



## *Insufficient efficiency in the work of the Ministry of Education and the PMU has influenced the School Modernization Program to be extended several times, as well as for some of the selected school facilities to be excluded from the program*

School Modernization Program implies, above all, construction, expansion, reconstruction and/or equipping of schools throughout Serbia. The estimated value of the project is around 100 million euros, of which 50 million euros were provided from a loan of the European Investment Bank. The project started in 2010. Since its inception, the project was managed by the Ministry of Education, while the PMU was involved in project management activities in 2014. Equipping and construction works on 213 selected school buildings were to be completed by the end of 2014.

The deadlines were, however, extended three times, the most recent one until the end of 2021. On average, three years would pass from concluding the contract on execution of works until the technical approval of works completed per each school facility, which is significantly longer than expected. The analysis of average duration was based on 117 school facilities contracted in the period 2015-2018, while the underlying reasons for such long time periods were assessed based on nine selected case studies.

The time period for the contractor to commence works exceeded the expected time period, and all project stakeholders contributed to it. This is particularly true for the Ministry of Education, as it failed to verify the technical documentation and readiness for construction, prior to publication of public procurement for execution of works

The applied manner for extensions of deadlines has resulted in the expert supervision and the technical approval commission's failure to identify delays in the execution of works, due to which no reasons or responsibility for the delay in the execution of works were determined, including the possible collection of penalties on that basis.



The contractors' requests for extension of deadlines were not timely responded to, due to inefficiency in expert supervision work. Likewise, in 8 out of 12 assessed cases, Ministry of Education failed to appropriately extend the deadline for execution of works.

Technical approval of works in none of the nine case studies was executed within the reasonable time frame, which was influenced by the Ministry of Education, expert supervision and contractor. As a consequence, teaching staff and pupils would start using the school facility before the technical approval.

### **Key recommendations**

#### **To the Ministry of Education, to:**

- ✎ ensure the verification of the completeness and adequacy of the technical documentation and the readiness for construction work, before announcing the public procurement of works
- ✎ apply an appropriate way of extending the deadline for the execution of works
- ✎ undertake the necessary activities in order to approve the performed works in a reasonable time
- ✎ ensure that determining delays in execution of works is appropriately done, explaining in detail the reasons and responsibilities
- ✎ pay additional attention to the implementation of construction works contracts, where the contractor is late with the execution of works, in order to undertake required measures, in a timely manner.

Insufficient efficiency and engagement of all participants influenced the implementation of the School modernization program to be significantly slower than planned. As a consequence, around 18% of the selected school facilities were not involved in the project. Due to the urgency of the works and the slow implementation of the project, most of these schools sought other sources to finance the works, while a small portion of schools was rejected as they were unprepared or because insufficient funds were not available.