but flexible legal environment for the operation of the RSAs. This should reflect the overall regional strategy of the MoES, that is, it should be more than just daily operational rules. The regulation should include the following elements: (1) the further specification of the functions defined by the education law in forms of both general explanation and specific job descriptions, (2) a clear regulation of the communication between MoES and RSAs, with the definition of the position in MoES to which the heads of the RSAs have to report and with the clarification of the ways the different sub-sections of the ministry can instruct the RSAs, taking the safeguarding of the organisational integrity of RSAs as a priority, (3) the specification of the way heads and other personnel of RSAs are prepared, selected and evaluated.

7. Turning RSAs into efficient, autonomously acting and accountable organisations through the further development of organisational, personal and technical conditions

100. All RSAs should develop into modern, dynamic organisations, capable to enhance the implementation of educational reform and contribute to the solution of local/regional educational problems by their own initiatives. The position of the head of the RSAs should be strengthened and upgraded through better selection, training, networking and though a stronger role in the coordination of the operation of all new functions within the RSA organisation. The heads of MoES departments should treat the heads of RSAs as their most important partners and inform him/her about all communication they have with the staff of the RSA. Heads of RSAs should be better informed about all function related reform activities. The operation of RSAs should be based on an approved yearly budget, which should cover their operation, including communication, internal travel and office costs. On

the longer term it is recommended that RSAs become legal persons, capable of establishing contractual relationships with other actors.

101. The further improvement of the quality of the personnel of the RSAs requires the continuation of intensive competency building. This should be based on a careful analysis of the content of the new functions and that of the new tasks related with these new functions. We recommend the development of a list of new competencies in cooperation with the staff of the RSAs. International cooperation programs, including the Twinning Program, should be used as one of the main instruments for the development of the new competencies. All international educational development programs – even those that are not focused on RSAs – should consider the possibility to include an RSA-related dimension. Competency building should also be strengthened by horizontal communication and experience sharing between heads and staff of RSAs. The endeavour of heads of RSAs to institutionalise their networking should receive support from MoES.

102. All RSAs should operate in a transparent way and maintain open communication with external partners. It is strongly recommended that each RSA develop its own homepage as an important communication instrument. It is also recommended that each RSA publish every year a short report on its own activities and on the most important developments of the educational sector of the region.

103. The adaptation of the internal organisation of RSAs to the new functions should receive strong support. We maintain our recommendation that RSAs should create three internal organisational units: (1) a development unit for school development and teacher professional development, (2) a unit for school evaluation and quality assurance, and (3) a third unit for functions related with statistics, analysis, school network planning, VET policy and territorial development (this unit could keep responsibility also for general secretarial functions).

104. The technical facilities of RSAs should be significantly improved. All RSAs should be supplied with good quality ICT equipment, network connections and appropriate software. They should possess appropriate meeting rooms and rooms for documentation and library services.

Specific recommendations for the "Twinning Program"

105. As for the further development of the Twining Program the following recommendations can be formulated on the basis of the 2003 October visit[16]:

(1) The Twinning Program proved its capacity to contribute significantly to the development of regional administration in Serbia and should be continued.

(2) As in the interaction of the Twinning partners new initiatives emerge that may go beyond the original scope of the program there is a need for opening and for managing openness and diversity. In order to enhance this more flexible program management, and more communication and transparency is needed (the new Twinning Website could play a key role in this). The concrete projects started by the Twinning partners should be continued, with a continuous evaluation by the local project management team.

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[16] These recommendations have been revised and finalised on the basis of the discussions at the Belgrade Midterm Twinning Conference on March 6-7, 2004.

(3) It is clear that the Twinning scheme, although it can contribute significantly to the development of the RSAs, will not be capable to provide all the necessary support for development alone. Countries cooperating in the Twinning Program – and perhaps other donor countries already providing assistance in other areas (e.g. public management development) – could propose new forms of assistance, in order to accelerate the development of the capacities of RSAs to implement the reform. Given the growing disparity between the RSAs and given their common role in the implementation of the reform in the whole country there is a need to think about how international cooperation could contribute to the development of *all* RSAs; For this purpose the possibility to involve further European countries should be considered. In the light of the progress of the reform the original question of *how* international cooperation could help the further development of regional educational administration in Serbia should be raised again, and a reflection on new forms should be started.

(4) As important new knowledge and experiences are being accumulated in the various Twinning Projects the second phase of the program should concentrate on (1) knowledge-sharing and dissemination, and (2) creating the basis of sustainability. The goal of the second phase should not be broadening activities but deepening and capitalising on what is already being done.

(5) The dissemination and the sharing of experiences and new knowledge should occur (1) between RSAs participating in the program and those not participating in it in order to enhance transfer of knowledge and skills to the non-participants; (2) within the circle of participating RSAs on the specific areas covered by the given Twinning partnership; and (3) between RSAs and other actors of the education system (e.g. schools, municipalities, teacher training institutions etc.). Concrete initiatives would particularly be needed that could allow the transfer of the knowledge and skills earned by RSAs directly participating in the program to those that are not involved. The general knowledge that is not directly linked with regional administration (e.g. on decentralisation, school management, learning organisation, quality management etc.) also should be shared. Sharing Twinning experiences with other countries should also be considered.

(6) Reflection on the potential mediums and instruments of dissemination and knowledge sharing is needed. The following could be considered:
- The potential of the new Twinning Website (conceived as a "learning website" needing frequent feedbacks from the partners)
- Formal and informal networking of heads and staff of RSAs (also independent from the Twinning Project)
- Training provided for heads and staff of RSAs with relevant *providers* (e.g. the potential new training frameworks like those offered by Norway and Canada) and other more general initiatives), appropriate *trainers* (e.g. the best RSA staff who should be encouraged and freed for training tasks) and relevant *content* (e.g. case studies on effective RSAs),
- Opening twining events to other Twinning partners
- Asking visiting foreign partners to address a broader audience while being in Serbia (with hosting staff from other RSAs for seminars)
- Dissemination within the RSAs (e.g. to inspectors „A")
- Dissemination to other actors than RSAs (e.g. to schools in current activities with them)
- Using existing networks created for other purposes

- Using other already planned Twinning actions also for knowledge sharing (e.g. project evaluation)

(7) The involvement of other partners beyond RSAs (e.g. schools, municipalities, universities, chambers) already practiced in some Twinning partnerships should be supported but a particular attention is needed in order to avoid the risk of loosing target (that is the original project objective of developing RSAs and regional educational administration).

(8) Within the Twinning framework the initiatives or program elements that relate to some currently weaker or more neglected areas that are particularly important for the MoES regional strategy should receive more attention – for example (a) strengthening linkages between education, employment and business, (b) managing and supporting school network planning, restructuring and rationalisation, (c) supporting the development of municipal level educational administration, and (d) the reform of inspection, particularly the redefinition of the role of inspection "A" in quality assurance and in enhancing curriculum reform.

(9) The whole staff of the participating RSAs should be involved in the Twinning activities, the involvement should not be limited to a few active persons of the staff.

(10) Twinning activities should be better linked with the current and more pressing duties of RSAs.

(11) The feeling of mutual benefits (two-way learning that strongly involves also the foreign partners) should be maintained and reinforced.

(12) All participating RSAs should have a small budget for Twinning activities.

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VII. Annexes

Annex 1.
Persons met and organisations visited during the fact finding visit in Serbia between 2003.10.13 and 11.19

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Annex 2.
The implementation of the recommendations of the first (2003 February) report

Recommendation	Level of realisation	Comments
1. The preparation of a policy paper on the reform of regional administration of education	Medium	No such policy paper was prepared, but the expert paper produced by the external consultant is widely known and is used for this purpose
2. The active involvement of the education sector in the reform of public administration and territorial planning	Low	The education sector became aware of the importance of this but the level of involvement is still low
3. The creation of new instruments for controlling, evaluating and influencing the educational activities of municipalities	Medium	A new body (republic inspectors) was created for this purpose but the quality of the staff and the instruments to be used have to be developed further
4. High level (legislative) regulation of the operation of RSAs	High	This was done in the Education Law
5. Lower level (ministerial) regulation of the operation of RSAs	Medium	This was done in the systematisation regulations but this does not go beyond a short job description for the various functions
6. Clarifying the responsibility for supervising RSAs within the MoES	Low/ Medium	This was clarified but the outcome is questionable (increased fragmentation)
7. Shifting from legal regulation to other regulation instruments in curriculum development	High	Looser curriculum regulation accompanied by competency building, school development and evaluation taking the place of the control of individual teachers by subject inspectors
8. Elaborating techniques of school evaluation and regulating this activity	Medium	This is being done, the direction of development seems to be appropriate but the process is too slow
9. Developing planning competencies within RSAs	Low	This is one of the weakest points
10. Developing a genuine territorial dimension for VET policy	Low	The ETF peer review gave a strong input but the institutional frameworks are missing
11. Institutionalising communication between RSAs and territorial social-economic partners	Low	This is still rather accidental. There are no regular mechanisms for this
12. Creating clear mechanisms for the professional control of selecting school principals	Low	The increased role of school boards is probably improving the selection process but the level of professional control is low. The training of principals has been started but no qualification requirements are set
13. An intensive development of the personnel of RSAs	High	This is valid only for those in the new functions
14. Improving organisational conditions and technical facilities	Low	No real improvement can be observed
15. Communication and openness	Medium	Although some RSAs have initiated serious actions for increasing openness,

		the improvement in this area is inappropriate. There are no RSA homepages