



 **Internews Kosova**

Monitoring report from the second round of the 2014 National Matura Exam

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INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Summary

Noting the significance of the State Matura Exam, and bearing in mind the numerous remarks and complaints pertaining to its conduct in the previous years and in the first round of the exam this year, Internews Kosova and BIRN monitored this process during its second round in 2014.

On 27 June 2014 a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between MEST and KALLXO.com, on the monitoring of the State Matura Exam. Pursuant to this Memorandum of Cooperation, KALLXO.com monitored 36 testing centers in 21 municipalities: Prishtinë, Obiliq, Fushë Kosovë, Podujevë, Kaçanik, Suharekë, Ferizaj, Skenderaj, Lipjan, Mitrovicë, Gjiilan, Malishevë, Istog, Deçan, Gjakovë, Prizren, Podujevë, Pejë, Kamenicë, Vushtri and Klinë.

More than 50 reports were gathered from the field, 19 of which yielded articles on specific topics. The main article was updated 28 times during exam day, with at least 20 videos and tens of images depicting the situation, as viewed by KALLXO.com monitors.

KALLXO.com reports prove that there were significant deficiencies in the monitored testing centers as far as exam process preparation and conduct are concerned. Despite precautionary measures undertaken, such as contracting

security companies to administer the test after the failure of secondary school staff and teachers to appropriately administer the first round of the exam, monitored exam centers did not give the impression of an academic environment that provide for unhindered conduct of National Matura Exam.

This report contains details of the most common findings, which are characteristic for all centers monitored during the exercise.

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

KALLXO.COM

platforma



The online platform www.kallxo.com is a joint project of the organizations Internews Kosova, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, NGO “LENS” and the Anti-Corruption Agency, financially supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The platform offers opportunities for all Kosovo citizens to report on corruption, organized crime, fraud, conflict of interest as well as on other cases such as abuse of official position, negligence, endanger of human rights of Kosovo citizens or endanger of general interest.

Internews Kosova (I/KS) is a non-governmental and non-for-profit organization, established in 1999. Main aim of I/KS is democracy development, support to civil society, development of independent media, professional journalism and investigative reporting in Kosovo and in the region. I/KS, in cooperation with BIRN, produces television shows “Jeta në Kosovë” and “Drejtësia në Kosovë”.

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) is a media organization specialized in investigative journalism, monitoring of public services and televised broadcasting.

For almost ten years, has BIRN produced and broadcasted on Radio-Television of Kosovo the shows “Jeta në Kosovë” and “Drejtësia në Kosovë”, published its online daily newspaper “Jeta në Kosovë”, and published the only English newspaper in Kosovo, “Prishtina Insight”. In the last four years, BIRN has also monitored the provision of public services.

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Unjustified absence of administrators

KALLXO.com monitors reported that in a number of centers, persons responsible for the conduct of the exam failed to report to duty on exam day.

One such example is the exam center in "Sami Frashëri" Gymnasium in Prishtina, where two exam monitoring officials were absent.

Mensur Neziri, the MEST officer assigned to this center, told KALLXO.com that only one of three UP officers assigned to monitor the center was present. Such absences caused problems for both exam organization and monitoring in this center.

A similar situation was witnessed in "Kadri Kusari" school in Gjakova, where one of the MEST officials assigned to monitor the exam was absent. Officials from this center provided no explanation to KALLXO.com monitors about the identity of the official or the reasons for his/her absence.

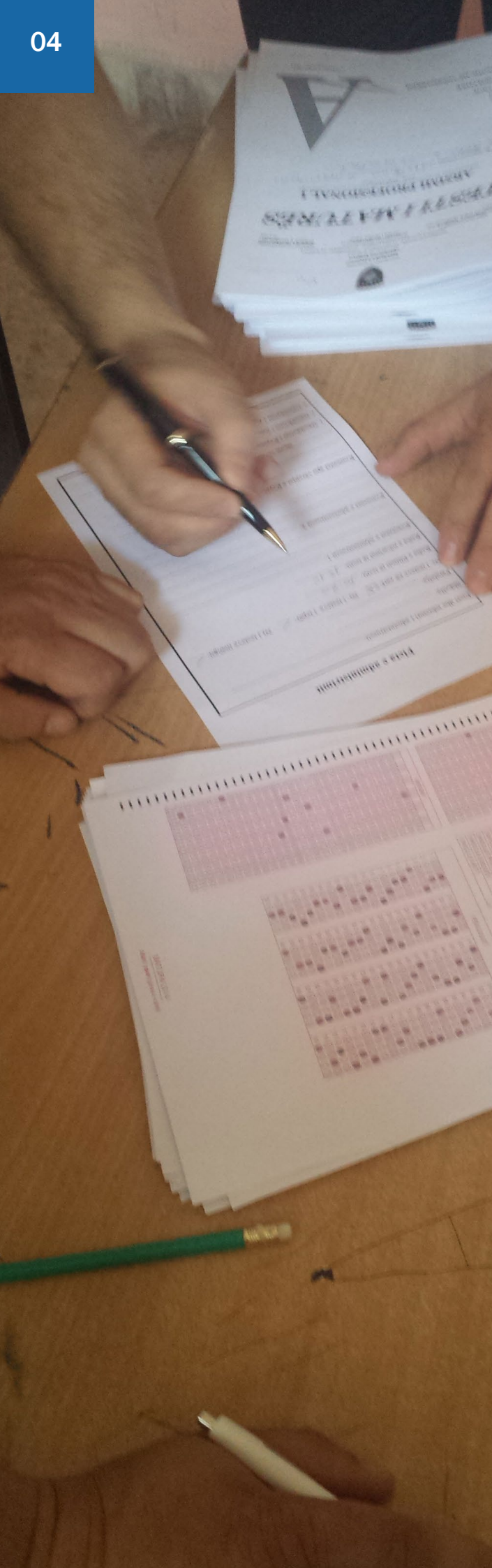
During exam day, KALLXO.com monitors received a complaint from Artan

Alidema, the MEST officer delegated in Secondary school "Zenel Hajdini" in Gjilan, who said that it is impossible to control 200 pupils with only 5 security guards available.

Alidema also voiced concerns on the issue of accompanying of students to the toilet, since there were no female security officers to accompany female students.

Faced with such situation, girls were accompanied to the toilet by two female MEST officers, who were tasked with ensuring proper conduct of the exam and not with the accompanying of students to and from the toilet.

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INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Delays

Another problem by KALLXO.com monitors was the late arrival to centers of both MEST staff and exam materials.

Monitors reported that in two centers, in Prizren and another in Gjakovë, the exams were postponed due to the late arrival of the tests.

KALLXO.com monitor reported that in “Kadri Kusari” in Gjakovë, the exam ran late as the tests arrived only at 09:40, although they were supposed to arrive no later than 09:00.

Significant delays were also noted in “Avdyl Frashëri” testing center in Prizren. This school was also used to test the knowledge of students from the Secondary musical school “Lorenc Antoni”.

Tests for these students arrived 1 hour and 20 minutes late, as MEST mistakenly mixed tests prepared for this school with those meant for the professional art school.

This error on MEST’s behalf created an unpleasant climate in the school, since students had to wait for over 1 hour and 20 minutes, thus also obstructing students from other schools undergoing examination in the same center.



INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Presence of unauthorized individuals in testing centers

KALLXO.com monitors noted the presence in testing centers of municipal education directorate officials, mostly directors of such directorates who are eligible to monitor the conduct of the exam, but not interfere in any manner.

As reported by monitors, visits mostly included municipal education directorate officials and mostly resulted in disturbance of order and distraction to students undergoing testing.

It was for these reasons that MEST officials ordered the Director of the Municipal Education Directorate of Istog municipality, Agim Haxhiu, to leave the premises of the testing center in “Bajram Curri” secondary school in Istog.

His removal from the center was preceded by Mr. Haxhiu's loud expressions in the testing center, complaining about MEST rules, which allegedly stressed the students. After considering that the presence of the director was causing a disturbance in the testing center, MEST officials Faton Ismajli and Gëzim Qerimi asked him to leave the testing center.

Shortly after, Bedri Hajzeraj, an officer of the municipal education directorate, was similarly removed from the same center for disturbing the order.

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Identification of students



In some testing centers, such as “Karagaç” in Peja and “Kadri Kusari” in Gjakovë, students were allowed to enter the testing center without due verification of their identity.

Identification of students was performed only later, after they had settled in testing centers and tests were disseminated. Then, officials noted a number of cases where students were not equipped with adequate identification documents.

This was resolved by provisionally suspending the presence of such students in the exam, until their relatives managed to bring them the necessary documents. Expulsion of students from testing centers due to their failure to provide adequate identity documentation, and their subsequent allowance back at the premises, caused confusion and obstruction to the testing process in general.

For instance, in “Karagaç” testing center in Pejë, student A.M. was expelled from the exam because he could not present an identification document. Identification documents were similarly controlled after the exam started in “Vëllezërit Frashëri” in Deçan.

In “Kadri Kusari”, a student was allowed to take the test for 20 minutes, although she did not have her ID card, then she was instructed to leave the exam, only to be allowed to return to the exam later.

Such practices were not applied in another school monitored by KALLXO.com monitors. Namely in “Xhemail Mustafa” in Prishtina, ID cards were checked before the exam started, and there were at least three cases when students were not allowed to take part in the exam without a valid identification document.

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Administration by security companies

For the second phase of the exam, MEST decided to contract the administration of tests to private security companies.

MEST made this decision as a reaction to reports from the first phase of the Matura exam, which showed that secondary school teachers tasked with administering the exam either did not possess the needed authority, or showed no willingness to provide an appropriate environment.

This MEST decision was heavily criticized by the general public.

Moreover, this step was often deemed offensive towards secondary school students and teachers.

We consider that the justification for this MEST action should be addressed in a special report, along with the analysis on reasons why teachers fail to provide adequate prerequisites for appropriate conduct of the exam.

However, KALLXO.com monitors concluded that in a number of testing centers the administrators hired by security companies also failed to perform their tasks in a professional manner.

In the testing center “Tafil Kasumaj” in Deçan, KALLXO.com monitors filmed a group of students copying from their notes under the nose of the security officer.

The same happened in “Skënderbeu” in Kaçanik. Moreover, students there were also using their mobile phones.

In “Karakaç” testing center in Peja, our monitor filmed a student using his mobile phone, in close proximity with the security officer.

**‘KARAGAÇ’
PEJË**

Our monitor filmed a student using his mobile phone, in close proximity with the security officer.

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

(Lack of) Instructions by the Ministry of Education

The Administrative Instruction on “Disciplinary measures for students and staff responsible for the conduct of the Matura exam”, was adopted by MEST a few days before the exam was held.

This Administrative Instruction stipulates sanctions for disciplinary violations during the exam. However, this instruction was not preceded by a comprehensive guideline, which would be accessible for all and would ensure that all stakeholders understand what is allowed and what is prohibited during the Matura exam.

On the other hand, bearing in mind that the entire academic system is affected by moral inflation, as witnessed by reports ranging from continuous and unsanctioned misuses during the national Matura exams in the previous years all the way to academic scandals at the summit of Kosovo's education system, MEST should have strived to undertake all measures necessary to explain to the best possible extent the code of conduct during the National Matura Exam, and not limit itself to the publication of the list of sanctions.

Specifically, KALLXO.com considers that MEST should have shown willingness to vest special efforts, in addition to the issuance of the said administrative instruction, by:

- a** Ensuring unobstructed access to this document to the general public, officials involved in the testing process, parents, students and other stakeholders, by publishing it online;
- b** Issuing the list of clear instructions to be followed by students during the test, along with the list of sanctions for violations thereof;
- c** Compiling a clear protocol of distinct rules to be implemented by all MEST staff members, municipal officials, exam administrators and other stakeholders involved in the organization and conduct of the exams.

Before listing other problems noticed during the monitoring exercise, the following is a proposal for how MEST instructions, which should be made public before every test, should look. The instructions below are extracted from the University of Oxford examination regulations, and are standard rules also used in Great Britain's secondary schools.

¹ Kësaj atmosfere i ndihmon edhe një atmosferë akademike që nga lidhshipi i Universitetit të Prishtinës e deri në nivelet më të ulëta të shkollimit ku kopjimi dhe gjetja e rrugës së shkrutë deri te nota dhe diplomimi është ves, nëse jo i inkurajuar, ves totalisht i tolerueshëm në sistemin shkollor në Kosovë



University of Oxford examination regulations¹

University of Oxford examination code of conduct²

DO

DON'T

Arrive 20 minutes before your examination

Arrive just as your examination is scheduled to start

Read carefully the instructions on the front of your examination paper

Leave your examination within the first or last 30 minutes

Write in black or blue ink

Write in pencil

Cross through your rough notes

If you don't cross through your rough notes they may be marked by an examiner

Complete the question numbers you have answered on the front page of the script booklet

Complete the examiners column on the front page of the script booklet

Complete your candidate details on the front of our script booklet: candidate number, date, examination

Write your name, University ID or Student Self Service number on the front of the script booklet

DO

DON'T

Raise your hand if you have a question

Communicate with any person during the exam, other than the invigilator

Raise your hand if you suspect there is a mistake on the examination paper

Ask if you do not understand a word or phrase on the exam paper, neither examiner nor invigilator is permitted to answer

Raise your hand if you need to leave the room, for example in the case of illness

Leave or re-enter the examination unless permitted by an invigilator

¹ <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance>

² For more details on regulations and instructions, see: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/contents.shtml>

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Use of electronic appliances

a. Phones

Administrative Instruction No. stipulates rigorous sanctions for the use of mobile phones and electronic devices, which may be misused during the testing process.

Since the instruction provides no concrete details and fails to clarify whether phones can be brought along into the testing area or not, the reaction of administrators to such cases varied.

KALLXO.com monitors reached the conclusion that MEST has not provided clear and uniform instructions on how testing center staff should react if they find that students are carrying electronic devices to the tests.

In certain centers, such as in “Xhemajl Mustafa” in Prishtina, administrators opted to collect all telephones at their own tables, whereas administrators in other centers did not ask from the students to remove their phones, but merely to turn them off.

b. Social networks

In addition to differences in controlling telephones and electronic devices, KALLXO.com monitored social media and noted concrete cases when mobile phones were used for the purpose of cheating during the testing process.

Two students from Podujevë managed to post pictures from inside the testing center, during the exam. Reacting to reports from KALLXO.com, MEST intervened and identified and sanctioned the students committing the violation.

Also, KALLXO.com monitor in testing center “Karagaç” submitted clear footage of a student using a telephone during the exam.

The administrative instruction provides no concrete details and fails to clarify whether phones can be brought along into the testing area or not

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Discipline of administrators and commissioners during the exam



KALLXO.com monitors reported that order and quiet in testing centers was also infringed by those called to protect it.

In most reports monitors found unnecessary conversations between students and monitors, which raised suspicions that the students were assisted in completing the tests.

When responsible officials were asked about the reasons for such conversations, they said that they were not helping students complete their tests, but rather responding to

requests for clarifications and granting permission to visit the restrooms.

Similar communication escalated in a case in “Vëllezërit Frashëri” in Deçan, when a female student was expelled from the exam after she complained about the behavior of commissioner Ardita Berisha, who was threatening students to maintain silence and refrain from cheating in a loud voice.

According to the KALLXO.com monitor, the student protesting such behavior was expelled from the exam, whereas the student that was breaking the silence in the first place continued her exam.



INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Discipline of students during the exam

A major problem identified by KALLXO.com monitors is conversation between students during the exam.

Footage from testing centers reveals that MEST again failed to provide appropriate academic prerequisites for a proper testing process.

The greatest deficiencies pertain to the culture of MEST officials and their tolerance of un-disciplined behavior during the testing process.

Testing Center Managers failed to impose academic authority and discipline students who misbehaved, who, in turn, also obstructed other well-behaved students.

KALLXO.com monitors report that some student groups had concrete communication plans, using 'sign language'.

Due to the free seating policy, such well-prepared groups were able to communicate and exchange information without much difficulty.

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Crowds in test packaging



KALLXO.com monitors also identified problems during the collection and submission of completed tests, upon conclusion of the testing process.

According to the rules, completed tests were to be placed in an envelope and submitted, however, due to the lack of appropriate guidance, rules were not strictly applied and crowds were created in front of the official table collecting and packaging completed tests.

This commotion was used by students to communicate among each-other, thus obstructing other students which were yet to complete their tests.

Also, KALLXO.com monitors revealed a number of cases when MEST officials did not have clear information on where to keep the tests until they were picked up by the arranged transport services.

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Recommendations

Based on KALLXO.com monitoring, Internews Kosova and BIRN recommend to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to take into consideration the following issues in the future organization of the State Matura Exams:

1

Written tests should be encouraged further, as means to assess knowledge throughout the school year, thus developing a culture of professional testing among both students and teachers, which will help the latter encourage the creation of a professional and academic atmosphere that encourages discipline and rewards proper conduct. If students benefit from such practice throughout their education, chances are that students will develop the culture and become allies in ensuring adequate conduct of tests, rather than subjects that have to be controlled by security officers;

2

Administration of the testing process should be entirely conducted by secondary school, respectively primary school teachers;

3

Protocols and responsibilities of officials engaged in test administration processes should be disseminated clearly in written form, in a timely manner, in order to ensure adequate sharing of detailed information on the possible situations that may occur during the testing process, and to ensure a uniform, Kosovo-wide reaction to such situations. Some such instructions are provided in this report;

**4**

The responsibility to participate in and administer the testing process could be regulated contractually with all teachers. Their engagement in the testing process should not be on a voluntary basis, but rather regulated as a contractual obligation of teachers, with clear and full stipulation of rights and responsibilities. In cases when it is proven that teachers have failed to administer tests, the extent of their responsibility should be reflected in the performance of their employment contract and not only in the exam day per diem allowance;

5

Check the identity of students at the entrance of the testing center, and not retroactively after they have entered the center or after the exam commenced. Each student should present a valid identification card with a picture at the entrance, otherwise his/her entry should be rejected;

6

Prohibit all electronic devices in the testing center, and not only their use. Students should not be allowed to bring their phones or other electronic devices listed in the instructions, which should be published by MEST;

7

Prohibit the use of cellular phones in testing centers for MEST officials as well;

8

Apply without exception the rule that no person is allowed to enter or exit the examination hall during the testing process, namely from its commencement to the official conclusion, except for toilet visitations for students, who should be accompanied by a supervisor of their own gender. Persons that wish to leave the examination hall for any other reason should not be allowed to return to the examination hall. Students with special needs may request from MEST to provide special conditions that suit their needs. MEST should review such requests individually, and act in accordance with the law;

**9**

There should be wall clocks in each testing hall, in order for students to know the exact time remaining for the examination and to be able to adequately plan their time;

10

Students should be notified upon the elapse of the first hour, second hour, and given notifications on the time remaining, at 30 minute and 10 minute thresholds;

11

Provide a protected space and a system for collecting and protecting personal belongings, including handbags and phones, at the entrance of each testing center;

12

Increase the distance between seats, in order for students not to obstruct one another during the examination process;

13

Professional school students should not be examined in the same hall with regular students;

14

Provide a clean and odor-free environment, due to their adverse impact on student performance;

15

Provide adequate ventilation in the examination hall during the test;

**16**

Students' family members and other unauthorized persons should not be allowed in the school courtyards;

17

Such unauthorized persons shall include all municipal education directorate staff, including respective directors, which were not selected by MEST to be part of the inspection teams;

18

Dress code for students in examination should be in line with school rules applied during the usual education process;

19

Examination should not be performed in spaces that don't meet appropriate acoustic requirements;

INTERNEWS KOSOVA

Publications on 2014 Matura Exam monitoring:

Students from Podujevë caught publishing the test on Facebook

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Kapen-Nxenesit-qe-Shperndane-Testin-ne-Facebook-VIDEO-1342>

Copying under the watchful eye of the steward

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Kopjohet-Ne-Sy-Te-Sigurimit-TV-1348>

Copying from phones in Pejë

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Kopjohet-me-Telefon-ne-Peje-1363>

Students expelled from the test in Pejë

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Flasin-Dy-Maturantet-e-Perjashtuar-nga-Testimi-ne-Peje-1345>

Two persons arrested in the vicinity of the testing center in Malishevë

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Arrestohen-Dy-Persona-Afer-Qendres-se-Testimit-ne-Malisheve-TV-1344>

MEST escorts out the municipal education officer in Istog

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/MAShT-i-Largon-nga-Shkolla-e-Istogut-Edhe-Zyrtarin-e-Arsimit-1338>

Test annulled after getting caught taking its picture

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/I-Anulohet-Testi-Pasi-Zihet-Duke-e-Fotografuar-Ate-1341>

Students copy from phones in Kamenicë

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Nxenesit-Kopjojne-me-Telefona-ne-Kamenice-1340>



Students expelled in Gjilan, Gjakovë and Deçan

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Perjashtime-ne-Gjilan-Gjakove-e-Decan-1339>

Tests arrive late in Prizren

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Testet-ne-Shkollen-Lorenc-Antoni-Arrijne-me-Vonese-1335>

Tests arrive late in Gjakovë

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Vonohen-Testet-ne-Gjakove-1332>

In Prishtina, students without an identification document are not examined

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Nuk-i-Lene-ne-Test-Se-Nuk-e-Kane-Leternjoftimin-1334>

MEST officer absent in Suharekë

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Mungon-Zyrtari-i-MAShT-it-ne-Suhareke-1333>

**All reporting and monitoring information
can be found at:**

<http://live.kallxo.com/sq/MTL/Perfundon-Testi-i-Matures-2014-1331>

