

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSION

Policy Mapping Grid: Bulgaria



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Further information about the Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion (TPL4I) activities is available on the [TPL4I web area](#).

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SECTION 1: WIDER POLICY CONTEXT

Wider policy context

In Bulgaria, there is new educational legislation that has come into force since 2016. The basic normative document is the Pre-School and School Education Act. This act officially regulates full inclusive education from kindergarten until completion of the last secondary education stage. Inclusive education is implemented at pre-school and school levels through a concept to support personal development.

There are two levels of educational support: general and additional support for personal development. Each kindergarten and school appoints a team to support personal development with the participation of psychologists, speech therapists and resource teachers.

The main definition in the Bulgarian law on inclusive education is:

“Inclusive education” is the process of understanding, accepting and supporting the individuality of each child or pupil and the variety of needs of all children and pupils through involvement and inclusion of resources aimed at removing the obstacles to teaching and learning and to creating opportunities for development and participation of children and pupils in all aspects of life in the community.
[\(Pre-School and School Education Act of 1 August 2016\)](#)

The second important regulatory document in this area is the Inclusive Education Ordinance. This regulatory document sets out the main practical procedures for implementing school-based inclusive education policy. A regional personal development support team for children and learners with special educational needs (SEN) is being introduced. This supports school teams and directs learners with SEN to continuing and vocational training. (Inclusive Education Ordinance of 18 December 2018)

In 2019, the **Algorithm for Co-operation between Educational Institutions and Social Assistance Directorates and Local Social Service Providers** was approved. This document is a joint effort between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. It stipulates how social workers and teachers should co-operate in dealing with children at risk and, where necessary, the families of such children should use social services in the community. This document also regulates ways of reporting from kindergartens and schools to local child protection departments for follow-up.

In collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Education and Science is planning to introduce a new model for assessing individual educational needs for learners with SEN. This model is based on the **World Health Organization’s [International Classification of Functioning, Health and Disability: Children and Youth Version \(ICF-CY\)](#)**. In this regard, 60 trainers have been trained to adapt the new framework for functional assessment of educational needs. In 2020, they are expected to conduct training with school teams across the country.



Wider policy context

Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Science currently show that 4,004 children with SEN are in general kindergartens with additional support and 17,016 learners with SEN are in mainstream schools across the country. There are 677 learners in special schools for children with sensory disabilities. There are 2,737 learners with multiple disabilities and SEN who attend special education support centres across the country.



SECTION 2: VISION AND MAIN PRINCIPLES OF TPL4I POLICY

2.1 Policy vision

Policy priorities	Findings
<p>2.1.1 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers (i.e. student teachers, beginning teachers, experienced teachers, teacher educators) can access career-long professional learning opportunities regarding the principles of inclusive education</p>	<p>2.1.1.1 'Children and students with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases are taught on integrated basis in kindergartens and in schools'. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Key Features of the Education System)</p> <p>2.1.1.2 <i>The Bulgarian Council of Ministers adopted a national plan for integration of children with SEN (2004–2007) in December 2003. ... In January 2004, the Ministry adopted a 'Strategy for Educational Integration of Children from Ethnic Minorities'. This 'gives Roma parents the right to choose their child's school, and the schools the duty to accept and assist them, with special assistants' (source: OECD, 2007, p. 32). (European Agency, Country information for Bulgaria, Systems of support and specialist provision)</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>2.1.2 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their role and collaboration in and contribution to inclusive education</p>	<p>2.1.2.1 Kindergartens, schools, support centres for personal development and regional centres implement professional development activities for pedagogical specialists at institutional level to support the inclusive education process qualification plan as part of the annual plan (Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 on the Status and Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists)</p>
<p>2.1.3 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their pedagogical responsibility to promote the interaction, learning, participation and collaboration of all learners</p>	<p>2.1.3.1 The post of 'teacher' includes the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning, organising and conducting the educational process, based on the acquisition of key competences by children and learners; • implementing effective educational methods and approaches, according to the individual needs of children and learners; • effectively using digital technologies; • assessing children's and learners' progress in acquiring key competences; • analysing children's and learners' educational results and formed competences; • general and additional support for children's and learners' personal development for correct inclusion in the educational and social environment; • co-operating and interacting with the participants in the educational process and all interested parties; • participating in conducting national external evaluations, state matriculation exams, compulsory state examinations or state examinations for the acquisition of professional



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>qualification and/or acquiring competence for professions, the exercise of which requires such;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• preparing exam materials for assessing learners' knowledge and skills in the respective course or module;• career guidance and counselling for learners;• developing and implementing projects and programmes;• participating in professional mobility and professional communities;• developing and implementing strategic documents related to the institution's activity;• protecting children's and learners' lives and health;• additional activities or interesting activities;• keeping and storing the obligatory documents;• holding consultations with learners and parents;• creating a school culture of tolerance, co-operation and mutual assistance;• conducting or participating in research in the field of pre-school and school education. <p>(Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 on the Status and Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists)</p>

Evaluative comments for 'Policy vision'

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2.2 Main principles

Policy priorities	Findings
2.2.1 Teachers' professional learning is defined in policy as a prerequisite for inclusive education	2.2.1.1 'The National Action Plan states that all teachers should be trained in teaching children with SEN'. (European Agency, Country information for Bulgaria, Teacher education for inclusive education)
2.2.2 Policy states that the principles and practice of inclusive education should be part of initial teacher education	2.2.2.1 All students studying pedagogical specialties at universities in Bulgaria are obliged to undergo a training course on inclusive education and methodology for working with children with SEN. (Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 on the Status and Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists)
2.2.3 Policy states that beginning teachers should receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	2.2.3.1 <i>Teachers are initially given the role of "Junior Teachers". In the execution of their obligations they are helped by the "Senior Teacher" and under his direction they improve their practical competence and adapt themselves to the education process accordingly.</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Conditions of Service for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)
2.2.4 Policy ensures that experienced teachers receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	2.2.4.1 The post of 'Principal' includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning, organising and reporting on internal institutional qualifications; • analysing institutional qualification activities;



Policy priorities	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-ordinating participation in professional communities and exchange of good pedagogical practices; • including teaching for the acquisition of key competences by children and learners; • analysing the results of school assessments and exams; • assisting newly-appointed teachers and trainee teachers in cases where the principal has been appointed as their mentor; • methodological support for those occupying the position of ‘teacher’ and ‘senior teacher’; • developing school curricula and innovative and authorial curricula systems. (Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 on the Status and Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists)
<p>2.2.5 Policy states that specialist teachers and other professionals (e.g. speech and language therapists, multilingual education teachers and other professionals who work in schools) receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education</p>	<p>2.2.5.1 The Public Education Act (2002; 2003) ‘regulated the integrated training of children and pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in pre-schools, general education schools and vocational schools’. Practical enforcement of the law led to the creation of teams of experts. (European Agency, Country information for Bulgaria, Legislation and policy)</p> <p>2.2.5.2 <i>The National Education Plan states ...</i> <i>Teachers from pre-school and school education should have higher education and qualification degrees of ‘specialist in ...’, ‘bachelor’ or ‘master’, as well as administrative and pedagogical functions qualifications. Additional professional qualification in ‘special pedagogy’ (‘defectology’) applies when working with learners with SEN.</i> (European Agency, Country information for Bulgaria, Teacher education for inclusive education)</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>2.2.5.3</p> <p><i>In 2014, resource centres were created to support the inclusion of children with SEN. They are state units with additional curricula and activities like ‘corrective’ therapies and include consultation with parents and teachers. (European Agency, Country information for Bulgaria, Systems of support and specialist provision)</i></p> <p>2.2.5.4</p> <p>‘The employed specialists are speech therapists, psychologists, special educators and music teachers’. (European Agency, Country information for Bulgaria, Systems of support and specialist provision)</p>
2.2.6 Policy states that teacher educators working in university education departments or pedagogical institutes should be trained and committed to the inclusive education agenda in their courses, as understood in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy	2.2.6.1

Evaluative comments for ‘Main principles’

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SECTION 3: GOALS AND CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT FOR TPL4I POLICY

3.1 Goals

Policy priorities	Findings
3.1.1 Policy states that all teachers should have qualifications that reflect an inclusive education agenda	<p>3.1.1.1</p> <p><i>The position of ‘teacher’ or ‘educator’ requires a completed higher education and an education qualification degree ‘Master’, ‘Bachelor’ or ‘Specialist’ in a major from a professional direction in accordance with the Classifier of higher education and professional direction and the ‘teacher’ or ‘pedagogue’ professional qualification area. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Key Features of the Education System)</i></p> <p>3.1.1.2</p> <p><i>For work with children and students with special education needs one should have additional professional qualification in the corresponding direction of the ‘special pedagogy’ (‘defectology’) specialty. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.1.2 Policy states competence areas for inclusive education for all teachers working at different levels of education (e.g. professional development of all teachers to facilitate their involvement in co-teaching, planning together, developing differentiated materials collaboratively, etc.)</p>	<p>3.1.2.1</p> <p><i>The Ministry of education, youth and science has listed the necessary requirements for the pedagogical and methodological qualification of teachers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>is able to identify level of competency, specifics and preferences in learning style of both the class and the individual student;</i>• <i>is able to identify educational and developmental needs;</i>• <i>is able to define in a clear and concrete way educational goals on all levels - curriculum, lesson sections, concrete lessons;</i>• <i>knows various methods for planning the educational process; develops various educational materials and knows how to link goals to the educational process and the expected results;</i>• <i>knows various educational strategies, methods and techniques for teaching, educating, learning and motivating students;</i>• <i>knows how to assess the qualities and suitability of educational and teaching materials, developed to meet different educational needs;</i>• <i>knows various forms and means for quality control and evaluation of both students' achievements and the results of the educational process.</i> <p><i>The most important test for each student is the abovementioned required practice work during which professors can evaluate their students' performance and stimulate them to acquire the necessary skills. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>3.1.2.2</p> <p><i>Project BG051PO001 - 4-1.07 on 'Inclusive Education' under the Human Resources Development 2007–2013 Operational Programme aimed to create conditions for establishing an educational environment oriented towards personal development and inclusive education for 'students with deviant behaviour' (source: Ministry of Finance, 2016, National Reform Programme, 2016 Update, p. 24). It covered over 3,000 children and pupils with SEN and pre-primary children at risk of learning difficulties. In total, it covered over 2,000 professionals, teachers and other team members for resource support. (European Agency, Country information for Bulgaria, Legislation and policy)</i></p>
<p>3.1.3 Policy states that all teachers' professional learning opportunities consider teacher competences for inclusive education</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>3.1.4 There is a formal strategy for promoting dialogue between ministries, regional/local authorities/municipalities and teacher educators to agree on the requirements of teachers' professional development opportunities for inclusion</p>	<p>3.1.4.1</p> <p><i>Regional Inspectorates of MES [Ministry of Education and Science] develop annual qualification programs for pedagogical staff at regional level and assign the task of organising the relevant activities to centres for professional and creative development of teachers. ...</i></p> <p><i>Pedagogical staff who have acquired professional qualification degrees are entitled to manage activities for qualification enhancement at school level. Qualification activities are implemented, possibly with the assistance of the higher schools, specialized institutes for teachers' qualification and the Regional Inspectorates of Education of MES. ...</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p><i>Some of the specialized institutes for teachers' qualification are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Central Teachers' Qualification Institute – Sofia;</i>• <i>Teachers' Qualification Institute – Varna;</i>• <i>Teachers' Qualification Institute – Stara Zagora.</i> <p><i>They develop annual plans for pedagogical qualification funded by the state. The plans need the approval of the Minister of Education and Science. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)</i></p>
3.1.5 There is a mechanism to ensure that all professional learning opportunities available to teachers are aligned with national- and local-level policy goals for an understanding of inclusive education	–
3.1.6 There are strategies to ensure that local-level professional opportunities for teachers are flexible/adaptable to local school contexts and school development plans for inclusive education	–



Policy priorities	Findings
3.1.7 There is a medium- and long-term review strategy for teachers' professional learning opportunities to ensure they meet system requirements for an inclusive education system	–

Evaluative comments for 'Goals'

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3.2 Continuum of support

Policy priorities	Findings
3.2.1 There is a strategy to ensure a continuum of diverse professional learning opportunities for inclusive education – for pre-service, beginning and experienced teachers, as well as teacher educators and support teachers – across all levels where teachers work	3.2.1.1 <i>National educational policies aim at providing highly educated and qualified personnel at all levels of the educational system in Republic of Bulgaria – pre-school, school and higher education. At the same time the policy is designed to stimulate the upgrading of qualification and realization of the principle of lifelong learning as a guarantee for a better quality of education and a more socio-economically developed society. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Teachers and Education Staff)</i>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p data-bbox="736 309 831 336">3.2.1.2</p> <p data-bbox="736 363 2024 432">'By 2020, Bulgaria should establish a unified and efficient system of education, training, continuous training and opportunities for the professional development of pedagogical staff'.</p> <p data-bbox="736 459 2040 528">State regulation of the teaching profession aims to achieve greater efficiency and establish teachers' responsibility and authority in society.</p> <p data-bbox="804 555 1980 624"><i>The strategic aim is focused on the performance of education policies in the EU, taking into account the traditions of Bulgarian education. ...</i></p> <p data-bbox="804 651 1099 678"><i>The strategy provides:</i></p> <ul data-bbox="860 705 1980 1038" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="860 705 1850 732">• <i>construction of unified system for education and continuing qualification;</i><li data-bbox="860 759 1861 786">• <i>legally guarantee the rights and obligations for professional development;</i><li data-bbox="860 813 1753 841">• <i>create better conditions for professional and career development;</i><li data-bbox="860 868 1809 895">• <i>financial information and technical support of the educational system;</i><li data-bbox="860 922 1980 1038">• <i>adaptability of management structures in secondary education.</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)



Policy priorities	Findings
3.2.2 There are strategies for developing leadership competences (e.g. school leadership or learning support leadership roles) for inclusive education in all relevant professional learning opportunities	–
3.2.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/higher education institutions to develop strategic plans for teachers' professional learning in inclusive education	3.2.3.1 Twenty-eight regional inclusive education support centres have been set up, which are the Ministry's structure. Regional centres provide methodological support, training and supervision of kindergartens and schools in the provision of inclusive education throughout the country. (Pre-School and School Education Act of 1 August 2016)
3.2.4 There are strategies to support effective collaboration and joint work between schools and higher education institutions/universities	–

Evaluative comments for 'Continuum of support'

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SECTION 4: CAPACITY BUILDING, FUNDING AND MONITORING OF TPL4I POLICY

4.1 Capacity building

Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.1 There are strategies to increase the capacity of all schools/higher education institutions to support all teachers to engage in professional learning activities on inclusive education	<p>4.1.1.1</p> <p>All administrative districts and municipalities in Bulgaria are required to develop local strategies to support children's and learners' personal development. The strategies envisage various activities, including teacher qualifications.</p> <p>There is a register of teacher training programmes in the Ministry of Education. All teachers are required to complete periodic additional qualifications. This is taken into account when conducting annual teacher evaluations.</p>
4.1.2 There is a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between all teachers/leaders/other stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of inclusive education as an approach that ensures high-quality learning opportunities for all	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.3 There is guidance on how teachers working in mainstream school settings/higher education institutions can understand and enact inclusive education	–
4.1.4 There are guidelines that support all teachers to collaborate to support all learners	4.1.4.1 In pre-primary initial teacher education: <i>For each group in kindergarten there are two teachers who teach in the field of pre-school pedagogy as general practitioners and study more than one subject. The main task of any teacher is to organize the educational processes and establish conditions at kindergartens to the well-being of all children.</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)
4.1.5 There are guidelines on how methods of quality assessment, school evaluation, inspections and other accountability measures contribute to planning/identifying priority areas of professional learning activities for inclusive education	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.6 There are strategies to support schools/higher education institutions to build strong leadership teams that are aware of the inclusive education agenda	–
4.1.7 There are incentives stated in policy for all teachers to engage in professional learning activities for inclusive education	<p>4.1.7.1 'On successful completion of qualification training carried out by the institutes and higher schools, participants from the pedagogical staff receive a certificate. This certificate allows for a pay raise'. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)</p> <p>4.1.7.2 <i>The introduction of differentiated payment for teachers on the basis of common for the whole country basic criteria, specified by every school depending on its peculiarity has provided opportunity for personal evaluation of the contribution of every teacher and stimulates their personal professional development along a five grade scale: Junior Teacher, Teacher and Senior Teacher. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Key Features of the Education System)</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>4.1.8 There are strategies stated in policy to develop the role of specialist teachers as a resource for mainstream schools</p>	<p>4.1.8.1 Vocational ‘teacher’ qualification takes place in different university departments: 40 faculties, two branches, two colleges, Centre for Continuing Education, Centre for Training and Department of qualification. The structure of the universities that provide training for qualification improvement or specialisation of educational staff is also different: faculties, departments, centres for continuing education, centres for postgraduate departments and units for training and specialisation. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)</p>
<p>4.1.9 There are strategies to promote professional learning for inclusion in teachers’ common competence areas (e.g. experienced teachers and specialist teachers are expected to engage in professional learning activities that promote inclusive education pedagogies, such as co-teaching)</p>	<p>4.1.9.1 With the help of the European Funds, the Ministry of Education and Science started a programme to create the conditions for teachers’ continuing pedagogical qualification. It includes developing differentiated payment mechanisms, dependant on teachers’ training and improving the teachers’ performance assessment system. A programme to develop pedagogical staff professional competences is of crucial importance (constant current knowledge improvement, acquisition of new skills and adopting new teaching and training methods, skills for work in intercultural environment, ICT training, online research, foreign language education, adult education, etc.). The 2011/2014 programme involved almost 70% of Bulgarian teachers in various forms of training. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>4.1.9.2</p> <p><i>National strategy for development of pedagogical staff</i></p> <p><i>Adopted in May 2014, the strategy meets the requirements and priority directions of the National Programme for Development of the Republic of Bulgaria: Bulgaria 2020 for improving living standards through competitive education and training to create the conditions for quality employment, social inclusion and ensure accessible and quality education.</i></p> <p><i>It is oriented towards the realization of these program policies and measures to achieve “a comprehensive, accessible and high quality education and training in school and pre-primary education”, by synchronizing policies regarding the preparation, continuing qualification and professional development for teaching staff and it is ... connected with the legal, institutional and social base of the education system. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Bulgaria, Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education)</i></p>
4.1.10 There are competences for professional learning in inclusive education for all teachers	–

Evaluative comments for ‘Capacity building’

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4.2 Funding

Policy priorities	Findings
4.2.1 There are financial incentives to encourage all schools/higher education institutions to develop policy and action plans for teachers' professional learning for inclusion	4.2.1.1 All kindergartens and schools providing inclusive education receive additional funding for additional support for children and learners with SEN. Additional funds are also provided for learner interest and extra-curricular activities.
4.2.2 There are mechanisms for systematic data collection on expenditure on teachers' professional learning that informs cost-effectiveness issues	–
4.2.3 There are flexible resourcing mechanisms that foster teachers' professional learning at school level	–

Evaluative comments for 'Funding'

–



4.3 Monitoring

Policy priorities	Findings
4.3.1 There is a comprehensive accountability framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of teachers' professional learning for inclusion activities	–
4.3.2 Monitoring mechanisms ensure that inequalities in access to professional learning opportunities at regional or organisational levels are addressed	–
4.3.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/teacher education departments/higher education institutions to have ownership of review and improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.3.4 There are mechanisms to share and analyse data to inform improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning at national and local level	–
4.3.5 There is data available on whether teachers are engaged in professional learning that is relevant to the level of education they teach	–
4.3.6 There are mechanisms to ensure that teachers' professional learning contributes to improving inclusive education practice at school level/the level of a teacher education department or higher education institution	–

Evaluative comments for 'Monitoring'

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National references

Pre-School and School Education Act of 01.08.2016, Bulgaria

Ordinance No. 15 of 22 July 2019 on the Status and Professional Development of Teachers, Principals and Other Pedagogical Specialists, Bulgaria

Inclusive Education Ordinance of 18.12.2018, Bulgaria (Pre-School and School Education Act of 01.08.2016)