
Work Programme 2024



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



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WORK PROGRAMME 2024



Co-funded by
the European Union

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Introduction

This work programme outlines the main activities that the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency) has scheduled for 2024.

To support its member countries' work, the Agency has considered their priorities, as set out in its [Multi-Annual Work Programme \(MAWP\) 2021–2027](#), in preparing this work programme.

The [Agency position on inclusive education systems](#) is the point of departure for the Work Programme 2024. The ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers. As part of the MAWP 2021–2027, the Work Programme 2024 will comprise a range of activities and processes that will further explore how countries can effectively work towards this vision.

The Work Programme 2024 is fully aligned with and directly contributes to European and international stated priorities for education and training. These include:

- the European Union (EU) Erasmus+ education programme (2021–2027) goals;
- the stated dimensions of the European Commission's [Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#);
- the European Commission's [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#);
- the European Commission's [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#);
- the European Commission's policy memo on [Strengthening the quality of early childhood education and care through inclusion](#);
- the [EU strategy on the rights of the child](#);
- the United Nations (UN) [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) on inclusive and equitable education, the UN [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989) and the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (2006), particularly Article 24.

The work programme aims to ensure coherence between the Agency's work and country commitments to EU and international priorities for education. It does so by providing countries, as well as stakeholders at European level, with evidence-based information, tools and recommendations that are reliable, valid and applicable to educational policy planning, implementation, monitoring and review.

For more information about the Agency, its work and work programmes, please visit its website: www.european-agency.org.

Organisation and finances

Member countries

The Agency currently has 31 member countries covering 36 jurisdictions: Austria, Belgium (Flemish, French and German communities), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech



Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

The Agency holds bi-annual meetings with its member country representatives. They review on-going activities and discuss and approve plans for future work, including activity plans, work programmes and budgets.

The proposed bi-annual meetings for 2024 are as follows:

- Spring bi-annual meeting, Estonia
- Autumn bi-annual meeting, venue to be confirmed.

Finances

Membership fees from the member countries and an operating grant under the EU Erasmus+ education programme (2021–2027) fund the work programme. Together, these contributions make up the Agency's operating budget.

On top of their membership fees, member countries contribute to the Agency's functioning by meeting the costs of their nominated Representative Board members' and National Co-ordinators' tasks. These include establishing and maintaining national networks, information dissemination and awareness-raising activities at national level, and participation in Agency meetings and activities. Furthermore, member countries cover the costs (person hours) of their nominated experts participating in content-related activity work.

As well as the activities financed by the main operating budget, the Agency will conduct specific additionally funded activities. These will be non-profit-based and will complement the activities within, but be independent from, the operating budget.

These additionally funded activities may include country system audits, consultancy and other country-specific services.

Since 2018, the Agency has also been involved in assisting member countries as a technical provider through the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) – now called the [Technical Support Instrument](#) (TSI) – of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM). The Agency has completed seven SRSP activities so far. In 2024, the Agency will be involved in four TSI projects.

For further information, please refer to the section on [additionally funded activities](#).

Co-operative relationships

The Agency will maintain its co-operative relationships with the EU Institutions, particularly with the European Commission, with members of the committees of the European Parliament and with Agency member countries' permanent representations in Brussels, as well as with key international bodies and organisations. These include [Cedefop](#), [Eurostat](#), [Eurydice](#), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and the Organisation



for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)). These relationships are considered important to ensure visibility of and support for the Agency's work for member countries in relation to the European stated priorities for education and training.

Co-operation with these organisations adds important facets to the Agency's work. It ensures that activities are mutually supportive and beneficial for member countries. The co-operative relationships provide opportunities for sharing information about work in Agency member countries with a wider audience and for gaining relevant information that can be shared in member countries.

The Agency will continue to be a member of the European Commission's working groups on Early Childhood Education and Care, Schools (the sub-group on Pathways to School Success), and Equality and Values in Education and Training for the period 2021–2025.

The Agency's co-operation with UNESCO will carry on, with the Agency engaging in events and activities of shared interest and continuing to develop and promote the [Inclusive Education in Action website](#).

On-going activities

The Agency will conduct a number of activities that are on-going throughout the MAWP 2021–2027. Brief descriptions of these activities follow below.

Country Policy Development Support (CPDS)

CPDS is central to the Agency's role as an agent for change in inclusive education. All Agency work essentially focuses on supporting countries to change, develop and successfully implement policy for inclusive education.

Within the remainder of the MAWP 2021–2027, all work will be organised to lead out of and/or feed findings into the overarching CPDS activity.

The proposed model and framework for CPDS build upon the main findings and outcomes, as well as processes and methodologies, that have proved useful for supporting individual country work, notably the [Country Policy Review and Analysis](#) activities.

The main activities in 2023 focused upon finalising and piloting the CPDS framework with the three Agency member countries – Iceland, Lithuania and Malta – that constitute the CPDS Working Group.

Main activities 2024

The three Working Group countries will self-identify specific standards that they will commit to improving. Based on their identified standards, specific evidence of implementation will be collected for each country.

The CPDS work will continue in 2024 with another group of countries, with a view to completing the CPDS framework, self-identifying their own standards and continuing to monitor their developments.

Using this phased approach, the CPDS work will gradually involve different groups of countries and will aim to align with Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA) and TSI work.



European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE)

The Agency's annual data collection activity ([EASIE](#)) provides information on education systems in participating Agency member countries. This data informs country-level work on learners' rights issues connected to equity and participation in inclusive education.

Main activities 2024

In the first half of 2024, the Agency will collect the EASIE data focusing on the 2021/2022 school year and publish it on the EASIE web area. In addition, the revision of the EASIE methodology and output portfolio will continue.

The 2024 EASIE workshop will aim to collect feedback on an outline proposal for an updated EASIE theoretical framework and data collection methodology. The workshop will include a presentation of the draft 'shadow' 2020/2021 Cross-Country Report, based on open-source data and information, to highlight gaps in the current datasets and promote discussions around how to address them.

The next (2022/2023 school year) data collection work cycle is due to begin in November 2024.

Country exchange activities

Country experience exchange sessions are a recurring item on the bi-annual meeting agendas, as they have proved useful for country representatives to gain insights into each other's policy development work.

Main activities 2024

At the 2024 bi-annual meetings, experience exchange sessions with country representatives will take place. The sessions will focus on topics of interest suggested by the country representatives.

Country information overviews

The [Country Information](#) pages are one of the most popular areas on the Agency website. There is an agreement to update them regularly and to periodically review the basic framework for the country overviews, so they continue to meet web users' interests.

Main activities 2024

The Agency will completely revise the country information overviews available on the Agency website. The revisions are based on information collected from country representatives and the 2022 web user survey. Changes include improving information consistency across country pages, a stronger focus on inclusive education, a closer link to activities, different ways of viewing/downloading information, enabling cross-country comparisons and providing more concise information.

In general, outputs from Agency activities (for example, EASIE) will have clearer cross-linking. Moreover, the Agency's Country System Mapping work has generated important information that can be used to update the country overviews.

In addition to the changes in content, the process of updating the country information webpages will provide current country-specific information in a way that ensures a reduced workload for country representatives.



Thematic activities

In 2024, Agency work will cover a range of thematic activities. Some on-going activities will conclude, while the new Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA) will begin. These will introduce new topics, as well as new ways of working with countries, to the Agency's work programme.

Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic – Building Resilience through Inclusive Education Systems (BRIES)

[BRIES](#) aims to map evidence and identify acknowledged forms of COVID-19's impact on education in general – and inclusive education in particular – at national and European levels. It focuses on learning points for making education systems more resilient and better prepared for potential future crises.

BRIES has two phases. Phase 1, initiated in 2021, included an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on inclusive education across member countries and the identification of countries' needs and topics to be further explored in peer-learning activities. Phase 2 consists of two rounds of peer-learning activities, carried out with stakeholders from different levels within the six Agency member countries in the BRIES country cluster.

Main activities 2024

The Agency will organise a dissemination event to present the outcomes of the BRIES activity. The guidance that was developed throughout the BRIES activity will be translated into all Agency languages and made available for users.

This guidance aims to support the work of policy-makers, public education authorities at all governance levels (depending on specific national contexts) and other education stakeholders, by emphasising the development of a culture of effective communication. Based on a communication framework, the guidance also offers a tool to help develop a culture of effective communication related to different aspirations. Furthermore, it contains promising examples of effective communication provided by countries that participated in the BRIES activity.

Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA)

All thematic work within the remainder of the MAWP will be organised as Thematic Country Cluster Activities. TCCA work will focus on countries' priorities and directly respond to country requests for more tailored activities to support policy development needs and build upon learning points from current activities. These activities will use peer-learning approaches and be developmental, building upon each other in cycles throughout the remainder of the MAWP.

The first cycle of TCCA work will run from late 2023 until the end of 2025. In this cycle, information from the Country System Mapping (CSM) activity outputs and information on country priorities from the 2023 Operational Survey have been used to prepare a series of country cluster activities. These are designed to support the work of individual and small groups of countries around identified challenges for implementing the identified priorities, i.e. monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working, and quality assurance.



Various outputs from the CSM activity will inform the discussions around these three themes. The outputs include country analysis reports that identify potential challenges, strengths and opportunities within Agency member countries' education systems as regards these three topics. In addition, a review of academic literature considering the three priorities of monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working and quality assurance will support the discussions in the different clusters.

In autumn 2023, Representative Board (RB) members' input was used to draft an overall TCCA cycle 1 activity plan. In addition, RB input will contribute to the planning of the specific cluster activities that will be implemented from 2024 onwards. A dedicated working meeting during the autumn 2023 bi-annual meeting will kick off the specific cluster planning process that will continue in early 2024.

Countries' responses to the 2023 Operational Survey have been taken into account in the formation of these country clusters. All countries will have the opportunity to work in a cluster focusing on their first choice of thematic priority.

In TCCA cycle 1, there will be six clusters. These clusters will consider a range of issues that have emerged within the CSM work as being important enabling or hindering factors within each of the three priority themes.

Three clusters will focus on **monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation for inclusive education**. Participating countries will consider a number of key issues around monitoring and evaluation processes at school, local and national levels. These will include issues countries are facing with regards to the qualitative and quantitative data needed to ensure school quality enhancement and system-level improvement. Alongside this, the clusters will examine the necessary accountability frameworks that ensure all learners' rights to inclusive education, as well as promote system efficiency, effectiveness and equity.

Two clusters will focus on **developing strategies for supporting collaborative, cross-sector working across all levels and sectors**. Participating countries will debate issues around the need for quality provision that involves effective collaboration within schools, between schools and families and between schools and other agencies in the community that can all contribute to more effective and efficient support for all learners. The clusters will also consider the issues around the need for a supportive policy context and co-operation between, for example, government departments at national level.

One cluster will focus on **developing multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance and accountability frameworks for inclusive education**. It will examine issues around cross-sector collaboration across all education system levels and, in particular, inclusive quality assurance and accountability for all stakeholders that further contribute to school and system improvement.

The outcomes emerging from across the clusters will inform a central cross-theme question: how can each of the three priority themes support the overall development of a system of continuous improvement for all stakeholders at all system levels?

Previous Agency work has shown that systems and procedures that take a continuous improvement approach can only be developed when:

- the vision and values for inclusive education are clearly expressed;



- evidence is gathered and used effectively with stakeholders to provide information on what works;
- there are clear action plans to address issues requiring further attention to ensure that all learners are provided with high-quality education.

The clusters' individual and collective work will aim to support individual countries in their efforts to promote continuous improvement for all stakeholders across the whole inclusive education system.

Main activities 2024

Following the completion of the individual cluster activity plans in late 2023, with the involvement of and approval by RBs, the individual thematic country cluster work will start with concrete activities in early 2024. The activity plans will be developed on the basis of the findings from the thematic analysis of the full CSM reports for the specific cluster member countries. Each cluster will follow its agreed activity plan, which will incorporate structured peer-learning activities.

Throughout 2024, particular attention will be paid to identifying, reflecting upon and promoting synergies between cluster activities and outcomes. The plans for individual clusters will highlight potential intersecting topics or complementary activities between clusters and indicate the development of cross-links between the various cluster activities.

For each cluster, online and in-person meetings will be scheduled during the lifetime of the first TCCA cycle. The cluster activities will involve key country stakeholders nominated by RBs.

Connected to the TCCA, a report presenting the overall findings of the CSM activity will be produced. This will highlight key findings emerging across the country inputs relating to the priority topics of monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working, and quality assurance. This report will be a further background resource and act as stimulus material for the individual cluster activities. The report will also be the basis for a short policy issues paper that will be translated into all Agency languages.

In addition, the literature review mentioned above will be published.

Additionally funded activities

The Agency will conduct a number of activities funded via additional grants. These additionally funded activities may include country system audits, consultancy and other country-specific services. These activities enable the Agency to undertake work that complements and reinforces the activities agreed by member countries within the main work programme. Brief descriptions of the additional activities planned for 2024 follow below.

Country audits

A system audit is one form of fully funded, external consultancy the Agency can offer individual countries. These country audits aim to provide recommendations that support evidence-based policy- and decision-making that promote self-review across all system levels and support longer-term development work in the country concerned.



The Agency has conducted country audits in Malta (2013–2014) and Iceland (2015–2016).

Malta audit

In 2023, 10 years on from the first audit, the Maltese Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation asked the Agency to re-audit Malta's system for inclusive education. The aim will be to identify progress, highlight key challenges yet to be addressed and showcase opportunities for building on existing effective practice.

Main activities 2024

Activities will include collaborating with key policy-makers in the Ministry and identifying key issues to be examined in the re-audit.

Work will also include preparing and later implementing the planned data collection. Several fieldwork activities will be held both in-person and online, including interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.

This will be followed by data analysis and preparation of the draft report for fact-checking by the Ministry. The audit will end with an in-person presentation and launch of the final report.

Technical Support Instrument (TSI) activities

The Agency will continue its co-operation with the European Commission's DG REFORM. Through the [TSI](#), the Commission provides technical support to EU countries that wish to reform their public systems. The Commission funds the activities in full.

The Agency is involved in three TSI projects that began in 2022 and will run until late 2024. The ministries of education in France and Greece, as well as Italy, Portugal and Spain in co-operation, requested these. In autumn 2023, the Agency began a new multi-country TSI project, at the request of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Irish Department of Education.

Through TSI projects, participating countries benefit both from the Agency's legislative and policy analysis and from its implementation recommendations. Other Agency member countries are involved in peer-learning activities and have opportunities to contribute to and learn from the sharing of policy development experiences.

France

The project aims to support the French Ministry of Education to deploy the LPI (*Livret de Parcours Inclusif*) digital educational tool throughout the national territory to ensure its acceptance among stakeholders, to develop its use without stigmatising learners, to assess and monitor how it operates and to identify ways to improve its functioning.

Main activities 2024

In the first half of 2024, the focus will be on stakeholder consultation draft recommendations. The next phase will involve monitoring and long-term reflections together with a panel of stakeholders who will work to identify LPI users' needs. The second half of 2024 will be devoted to preparing a communication proposal, a training plan and an action plan.



Greece

The 'Implementation of the European Child Guarantee – Promoting Inclusive Education in Greece Phase II' project aims to improve inclusive education in Greece by supporting the authorities to pilot a newly adopted inclusive education policy framework at school level before its roll-out.

Main activities 2024

The activities will combine the findings, knowledge and experience gained in the previous years to create a full review of inclusive education practices. There will be a specific focus on the three priority areas of inclusive assessment practices, inclusive transitions and inclusive school guidelines. In light of findings from Phase I of the project, existing policy documents will be amended, where necessary. Additionally, detailed recommendations will be made for implementing the pilot programme at national level.

Multi-country (Italy, Portugal, Spain)

The 'Combatting Disparities in Access to Inclusive Education in Portugal, Italy and Spain' (EUROCH) project aims to improve design and consistency in policy implementation at national and regional level, and the quality of inclusive education policies across Italy, Portugal and Spain. The countries seek support for policy reforms that improve equity in education for all learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The aim is to help their efforts to effectively implement the European Child Guarantee.

Main activities 2024

The team will shape a set of recommendations, new measures and action plans to improve inclusive education within and across the three countries. A methodology for developing models, toolkits and processes to monitor and evaluate all aspects of inclusive education, for implementation at all education and regional levels, will be designed.

The project will culminate in a final report, describing the context, process, challenges, achievements and sustainability across the project's five phases.

Multi-country (Finland, Ireland)

The project aims to help Finland and Ireland to identify key objectives and plan actions for promoting equitable learning opportunities, improving educational outcomes and increasing access to mainstream education for all learners.

In Finland, the project specifically aims to address regional differences in the provision of support measures. In Ireland, the aim is to develop a model of inclusion tailored to the Irish education system.

Main activities 2024

Following the project methodology being set out and the project kick-off event in 2023, the team will review both countries' legislative frameworks in 2024. In parallel, a desk review of the countries' professional development frameworks will take place.

Consultation meetings with various stakeholder groups within and across both countries, at local, regional and national levels, will be organised. A study visit to a 'peer country' will enable the exchange of expertise and experience on issues of common interest.



The data collected in 2024 will contribute to a comprehensive country system analysis that will lead to the development of a roadmap for each country.

Operational activities

Events

Peer-Learning Activity

As part of the Agency's involvement in the European Commission's working group (WG) on Equality and Values in Education and Training for the period 2021–2025, the Agency will host the WG's next Peer-Learning Activity (PLA) in Brussels in early 2024.

The topic for the WG for this period will be learners' special or additional needs. The PLA will focus on working towards more flexible systems of support to meet all learners' needs.

The PLA will provide an opportunity for in-depth discussions. All participating countries/organisations will be invited to present their examples in line with the agreed agenda, particularly during discussion sessions.

UNESCO – 30 years since Salamanca

UNESCO and the Agency are working together on a three-day event to mark the 30th anniversary of the Salamanca Statement. The event will have two parts.

The first day will consist of a high-level panel discussion with decision-makers.

The second part, the Global Inclusive Schools' Forum, will take place across two days and will include thematic panels as well as a 'Global Village' networking event.

The event's overall purpose is to make the case for fostering inclusion and equity in education. It will bring together ministers of education and senior representatives of ministries to facilitate policy dialogue on how countries are prioritising and promoting inclusion in education and how to address common challenges through collaboration. Examples of practice from around the world will be showcased to foster discussion and knowledge-sharing. The event will give opportunities for scale-up and partnerships to promote more inclusive and equitable education systems.

Information dissemination and production activities

The Agency's information dissemination work includes producing, publishing and disseminating Agency outputs and communicating key messages. Using offline and digital tools, the Agency ensures all its materials are up-to-date, comply with international guidelines on accessibility and are available on relevant platforms.

Policy-makers in the education field are the Agency's main target audience and the Agency aims to ensure its outputs and materials reach them. Other stakeholders, such as experts, researchers, school leaders, teachers, parents and learners, are also target audiences of Agency work.



Based on the conclusions of the self-review work carried out in 2022, the Agency started revising its dissemination and communication strategy in 2023. This work will proceed in 2024, and the updated strategy will draw on the findings of the 2023 Operational Survey.

The Agency will continue to produce a broad range of outputs and materials, with an emphasis on concise outputs, as well as graphic and video formats. The Agency will carry on offering open-source materials that member countries can adapt to their contexts and needs.

As ever, the Agency will be a resource for its member countries and actively support them as they disseminate Agency information in their national networks. This includes raising awareness about new Agency materials and how to use them, translating agreed publications into Agency languages and sharing country news.

The Agency will keep exploring ways to help its member countries to improve their overall information dissemination.

Online open-access repository of Agency materials

The Agency will continue to upload publications to Zenodo, an open-access repository that acts as an online archive for all publications produced by an institution, intended for long-term preservation and broad availability. All Agency publications are uploaded to the '[Inclusive education](#)' community, thereby allowing other content libraries to index these publications. The Agency will monitor traffic and downloads on this dissemination platform.

Updating the glossary of key terms

The Agency's [online glossary](#) aims to coherently define key concepts in the inclusive education field, reflecting how the Agency uses them in its activities. The glossary will continue to be updated with terminology from emerging activities. The Agency will seek to increase the glossary's visibility by integrating it into activity pages and linking to it from various pages of the Agency website.

Websites and accessibility

The [website](#) is the hub for all Agency information. In 2024, the Agency will maintain the highest possible levels of website accessibility and usability. Search engine optimisation will be a continued focus to ensure inclusive education content is easily discoverable. Agency activities and outputs will be presented on the website as they become available.

The website's accessibility and translation tool, powered by Recite Me, will continue to ensure that all Agency website content, including downloadable PDFs, is available in over 100 languages.

The [Inclusive Education in Action website](#) – developed in collaboration with UNESCO – will be updated throughout 2024 with free, open-access resources and case studies from Europe and around the world.

MyAgency – the Agency's intranet

[MyAgency](#) is the Agency's web-based platform for internal communication and activity management. Throughout 2024, new resources and new activity areas will be added to



MyAgency. The Agency will encourage its member countries to use the [Country Corner](#) for interaction and communication.

News and digital media

The Agency will regularly publish news items in the [News section](#) and in its quarterly [eBulletin](#).

The Agency amplifies its content to drive traffic to the website through digital media extensions. The Agency's [LinkedIn profile](#) will carry on sharing weekly updates and connect with relevant stakeholders. The Agency will maintain its [Google Scholar](#) presence. New videos reflecting key Agency messages and activities will be considered for the [Agency YouTube channel](#) and website.

Information dissemination statistics

In early 2024, the Agency will draft an annual report summarising website performance statistics and the dissemination of Agency materials for 2023. The report will include quantitative and qualitative findings, trend analyses and strategic recommendations to inform future dissemination.

