

How can school staff be supported to repair the damage to learning caused by separation from school as disadvantaged children return to the classroom after home schooling?

- Almost 46% rural population (19 million total);
- 3,5 mil. Children of schooling age, only 72% enrolled in schools (in 7 000 schooling units country-wide);
- Since March '20 – approx. 1 million returned mainly from WE;
- Quality of education is on a decreasing trend, based on PISA testing; Romania occupies the 47th place (decade low) in the OECD countries, and much below EU average.

Factors of vulnerability: poverty, risk of violence and abuse, living in crowded households, children left behind.

- COVID-related factors of vulnerability: difficulty in maintaining social distancing, economic uncertainties for family units, lack of specific hygiene and protective equipment;
- children separated from their parents (because of COVID-caused hospitalisations) had difficulties in accessing basic goods (food, medicine, household items), limited support to attend online schooling.
- it is estimated that up to 40% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds did not attend classes;



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Shortcomings identified and support needs

- Need for support to children, parents, legal tutors with adequate programs in order to facilitate online schooling.
- Limited digital competencies of pedagogical staff led to a high variation in the quality of the educational programs delivered. Educational programs need to be put in place in order to cover this gap also in the post-COVID context.
- Precarious access to technical equipment (laptops, tablets) to participate in schooling programs held online. This needs to be improved for both children and educators, with a high priority on disadvantaged children (in poverty situations).
- Need to find solutions to continue and maintain other types of services (social assistance at the community level, medical services).
- Increased capacity for pedagogical staff; online schooling requires a higher effort and more capacity on behalf of educators. In order to follow the same curricula and rhythm, an increased capacity is needed (at least in terms of support roles and functions).