



ANNEX C1: Twinning Fiche

Project title: Promotion of inclusive education and STEAM in urban and rural schools

Beneficiary administration: The Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic

Twining Reference: KG 21 NDICI OT 01 24

Publication notice reference: EuropeAid/181528/DD/ACT/KG

EU funded project

TWINNING TOOL

1. Basic Information

1.1 Programme:

Decision *NDICI ASIA/2021/043236*, Annual Action Plan 2021, Direct Management under NDICI Instrument.

1.2 Twinning Sector:

Other (OT): Education

1.3 EU funded budget: EUR 2 million

1.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The project will contribute in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals 4 '*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*' and 5 '*Gender equality*'.

2. Objectives

2.1 Overall Objective(s):

Policy and technical support to accelerate progress towards achievement of the interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 4 (Education) and 5 (Gender).

2.2 Specific objective:

Capacity building of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic enabling to put in place an effective mechanism to promote inclusive and equitable quality education.

2.3 The [National Education Development Programme 2040](#) (NEDP) adopted by the Kyrgyz Government Decree # 200 of 4 May 2021.

3. Description

3.1 Background and justification:

According to the National Statistics Committee (NSC), the permanent population of Kyrgyzstan in 2023 was 7,037,590 people with the annual population growth of 1.8 percent ([2022 Census](#)). 65.1 percent live in rural areas and 34.9 percent in urban settlements. The population of Kyrgyzstan is relatively young: in early 2023 nearly 35 percent of the population were children and adolescents, 57 percent persons of working age and 8 percent older than working age.

The latest available [Kyrgyzstan's Human Development Index \(HDI\) value for 2023/2024](#) is 0.701—which put the country in the High human development category—positioning it at 117 out of 193 participated countries. The 2021/22 HDI was 0.692- putting the country in the Medium human development category. This is a very positive evolution, which is built on improvement of three basic dimensions such as long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. Between 1990 and 2023, Kyrgyzstan's HDI value changed from 0.637 to 0.701 (a change of 10.0 percent), life expectancy at birth changed by 6.2 years, expected years of schooling changed by 1.1 years and mean years of schooling changed by 2.8 years. Kyrgyzstan's [GNI per capita \(PPP\)](#) has also increased from US\$5,050 (2021) to US\$5,670 (2022).

The overall poverty in the country has fluctuated: 2019 (20.1 percent), 2020 (25.3 percent), 2021 (33.3 percent) and 2022 (33.2 percent). Still over 60 percent of the population lives below US\$5 a day. Poverty is concentrated in rural areas. Almost three quarters of the poor live in rural areas. Poverty levels vary across regions/oblasts in the country. Key factors explaining volatility of poverty indicators in the rural areas over the years are quality of agricultural harvest, employability and remittances flows.

The Kyrgyz Republic is among the countries with the largest youth share in their respective populations, which requires the creation of more jobs to absorb young job seekers. The authorities are prompted to review education regulations to encourage skills building within the envelope of

available fiscal resources to facilitate and improve the match of students to jobs demanded by the 21st century, especially for vulnerable groups and youth with disabilities.

Education plays a decisive role in reducing inequality. It is a strong determinant of occupational choices and therefore of income levels. Public investment in education can easily translate into reducing inequality by increasing the share of the population that has access to professional and social opportunities. The system needs to be more supportive of **inclusive education**. The main challenges for inclusive education are the lack of enabling physical and psychological learning environment, lack of adapted teaching and learning materials, lack of professionals and insufficient capacity and motivation of teachers in identification and provision of responsive to individual learning and special education needs of children as well as lack of solid monitoring and management of schools. The total population of children with disabilities (based on the [number of children registered with disabilities in 2021](#)) is over 34,000 (53%-girls, 47%-boys), which is likely an underestimate. Children with disabilities are often not registered at birth and may not enter school, or are given home-schooling which is not the same quality as regular school. Nearly 30 percent of children with disabilities participate in education.

Learning outcomes measured in most recent international (PISA 2009) and national (2021/22) large-scale standardized assessments showed a low academic performance of students across subject areas in grades 4 and 8. The 2009 PISA outcomes demonstrated that Kyrgyzstan was the lowest-performing country and revealed that over 80 percent of 15 y.o. students, especially in rural schools, did not reach the baseline level of achievement in reading, 65 percent of students did not reach the lowest proficiency level of performance in mathematics, and over 80 percent did not reach the baseline of proficiency level in science. The 2021/2022 national assessment revealed that 50 percent and 40 percent of children in grades 4 and 8 accordingly failed to meet minimum learning standards in reading and comprehension, 60 percent and 50 percent in math; and 40 percent and 70 percent in science.

Reportedly, schools with higher levels of internet connectivity tend to have higher average student performance levels on standardised tests, including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The chain of impact from school connectivity to socio-economic gains begins from improved learning outcomes for children. If improved connectivity is supplemented with the right policies to integrate STEM in education, it can improve access to learning resources and enhance the quality of education. New doors are opened for further education and career pathways, offering better opportunities at all stages of life. Expanding access to the internet in rural schools and embedding the use of technology in educational practices could equalise opportunities for students from an early age, with benefits that proliferate through childhood and adulthood. While lack of access to the internet does not preclude children from obtaining an education, the absence of the learning opportunities that connectivity enables can serve to further widen the gap in outcomes for children with and without access. Connecting schools can improve both learning outcomes for children, and GDP per capita. Learning-adjusted years of schooling could increase by 4-11% and GDP by 7-19% if Kyrgyzstan were to level up with Finland ([The Economist, 2021](#)). Digital technology is a powerful enabler of the SDGs. However, divides around access to technology, digital skills, and inclusive technology development persist across the country, slowing the potential and create a risk to achieve the SDGs.

It is expected that the Education Ministry is able to give an opportunity to build on outcomes and capitalize on the momentum for technology in education to ensure that connectivity is a driver for inclusive and gender-equal learning, employability and livelihoods especially for the most marginalized.

The COVID-19 crisis significantly contributed to changes in inequality and affected the main drivers, especially government expenditure as a general driver of inequality. Drivers of inequality also include gender, age, disability, employment status, with implications for pay and income, access to welfare, health and education services and decision making. Expenditures in education as a percentage of GDP is relatively high, but spending per capita is still low. Efforts could be made for reducing **inefficiencies in educational spending** and strengthening **institutional and management capacity** in the education sector. Since the school population is growing nearly 2 percent annually, more

schools, teachers and teaching and learning materials are needed not only to maintain current level of access but also to improve the quality of education.

The present National Education Development Programme 2040 is addressing current and future socio-economic and demographic pressure points and vulnerabilities of the Kyrgyz Republic. It is attentive to inclusive growth and development of a young nation aspiring for its place in the global knowledge economy. The Programme includes three core tasks (i) Fair and equal access; (ii) Quality assurance in education; and (iii) Effective management and financing. Implementation of all three tasks is envisaged at all levels of education and the main measures are identified within each of the tasks, which for the most part provide a comprehensive coverage of the reform needs of the sector. The education sector is multi-tiered with complex stakeholder dynamics. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is the principal actor. The Ministry is responsible for all levels of education - pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education- at the policy level. There is adequate ministerial ownership and leadership of the education sector, which is the core element for improving the education system in Kyrgyzstan. The success of all other elements depends on how effective the MoES is in affirming its ownership and leadership and its responsiveness to the sector policy dialogue. The day-to-day management of the school system rests with the rayon (municipal) administration authorities. This administrative structure, in turn, affects the clarity of the financial management of the education sector. While the MoES has been granted greater responsibilities for managing the sectoral budget, resources for the operations and maintenance of schools are provided through the state budget directly to the municipal administrations. Teachers' salaries are paid by the Ministry, with the exception of teachers employed in the city of Bishkek, who are paid by the Bishkek city administration. This diffusion of the sector budget affects the ability of the MoES to fully control the allocation and spending of its resources.

3.2 Ongoing reforms:

[The Sustainable Development Report 2023](#), which is a global assessment of countries' progress towards achieving the SDGs, demonstrates that Kyrgyzstan ranks 45 out of 166 participated countries with the improved score of 74.4 out of 100 (2022 score- 73.7, rank- 48/163) in achieving 16 SDGs (1 is not relevant): 6 Goals face significant challenges and stagnate, including SDG 5 on gender equality, 2 SDGs are on track or maintaining SDG achievement, including SDG 10 on reduced inequality, and 8 SDGs are moderately improving, including SDG 4 on education.

[The 2023 SDG 4 scorecard](#) (UNESCO) reports that Kyrgyzstan made **fast progress** in case of the upper secondary completion rate and the participation rate in organized learning one year before primary; for the two public expenditure indicators, Kyrgyzstan **has achieved** the two expenditure indicator benchmarks as it allocated above 4% of GDP and above 15% of total public expenditure to education.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Kyrgyz Republic has displayed a high degree of commitment to reforms, through the implementation of the Education Development Programme 2040, and continuous improvement in implementation of the 3-year Action Plan (AP) 2021-23. A new Action Plan for 2024-2026 is being finalised and to be adopted in the course of 2024.

According to the latest annual report produced by the MoES, a relatively good level of 2023 AP performance was reached. In total, 83.97% of targets were achieved.

The progress of some key indicators over 2018-2023 is presented below:

Indicator	2018-2019 academic year	2019-2020 academic year	2020-2021 academic year	2021-2022 academic year	2022-2023 academic year	Comments
Coverage by Early Child Development programme (%)	24,6	25,4	22,0*	23,9	26,4	*pandemic impact
Coverage by all forms of pre-school education (%)	40,9	43,1	40,4*	48	50	*pandemic impact
School education coverage (%)	98,7	97,8	97,4	97,2	93,3	Decrease
Number of school age children not in school	2,826	2,834	2,645	2,495	2,475	Improvement

Funding of education expenditures from the republican budget (%)	96,1	97,1	98,2	99,2	103,9	Improvement
Per capita funding in schools (%)	88,8	94,3	97,9	97,9	98,9	Improvement
Average salary rate of school teaching staff vs. average salary rate across the country (%)	87,3	103,7	90,2	87	80	Decrease
Average score of nationwide testing of school graduates (ORT) across the country	123,3	120,2	120,5	119,8	121,8	
Number of early child development institutions	1,497	1,617	1,648	1,712	1,834	Improvement
MoES's Public confidence index (%)	30,5	30	31,5	35,2	31,8	

The fine-tune of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) is underway to improve real-time connectivity and accurate education data supply and management across the country. Through [web-based OpenEMIS platform](#) managed by the MoES, education statistics are openly accessible in real time (to date, there are education data across 40 out of 67 parameters). This compensates for the absence of statistical yearbooks. The National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (NSC) publishes a comprehensive statistical bulletin on the education sector, which is issued once in five years. The latest [2018-2022 statistical bulletin](#) was published by the NSC in 2023, which also provides sex-disaggregation for most of its disclosed administrative and learning data based on school census in 2022.

Learning outcomes are central to the global education agenda set out in the SDGs, so the measurement of these outcomes is also a global priority. Half of the 10 education targets in SDG 4 relate to learning and skills. The Kyrgyz Government recognises that international and national comparative assessments provide valuable cross-national data on student learning across countries and cross-regional within the country and often facilitate capacity building and peer learning opportunities. In order to benefit from the monitoring of learning outcomes, the Education Ministry applies learning assessment nationwide. National assessments of functional literacy and numeracy skills help to identify learning progress and gaps in urban-rural context and use the results to improve learning. Using the latest available data of [2021/2022 assessment](#), it is possible to estimate how many children are failing to meet minimum learning standards in mathematics, reading and science, e.g. 5 out of 10 children in grade 4 do not reach minimum in reading and comprehension, 6 out of 10 children in math, and 4 out of 10 children in science; 4 out of 10 children in grade 8 are below basic level in reading and comprehension, 5 out of 10 children in math, and almost 7 out of 10 children in science:

Grade	Subject	2017 (baseline)	2021/2022	Progress
Grade 4	Reading	59.8%	49.2%	Improvement (+10.6%)
	Math	60.3%	61.2%	Slight deterioration (-0.9%)
	Science	53.1%	39.1%	Improvement (+14%)
Grade 8	Reading	51.5%	39%	Improvement (+12.5%)
	Math	64.9%	52.9%	Improvement (+12%)
	Science	76.6%	68.7%	Improvement (+7.9%)

The pandemic certainly deteriorated the learning gap given the little digital, blended and distance learning preparedness. Closing such learning gap is key to unlocking potential of demographic dividend of not only providing labour, but also a reasonably skilled workforce and therefore considerably increasing labour productivity. Preparation for the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) [2025 cycle](#) in Kyrgyzstan has begun after a 15-year break and has gained considerable political momentum. The government is well aware that PISA can primarily be a powerful instrument for evidence-based education reform in addition to assessing absolutely and relatively education outcomes and learning productivity. The [latest PISA assessment](#) took place in

2009, where almost 80% of participated students in Kyrgyzstan did not reach the minimum requirements. Proper preparation for PISA participation may have a systemic quality effect.

Since the ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2019 in Kyrgyzstan, there has been some progress in the legal and policy sphere towards ensuring equal rights and fair treatment for persons with disabilities. The first and most significant contribution is the State Programme [Accessible Country 2023-2030](#), which was adopted by the Government Decree in February 2023 and aims to guarantee physical and attitudinal accessibility, including access to services such as education, health care, and employment. It is expected that the implementation of this programme will ensure the use of universal design in all new infrastructure and the use of reasonable accommodations in the provision of services, as and when appropriate. Meanwhile, health and education services are not available in all the regions of the country, and persons with disabilities living in rural and remote areas are usually excluded from access to education and health services. Children with disabilities face barriers to their access to education: in most cases they are segregated in special schools or confined to home schooling, thus receiving a lower quality of education, with reduced opportunities to be included in the society.

Active Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) provided substantial advisory support to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in developing a [unified Law on Education](#) that consolidated six education-related laws. The document was adopted in 2023 in order to reform the education system and improve the quality of educational services and increase their availability, strengthen continuity in education, as well as develop a personality that meets modern challenges and is competitive in the labour market. Some of the most important changes include advancing inclusiveness, multilingual education (focusing on the language of instruction), a voucher financing mechanism, an enabling and equitable framework for children with disabilities, and gradual introduction of a new 12-year school system through compulsory grade zero in schools and kindergartens.

Furthermore, there are efficiency challenges in general school education. One of the challenges is insufficient teacher salary levels – despite significant increases over time. Effectiveness of public spending on education has also not improved much in recent years. Notwithstanding increases in education spending, learning outcomes have improved only slightly based on national and international learning assessments. Poor accountability at the school and system level mainly comes from insufficient use of data on learning results and on teacher performance, insufficient knowledge about the cost effectiveness of per-student expenditures because of a complex formula for allocating funds per student.

The number of students in schools and the school's student/teacher ratio determine the number of instructional hours at each school, which in turn determines the number of teachers that can be hired. The state budget is allocated using Normative Financing, which is a cost per student (per capita funding). It is based on the Wage Norm and an average allocation for other school expenditures. The Education and Finance Ministries are advised to link expenditures to educational performance, with an emphasis on learning outcomes, access equity, and inclusion. The Education Ministry intends to update the EMIS enabling to include indicators of finance (per student expenditures by type of expense, by level of education, by region, and by type of school), indicators of learning (by location, grade level, and type of school), and disaggregated budget data on instructional expenditures (e.g. teachers, educational materials) to estimate financial efficiency in relation to educational outcomes. The MoES has been considering a plan for analyzing the relationship between financing and learning outcomes, determining the costs and benefits of additional investment in classrooms spaces and a reduction of double/triple shifts; piloting the use of vouchers that allowing children to attend private preschools, where the cost of the infrastructure is mostly borne by private providers. It is envisaged that (i) Pilot voucher systems using private providers can help reduce overcrowding; (ii) Pilot public-private partnerships can help attract private investments in pre-school and school infrastructure.

Based on an analysis of the current challenges in education, there were 7 directions selected as the most transformational for the education system, which were included into a new mid-term education program - “Altyn Kazyk” (polar star): (i) preschool education development; (ii) improvement of school education quality, including printing of modern textbooks; (iii) digitalisation of education to achieve the level of developed countries; (iv) improvement of effective system to teach the state

language as the native language and the second one; (v) facilitation of joint work with the community (interaction with parents to educate children); (vi) optimization of the education system management (within administrative-territorial reform); (vii) increase of competitiveness of vocational education.

As part of the implementation of “Altyn Kazyk”, the following drivers are operationalised:

- Center for Innovative Pedagogical Technologies (Brain Center) to engage in strategic and pedagogical development of schools, replicate the best domestic pedagogical practice, e.g. innovative lessons, new teaching manuals, mobile pedagogical caravans, updated national educational content with support of the Digital Education Center;
- ‘Virtual teacher’ - a new format of methodological assistance such as ‘mobile teacher – teacher-nomad’.
- Educational Quality Development Department and Quality Assessment Center to motivate and promote payments for results, e.g. assessment of teacher professional competence; digital in-school knowledge assessment, starting from grade 3, on reading, comprehension, mathematics and multilingual education; identification of functional literacy; monitoring of professional teacher competence (certification/assessment/self-education).
- Pedagogical workshops in STEM subjects.
- National portal of teaching staff.

3.3 Linked activities:

The main coordination functions related to the implementation of the [National Education Programme 2040](#) are assigned to the Education Ministry. The Ministry coordinates the relevant projects and initiatives implemented by the line ministries (e.g. Finance, Health, Labour and Social Protection, Digital Development, Environment), governmental agencies (e.g. [GOSSTROY](#)), city administrations and local authorities.

There are a number of projects financed by various donors, which contribute to education sector reforms, e.g.:

The ongoing **EU-funded** budget support operation totalling €32 million targets education sector during 2023-2026 and includes (i) policy dialogue focusing on quality and learning outcomes, (ii) digitalisation to make education system more inclusive and equitable and prevent digital divide widening, and (iii) preparation of students for emerging job opportunities in the market with special focus on green and media skills

The **World Bank** continues to support the Government in reforming the education system throughout 2020-2026. The World Bank’s US\$50 million ‘Learning for the Future’ project contains the following components: (i) enhancing teaching and learning, which increases equitable access to quality early childhood education and enhances the effectiveness of teaching-learning practices in preschool; (ii) increasing effectiveness in teaching practice through a strengthened teachers’ professional development model that links the design and delivery of teacher training programmes aligned to the new curricula and evidence, (iii) technology-enabled support for learning through the development of digital content/resources aligned to the new curriculum that complement new textbooks, and (iv) enhancing measurement in learning, with the objective of further enhancing the measurement system and its capacity for assessing student learning outcomes in cognitive and non-cognitive domains.

Having supported reforms in the education sector since 1994, the **United Nations Children’s Fund** (UNICEF) is a long-standing and trusted partner of the Government of Kyrgyzstan. UNICEF continues to support the MoES in improving OpenEMIS in areas of data collection and visualization, and data use for planning and accountability. For quality education, UNICEF helped to improve in-service teacher training modules on STEM subjects: math, biology, chemistry, physics and ICT in collaboration with the MoES. To ensure school connectivity, UNICEF also worked with [GIGA](#) to support 1,500 students in rural schools to access fiber-optic Internet connection, which allowed children to learn using a wide variety of online teaching-learning materials (TLMs) and resources. Furthermore, UNICEF (jointly with USAID) provided technical and financial support to the MoES to promote Inclusive Education. Currently, a model of inclusive schools and mechanisms are being

piloted with the support of UNICEF and CSOs. About 15,000 children in 50 pilot schools are benefitting from this 'Learning Better Together' pilot.

USAID focuses on building early grade reading and math skills across the country. The project is implemented during 2019-2024 and intends to improve learning outcomes in reading and mathematics among 300,000 students in grades 1-4 in 1,687 target schools. The project has three objectives: (i) improve instructional quality in reading, numeracy and mathematics; (ii) improve formal and non-formal learning environments; and (iii) creating an enabling environment by strengthening the primary education system. In 2023, the project equipped 1,682 public schools with 3,372 sets of math teaching and learning materials followed by training of over 13,000 teachers in target schools on effective teaching methods.

ADB Board has approved its new School Education Reform Sector Development Project totalling US\$40 million to be implemented in 2025-2030. The programme adoption has still been pending in the Kyrgyz Parliament. The project has three components: (i) Improving the quality and relevance of curricula with priority on interdisciplinary approaches and setting up the regulatory framework for approval and roll out of a new 12-year subject curricula (specifically for grades 6-12), strengthening the capacity of MoES staff and experts on textbook assessment, and building the capacity of the curriculum developers; (ii) Improving the quality of teaching, including reform of in-service teacher training system, revision of pedagogical university education standards, revision of teacher salary structure and incentives, training of 10,000 teachers to implement the revised curriculum in schools with a focus on language and STEM; (iii) Strengthening the network of innovative schools by granting them with academic, administrative and financial autonomy, rehabilitating 23 schools and providing lab equipment to 220 cluster schools.

The **Aga Khan Development Network** (AKDN) has also been actively supporting education sector reform through its network organizations. AKDN has founded the University of Central Asia (UCA) in Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, under the *Schools2030* initiative, the AKF partners with 30 kindergartens and 70 schools in Osh, Naryn, Chui oblasts and Bishkek to enable teachers and school stakeholders to co-design, implement and measure new school-level solutions and identify what works to improve students' learning outcomes.

An important global education initiative such as the **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)** has been well advancing in the country, where the EU is the biggest global funder. It is very likely that GPE funding will be unlocked in 2024/2025 as the Education and Finance Ministries intend to attract GPE grant resources of USD 15 million and mobilise additional loan of USD 50 million from Saudi Arabia Fund and USD 10 million from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in line with the multiplier grant modality. In response, the Local Education Group led by the Education Ministry and co-chaired by the EU and USAID along with its annual Joint Sector Review built on the comprehensive education sector assessment have been operationalised. The project aims to induce system transformation to support the MoES in ensuring equitable access to quality school education and learning opportunities for boys and girls. Its scope of work will include (i) revision of the content of education, including transition nexus from pre-primary to primary education, in line with the requirements of the Law 'On Education'; (ii) construction and/or rehabilitation of school infrastructure, including gender-sensitive and inclusive [WASH](#) facilities and adequately equipped school labs; (iii) improvement of systems, practices and capacities of the MoES.

All ongoing project activities strongly support the crucial education areas, which have transformative effect, thereby mutually reinforcing the impact of all interventions.

3.4 List of applicable *Union acquis*/standards/norms:

Bringing in Member State expertise is a way of extending the reach and visibility of the European Education Area and its initiatives to partner countries, including Kyrgyzstan. In this sense, the Member States involved could share their experience on this and on the way that cross-border cooperation and exchange of practices is 'levelling up' policy and practice across Europe. The MSs

are also encouraged to take the Kyrgyz partners through the ‘practical acquis’ from their own and other Member States that is included in platforms such as the [Schools Education Platform](#), where Member States are represented on Working Groups, which are providing advice at a practical and a policy-making level.

Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan is eligible to take part in specific [Erasmus+](#) opportunities. These are limited to the higher education (HE) sector. While these projects benefit directly the HE sector, benefit also works downstream, as teachers and trainers are equipped to play their role throughout the education sector in schools, vocational and adult education. Some Kyrgyz projects need to be reviewed as good examples of how to address inclusive education, better take-up of STEAM learning, and education financing.

3.5 Components and results per component

The challenges of the country education system are interrelated. At the same time, it is particularly helpful – from a time-bound sector reform perspective – to prioritise and concentrate on a few critical ones. **Three challenges of access for all, quality, and sound finance** in the education sector of Kyrgyzstan stand out as most pressing, with most crosscutting implications and transformative potential.

Disability-inclusive education has become a major focus of the 2030 Agenda commitment to ensure ‘*inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*’. The project intends to advocate a twin-track approach focused on ensuring that mainstream education programmes are designed for all learners and developing targeted support to address the specific needs of children with disabilities. The project monitoring of inclusive education for children with disabilities will cover a range of issues related to system capacity and development, infrastructure, participation of children with disabilities, learning environment and its quality. Essential pre-requisite for disability-inclusive education is that schools are capable of receiving children with disabilities and that three supply-side characteristics are particularly important: teachers need to undergo pre-service and in-service teacher training to instruct classes in which children may have physical impairments or learning difficulties and need additional expert support; school infrastructure (buildings, classrooms) must be accessible; and schools should also be able to provide learning materials for children with a variety of disabilities. The State Programme [Accessible Country](#) needs to be operationalised through direct support to implementing ministries such as the Education Ministry and relevant subordinate bodies.

In this context, the proposed Component 1 is envisaged to support to achieve the following results:

Component 1/Mandatory Result 1: More inclusive and equitable education

Output 1.1: Strengthened national operational capacity to prevent education divide, respond and address inclusive education challenges irrespective of gender, disability and/or location.

The current challenge of the Kyrgyz Government for skills development is twofold: preparing the workforce of the future and ensuring that the current workforce can adjust to changes in the labour market and digital environment. Nowadays, a very important enabler, which is missing in many schools, is collaborative learning space and intersection of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM). It is required that a comprehensive STEAM content development strategy/policy that ensures focus on learning objects, distributed content creation, and interactivity content, while linked to the national curriculum, is in place. The project intends to reach out to necessary stakeholders, especially science and mathematics teachers and school leaders—to hear their views on what is working and what needs improvement in schools. The space of at-cost and freely accessible materials and systems is full of many good examples. Built in this model is continual improvement of the tools to ensure that student and teacher needs are met in providing better software, more and greener interactivity, and reaching learning outcome more effectively and efficiently. STEAM abilities, adequate digital competency standards have to be in use to provide pathways that define what is expected of students, teachers, head teachers, teacher educators, and education officers. The current approach for such competency needs to be reviewed together with the Education Ministry

and its new Center for Innovative Pedagogical Technologies. In this context, the Component 2 is envisaged to support to achieve the following result:

Component 2/Mandatory Result 2: Better education quality

Output 2.1: Skills and competencies needed in the digital era, for both boys and girls, enhanced.

Better budgeting and spending on education development have been kept on the top of the policy agenda. The rules and processes that regulate how the government budgets for and spends on education need improvement for scaling the benefits of education upgrade and innovation. Without ongoing investment, school infrastructure, education content, and equipment decay, data integrity declines, and teaching and technical personnel who deliver education services leave. The present capital spending does not give government sufficient flexibility to make that investment, and governance structures do not focus enough on long-term ownership. The challenge government faces to effectively and efficiently finance education is not just a rules problem. It is also a management issue. Sound education finance requires management to have a comprehensive understanding of how the financial, operational, technical, and strategic aspects of delivery interact. There is distance between the line ministries, subordinate agencies, local authorities and schools responsible for education process and those who own the decisions on spending and resources, e.g. the Finance Ministry. The national authorities are strongly advised to rethink many cost-component aspects embedded in the National Education Programme and its APs to ensure fair and efficient resource distribution (e.g. voucher funding, per-capita funding, etc.). The space of cost effective education systems is full of many good examples. Thus, the project intends to work closely with the line ministries and agencies to share its expertise, with the goal of forming a cost-effective budget and policy formulation, which is reflected in the Component 3, notably:

Component 3/Mandatory Result 3: Improved education finance

Output 3.1: Strengthened national operational capacity to apply sound education finance at national and local/rural level

3.6 Means/input from the EU Member State Partner Administration(s)*:

The project will be implemented in the form of a Twinning contract between the EU Delegation and EU Member State(s). The implementation of the project requires one Project Leader (PL) with responsibility for the overall coordination of project activities and one Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA) to manage implementation of project activities, Component Leaders (CLs) and pool of short-term experts (STEs) within the limits of the budget. It is essential that the team has sufficiently broad expertise to cover all areas included in the project description.

Proposals submitted by Member States shall be concise and focused on the strategy and methodology and an indicative timetable underpinning this, the administrative model suggested, the quality of the expertise to be mobilised and clearly show the administrative structure and capacity of the Member State entity/ies. Proposals shall be detailed enough to respond adequately to the Twinning Fiche, but are not expected to contain a fully elaborated project. They shall contain enough detail about the strategy and methodology and indicate the sequencing and mention key activities during the implementation of the project to ensure the achievement of overall and specific objectives and mandatory results/outputs.

The interested Member State(s) shall include in their proposal the CVs of the designated PL and the Resident Twinning Advisor, as well as the CVs of the potentially designated component Leaders-CLs.

The Twinning project will be implemented by close co-operation between the partners aiming to achieve the mandatory results in sustainable manner.

The set of proposed activities will be further developed with the Twinning partners when drafting the initial work plan and successive rolling work plan every three months, keeping in mind that the

final list of activities will be decided in cooperation with the Twinning partner. The components are closely inter-linked and need to be sequenced accordingly.

3.6.1 Profile and tasks of the PL:

The Project Leader shall be a senior staff member at an EU Member State public (governmental) body. Minimum requirements for the PL's *profile* are:

- at least Master degree in relevant field or equivalent professional experience of 8 years;
- at least 3-year experience in the field of education policy formulation and implementation, as part of the overall professional experience;
- excellent command of English, both spoken and written.

The PL will implement the following tasks:

- overall coordination, guidance and monitoring of the project preparation and implementation;
- preparing the project progress reports with support of RTA;
- ensuring timely achievement of the project results;
- co-chairing the project Steering Committee;
- provision of legal and technical advice and policy analysis whenever needed;
- taking appropriate decisions for the smooth and effective implementation of the project.

3.6.2 Profile and tasks of the RTA:

The RTA should be a civil/public servant from an EU member State. He/she will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the project. Minimum requirements for the RTA's *profile* are:

- at least Master's degree or academic equivalent in education, pedagogy, education finance or other relevant fields or in its absence, professional experience in the relevant sectors of a minimum of 8 years;
- at least 3-year experience in the field of education policy formulation and implementation, school management or supervision, as part of the overall professional experience;
- good knowledge of relevant EU legislative and institutional arrangements;
- experience in education management, costing and/or administration;
- good inter-personal, communication and facilitation, training, presentation, networking, negotiation, analytical and organisational skills, ability to work effectively in a multicultural/multinational environment with consideration of different stakeholders' interests;
- good command of English, both spoken and written.

The following skills will be considered as an asset:

- previous experience in international projects;
- good command of Russian language

The RTA is expected to implement the following *tasks*:

- organisation and planning of the project activities both technically and administratively, overall supervision of the project implementation and coordination of all activities, as well as conducting the project administration;
- guiding the team members and coordination of their activities according with the defined work plans, for ensuing timely delivery of the project outputs;
- technical input to the project whenever needed and provision of advice in his/her field of expertise;
- organisation and supervision of the short and medium-term experts' works;
- assisting the PL in preparing the project progress reports.

3.6.3 Profile and tasks of Component Leaders:

The three Component Leaders will be deployed on medium term basis during the overall period of the project implementation. They will be identified by PL/RTA in the course of the project designing and implementation, and shall be agreed with the Beneficiary administration and the EU Project Manager, prior to contracting.

The Component Leaders shall have:

- at least Master's degree or academic equivalent in the subject relevant to the component or in its absence, professional experience in the relevant sectors of a minimum of 8 years;
- at least 3-year experience in their respective field/project component, as part of the overall professional experience;
- good command of English, both spoken and written;
- experience in international projects related to education management and development would be an asset.

In close cooperation with the RTA and their counterparts, the Component Leaders will organise, coordinate and supervise the work of the short-term experts related to their components, as well as provide technical expertise for implementing the activities defined by the work plan of the corresponding component and delivering the required outputs. The Terms of Reference for the Component Leaders will be designed by PL/RTA at the project work plan preparation stage.

3.6.4 Profile and tasks of other short-term experts:

The Short-Term Experts will provide expertise related to the specific technical tasks. They will be identified by PL/RTA in the course of the project designing and implementation, and will be agreed with the Beneficiary administration and the EU Project Manager, prior to contracting.

The Short-Term Experts shall have:

- at least Master's degree or academic equivalent in the subject relevant to their specific task or in its absence, professional experience in the relevant sectors of a minimum of 5 years;
- at least 3-year experience in their respective field;
- good communication, presentation and training skills.
- good command of English, both spoken and written;
- experience in international projects related to education management and development would be an asset.

4. Budget

EUR 2 000 000

5. Implementation Arrangements

5.1 *Implementing Agency responsible for tendering, contracting and accounting:*

The European Union Delegation to the Kyrgyz Republic will be responsible for tendering, contracting, payments, accounting and financial reporting, and will work in close cooperation with the beneficiary.

The person in charge of this project is:

Ms Gulnara Botobaeva

Programme Manager

Delegation of the European Union to the Kyrgyz Republic

Business Centre Orion, 21 Erkindik Boulevard, 5th Floor, 720040 Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Tel: (+996 312) 26 10 00

E-mail: gulnara.botobaeva@eeas.europa.eu

5.2 Institutional framework

The direct beneficiary of this Project is the [Ministry of Education and Science](#) (MoES), which is a principal executive body in charge of the implementation of the National Education Development Programme 2040.

5.3 Counterparts in the Beneficiary administration:

The PL and RTA counterparts will be staff of the MoES and will be actively involved in the management and coordination of the project.

5.3.1 Contact person:

Mr Bekjan Supanaliev- Deputy Minister of Education and Science of KR
257, Tynystanova str, Bishkek, 720040

5.3.2 PL counterpart

Mr Bekzhan Supanaliev- Deputy Minister of Education and Science of KR
257, Tynystanova str, Bishkek, 720040

5.3.3 RTA counterpart

Ms Gulsun Zhorobekova- specialist, International Cooperation and Investments Department
Ministry of Education and Science of KR, 257, Tynystanova str, Bishkek, 720040

6. **Duration of the project**

24 months

7. **Management and reporting**

7.1 **Language**

The official language of the project is the one used as contract language under the instrument - English. All formal communications regarding the project, including interim and final reports, shall be produced in the language of the contract.

7.2 **Project Steering Committee**

A project steering committee (PSC) shall oversee the implementation of the project. The main duties of the PSC include verification of the progress and achievements via-à-vis the mandatory results/outputs chain (from mandatory results/outputs per component to impact), ensuring good coordination among the actors, finalising the interim reports and discuss the updated work plan. Other details concerning the establishment and functioning of the PSC are described in the Twinning Manual.

7.3 **Reporting**

All reports shall have a narrative section and a financial section. They shall include as a minimum the information detailed in section 5.5.2 (interim reports) and 5.5.3 (final report) of the Twinning Manual. Reports need to go beyond activities and inputs. Two types of reports are foreseen in the framework of Twinning: interim quarterly reports and final report. An interim quarterly report shall be presented for discussion at each meeting of the PSC. The narrative part shall primarily take stock of the progress and achievements via-à-vis the mandatory results and provide precise recommendations and corrective measures to be decided by in order to ensure the further progress.

8. **Sustainability**

The Education Programme 2021-2040 along with its ongoing action plan is relevant and credible, which rests on the Government ability and leadership to tackle the challenges of the education reform. Despite frequent government turnover and the recent appointment of a new Minister of Education (October 2023), no significant policy shifts are observed. It is evidenced that the Education policy has internal logic and rationale and appears to have the right magnitude to achieve its goals. The policy is based on reliable data, adequate resources necessary to run the process and trusted institutions. The policy is also consistent with the longer-term vision and strategic direction of the [National Development Strategy 2040](#).

Based on the forecasts confirmed by the [IMF](#), the domestic revenue situation is relatively healthy but subject to significant risk due to external shocks. So far, financial sustainability is assured – recurrent and priority expenditures, including education sector financing, are protected in the budget. It should be noted that the Government has managed to maintain good level of education expenditure during the pandemic and economic downturn.

The current education cost estimates are reflected in the respective programme budget, annual budget and the Mid-Term Budget Forecasts. The budgets for 2022, 2023 and forecasts for 2024 and 2025 related to the education sector indicate that the sector continues to be well-financed both in allocations as a percentage of the total State Budget and in execution. It accounts for about 6% of GDP and between 17-20% of the total State Budget.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Kyrgyz Republic has displayed a high degree of commitment to reforms, through the implementation of the Education Development Programme 2040, and continuous improvements in implementation of the rolling 3-year Action Plans.

The participatory, ownership and empowerment project approach will ensure that the project beneficiaries will continue to sustain their activities beyond the project duration.

Capacity building and training of trainers measures will secure that they have a technical and managerial expertise to continue their activities. The expertise delivered by the project will contribute to their long-term sustainability. Policy issues, particularly for digital and green skills building, are especially relevant to designing and implementing a fit-for-future learning system and addressing youth unemployment.

Since this Twinning project also includes support to education policy formulation, costing and implementation, the sustainability of mandatory results/outputs will be organised by ensuring that project recommendations are backed up by at least basic impact assessments (regulatory, fiscal) and they are consulted with both internal and external stakeholders (inter-ministerial and public consultations), as required by the rules of procedure of Beneficiary country. Sufficient time will be allocated to this preparatory work during the project.

9. Crosscutting issues

Mainstreaming environment and climate change concerns as part of the decision processes of the MoES represents an important EU added value for the education sector in Kyrgyzstan. EU best practices in green procurement and skills will support low carbon and low environmental footprint choices. Integrated and improved quality of teaching and learning in green transition and sustainability will improve the quality of education and offer new opportunities for greening the education sector. The programme intends to promote and integrate knowledge and skills on environment, climate change and sustainable development and lifestyles through schools; and enhance commitment of future generations to sustainable development.

The project envisages promotion and mainstreaming gender equality in schools through reduction of gender stereotypes of new teaching and learning materials and increase of positive images of girls and boys to pursue gender rights. The project will contribute to the specific thematic objective/outcome '*Promoting gender equality in education*', which also includes access to STEM and digital education and training, under Thematic Area - Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women of the [EU Gender Action Plan III](#) (2021-2025).

There is a growing recognition among stakeholders that economic growth is not sufficient to sustainably reduce poverty if it is not inclusive, particularly in the education sector. The most marginalised groups are often invisible in society: disabled children, children in remote villages, and the very poor. Inclusive education should be viewed in terms of including traditionally excluded or marginalised groups or making the invisible visible. The proposed project intends to pay a special attention to the efforts towards greater inclusive education in the country and promote social dialogue and actions contributing to human rights protection.

10. Conditionality and sequencing

There are no preconditions defined for this Twinning project.

11. Indicators for performance measurement

Please see Annex 1: the Simplified Logical Framework Matrix

12. Facilities available

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic will host the Member State experts in its premises. The EU MS experts will be provided with office space, security related arrangements and facilities for training, seminars, conferences.

Purchase of notebooks/laptops, including necessary software, for the project staff shall be budgeted in the project to ensure daily interactions in office and while teleworking within the global ceiling of EUR 20,000 foreseen for the purchase of goods (see sections 3.8 '*Equipment and office supplies*' and 4 '*Facilities provided by the Beneficiary administration*' of the Twinning manual). Goods purchased with project funds become the property of the Beneficiary at the end of the project provided a handover certificate is signed by both PLs and the items are registered in the asset register of the Beneficiary.

ANNEXES TO PROJECT FICHE

1. The Simplified Logical framework matrix as per Annex C1a
2. The National Education Development Strategy/Programme 2021-2040
3. The new education programme "Altyn Kazyk" presentation built on a new vision and sector review
4. Financing Agreement "Education Sector Reform Performance Contract" between EU and the Government of KR (April 2022)

Annex C1a : Simplified Logical Framework

	Description	Indicators (with relevant baseline and target data)	Sources of verification	Risks	Assumptions (external)
Overall Objective	Policy and technical support to accelerate progress towards achievement of the interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 4 (Education) and 5 (Gender).	<p>Target: Improved SDG score at the end of the intervention as per the Sustainable Development Report Baseline: 2023 SDG score-74.4</p> <p>Target: Improved Human development Index of KR at the end of the intervention. Baseline: 2022/2023 HDI- 0.701</p>	<p>National Statistics Data;</p> <p>The Sustainable Development Reporting;</p> <p>Human Development Reporting (UN)</p>	Instable country political situation, government reshuffle along with high turnover of senior staff at central and regional levels (Risk is moderate).	The political situation in the country remains stable and safe; The Kyrgyz Government has adequate resilience to external shocks and crises enabling to continue operations; The Kyrgyz Government remains committed to SDGs and fundamental values/human rights
Specific Objective	Capacity building of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic enabling to put in place an effective mechanism to promote inclusive and equitable quality education.	<p>Target: at least 3 practical solutions were put in place to promote (i) inclusive, (ii) equitable and (iii) quality education, with the EU support at the end of the intervention Baseline: 0</p>	Education Ministry progress reporting; Progress reports of Twinning project.	The frequent change of key stakeholders may lead to a lack of commitment to support the project agenda (Risk is moderate)	The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the European Union, and Development Partners continue to support the strategic goals of the National Education Development Programme 2040 and its 3-year Action Plan
Mandatory results/outputs by components	<p>Component 1/Mandatory Result 1: More inclusive and equitable education Output 1.1 Strengthened national operational capacity to prevent education divide, respond and address inclusive education challenges irrespective of gender, disability and/or location.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Target: Pre-service teacher training programme on inclusive education is developed for the relevant Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and at least 75 teachers are trained and certified as trainers (ToT) through on-the-job training and study visit(s) to the EU MS(s) to integrate inclusive education and teaching, with the EU support Baseline: 0</p> <p>1.1.2 Target: Inclusive education policy in relevant strategic documents (e.g. AP, Accessible country programme) is reviewed and at least 3 practical actions are implemented with the EU support Baseline: 0</p>	Education Ministry progress reporting; Inclusive education pre-service teacher training programme; Progress reports of Twinning project. Interview/questionnaire for teachers and students.	<p>The policy makers are reluctant to participate in the project events. Joint project actions with relevant national authorities are limited or not feasible (Risk is low).</p> <p>Mid-level counterpart representatives have no adequate competency (Risk is low).</p>	<p>The Education Ministry and the Kyrgyz Government in general remain committed to the implementation of the EU-funded Twinning project.</p> <p>Staff provided by the project target groups are willing to participate in the project activities and have adequate status, competence and responsibilities.</p> <p>Civil Society Organisations are ready to play a constructive role</p>

		<p>1.1.3 Target: Inclusive education through enrolment of children with disabilities (gender disaggregated data) is piloted in at least 9 primary urban and rural schools with the EU support</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p>			
	<p>Component 2/Mandatory Result 2: Better education quality</p> <p>Output 2.1 Skills and competencies needed in the digital era, for both boys and girls, enhanced</p>	<p>2.1.1 Target: at least 75 teachers are trained and certified as trainers (ToT) through a special online self-education programme/training developed by the project and study visit(s) to the EU MS(s) to integrate STEAM teaching with the EU support</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p>	<p>Education Ministry progress reporting; Progress reports of Twinning project. Interview/questionnaire for teachers and students.</p>		<p>and voice for the inclusive education and SDGs.</p>
		<p>2.1.2 Target: STEAM-related policy in relevant strategic documents (e.g. AP) is reviewed and at least 3 practical actions are implemented with the EU support</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p>			
		<p>2.1.3 Target: Working platform of the EU and Kyrgyz Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is operationalised to exchange experience and promote STEAM best practice with the EU support</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p>	<p>Website of the network platform and/or joint events publications, MoES and project reports</p>		
	<p>Component 3/Mandatory Result 3: Improved education finance</p> <p>Output 3.1: Strengthened national operational capacity to apply sound education finance at national and local/rural level</p>	<p>3.1.1 Target: at least 20 education finance specialists from MoES, urban and rural subordinate bodies are trained as trainers (ToT) through on-the-job training and study visit(s) to the EU MS(s) to integrate sound finance management with the EU support</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p>	<p>Education Ministry progress reporting; Progress reports of Twinning project. Interview/questionnaire for finance specialists.</p>		
		<p>3.1.2 Target: Education finance policy in relevant strategic documents (e.g. AP, programme budgeting) is reviewed and at least 3 practical actions are implemented with the EU support</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p>			