

## **ORGANISATION OF PROVISION TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

### **POLICY BRIEF**

#### **Policy context**

There is increasing acceptance among all countries, supported by Article 24 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UNCRPD), that inclusive education offers the best educational opportunities for learners with disabilities.

At European Union (EU) level, Article 26 of the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) provides a guiding principle for EU legislative and policy measures to support full inclusion of children with disabilities. This is reflected in the [European Disability Strategy 2010–2020](#), which clearly supports the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education. Furthermore, it commits the EU to support, through the [Education and Training 2020 programme](#), the member states' efforts to remove legal and organisational barriers to people with disabilities entering the general education and lifelong learning systems and to guarantee them inclusive education and personalised training at all levels of education.

However, the range of approaches used in 'operationalising' inclusive education varies widely and the Organisation of Provision project set out to provide concrete examples to help countries to move towards a rights-based approach. This requires a change in approach from organising provision in terms of individual support (often based on medical diagnosis), to considering how systems are organised to support mainstream schools to meet the needs and fulfil the rights of all learners. In the current climate, cost-effective ways of managing resources while maintaining quality are also needed.

#### **Project findings**

Agency member countries initiated the three-year Organisation of Provision project in order to examine the following key question: how are systems of provision organised to meet the needs of learners identified as having disabilities under the UNCRPD in inclusive settings within the compulsory school sector?

From the project desk research, site visits and seminars, the following points were noted as necessary for the development of inclusive practice and the organisation of effective support:



- Conceptual clarity regarding inclusive education.
- Legislation and policy that recognises the synergy between the UNCRPD and the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) in prioritising the rights of children with disabilities and ensuring consistent policy and practice at all system levels.
- A systemic view that focuses on developing the ‘inclusive capability’ of the education system as a whole and encourages strong links, collaboration and support between and within all levels (i.e. between national and local policy-makers, education and school leaders, teachers, other professionals, learners and families).
- Inclusive accountability that involves all stakeholders, including learners, and informs policy decisions to ensure the full participation and achievement of all learners, but in particular those vulnerable to underachievement.
- Strong, shared leadership to effectively manage change.
- Teacher education and continuing professional development for inclusion to ensure that teachers develop positive attitudes and take responsibility for all learners.
- A clear role for specialist settings to develop as resource centres to increase the capability of mainstream schools and ensure quality provision and well-qualified professional support for learners with disabilities.
- School organisation, teaching approaches, curriculum and assessment that support equivalent learning opportunities for all.
- Efficient use of resources through collegiality and co-operation, developing a flexible continuum of support rather than allocating funding to specific groups.

These areas are broadly agreed in research literature and in recent Agency work, such as [Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education](#) (2011), as well as in the Organisation of Provision project activities.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations, based on the main project outcomes, are addressed to policy-makers and aim to improve systems of support for all learners, in particular those with disabilities in mainstream schools.

### ***Child rights and participation***

Policy-makers should:



- Review national legislation and education policy to ensure that they are consistent with and actively support the principles of both the UNCRC and the UNCPRD and uphold the right of all learners to full participation in school with their own local peer group. This would include in particular:
  - the right to education and inclusion;
  - non-discrimination on the grounds of disability;
  - the right of the child to express their view;
  - access to assistance.

### ***Conceptual clarity and coherence***

Policy-makers should:

- Clarify the concept of inclusion across and between levels of the system as an agenda that increases quality and equity for all learners, addressing underachievement by all vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities. All education policy-makers need to take responsibility for **all** learners.
- Consider the links between system levels (i.e. between national/local policy-makers, local education/school leaders, teachers, other professionals and learners and their families) and enhance them through collaboration and coherent partnerships between ministries and local services. Such action should broaden perspectives, increase mutual understanding and build the 'inclusive capability' of the education system as a whole.
- Provide incentives for schools to take all learners from the local community and ensure that methods of assessment, inspections and other accountability measures support inclusive practice and inform further improvement of provision for all learners.

### ***Continuum of support***

Policy-makers should:

- Develop a 'continuum of support' for teachers, support staff and, in particular, for school leaders through the use of research, networking and links to universities and initial teacher education institutions in order to provide development opportunities for all groups as lifelong learners.



- Develop the role of special schools as a resource to increase the capability of mainstream schools and improve support for learners. There is a need to maintain and further develop the specialist knowledge and skills of resource centre personnel in ways that enable them to support school staff (for example, through counselling and collaboration), as well as provide a specialist network that will enhance support for learners, such as those with low-incidence disabilities.
- Develop more accessible curriculum and assessment frameworks and support greater flexibility in pedagogy, school organisation and resource allocation so that schools can work in innovative ways to develop a continuum of support for learners, rather than fitting them into an existing system.

More information is available from the Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education project web area: <http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/organisation-of-provision>

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