

COUNTRY SYSTEM MAPPING

Country Report: Cyprus

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



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INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Country System Mapping (CSM) activity is to identify, map and analyse the key features that impact the effective implementation of inclusive education policy in practice in all Agency member countries' education systems. In a departure from previous thematic activities undertaken by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency), CSM considers the **whole** education system from the perspective of implementing policy for inclusive education in practice. However, within this system-wide view, there is a focus on the specific priorities Representative Board members (RBs) have already identified in relation to monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working and quality assurance.

The main output from the CSM work is a systematic mapping of information on each country's education system.

Information from the individual CSM Country Reports has been analysed in two ways:

- **Thematic Analysis** to highlight issues (challenges and opportunities) emerging from the reports to use as the starting point for the Agency's Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA).

Challenges for inclusion are defined as things the country needs to work on to reach an inclusive education system. Strengths for inclusion are things that encourage and reinforce inclusive practice in the country and could potentially be shown as an example to other countries.

- **Mapping** to inform TCCA groupings, based on the system structures and processes countries have (or do not have) in common.

The agreed goal for the mapping element of the CSM analysis work was to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate which country systems are structured and/or working in different – or similar – ways.

The information from the CSM work will be used within the remainder of the [Multi-Annual Work Programme 2021–2027](#) (MAWP). As of autumn 2024, country cluster activities will be organised which are closely aligned to individual country approaches to key issues for inclusive education, as well as system structures and processes countries have in common.



Work within a shared vision for inclusive education systems

All Agency work is aligned with the [position on inclusive education systems](#). This agreed position states that 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 ([European Agency, 2022, p. 1](#))¹.

Agency work focuses on supporting the development of inclusive education systems in member countries to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This aim is directed at all learners. However, all aspects of Agency work clearly recognise that some groups of learners face obstacles and barriers that mean they should be considered **learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education in mainstream schools in their local community, alongside their friends and peers**.

UNESCO identifies the possible obstacles and barriers to education learners may face as arising from:

... gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion and other beliefs and attitudes ([UNESCO, 2020, p. 4](#))².

Many learners may face a combination of these factors and the intersectional (inter-connected) nature of learners' needs must be acknowledged. Every learner has their own unique experiences of discrimination and/or barriers to learning. Everything and anything that can marginalise learners and increase their chances of exclusion from mainstream inclusive education must be understood and recognised.

All Agency member countries are committed to working towards ensuring more inclusive education systems. They do so in different ways, depending on their past and current contexts and histories. Inclusive education systems are a vital component within the wider aspiration of more socially inclusive societies that all countries align themselves with, both ethically and politically. However, all Agency work clearly recognises that countries have differences in their ways of thinking about, identifying and making provision for different groups of learners who may be considered vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

All countries have undergone key conceptual changes in their thinking and policy priorities for developments as they move towards inclusive education as an approach that ensures high-quality education for all learners. Across countries, the first shift was made from the concept of special educational needs to special needs education. This shift represented a focus away from the learner (identified as having special educational needs) towards a focus on the provision they receive (special needs education for learners who experience difficulties at school). The term 'special needs education' has also widened the focus

¹ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022. *Agency Position on Inclusive Education Systems*. Odense, Denmark

² UNESCO, 2020. *Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and education: all means all*. Paris: UNESCO



beyond learners with disabilities to include learners who appeared to be failing in school for a wide variety of reasons.

It is worth emphasising here that there have never been agreed definitions of the concepts of special educational needs or special needs education that can be consistently used across countries. The groups of learners considered as having special educational needs which require additional provision largely differ across countries.

The most recent shifts emphasise a move away from a concern with types of special needs or the categories a learner may or may not fall into, towards thinking of inclusion and inclusive education as an approach for all learners. They emphasise the barriers experienced by learners and focus overall on learners who may be vulnerable to exclusion from educational opportunities for different reasons.

Agency work focuses on supporting the development of inclusive education systems in its member countries to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This aim is directed at all learners, while recognising the need to specifically address learners who may be vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

Overview of the Country System Mapping

The information collected in the CSM activity aims to provide evidence of and reflection on **where countries currently are** in their inclusive thinking, policy and provision for all learners, but in particular for those learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

CSM work focuses on the **whole** education system and how certain structures, mechanisms and processes may impact on the implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice. It aims to get insights into how the needs of all learners – including individuals or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education – are being considered. Many questions refer to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education. Countries have opportunities to clarify what 'learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education' means for them and their systems.

However, it is acknowledged that it may not be possible for countries to provide information covering all learners and all learner groups.

The questions specifically focus on four priorities RBs have identified for wider future Agency work in relation to:

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Cross-sector working
- Quality assurance
- Effective policy implementation.

There are six main sections:

Section 1. Background to the inclusive education system

Section 2. Overview of the education system

Section 3. Legislative and policy framework



Section 4. System governance

Section 5. Quality assurance and accountability

Section 6. Stakeholder collaboration, co-operation and effective communication

Where countries have provided additional comments and reflections, these are included in a separate Section 7.

In each of these sections, relevant information was collected covering International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 02 (pre-primary education) to 3 (upper-secondary education).

Each section has two subsections which require different types of country information, as outlined below.

All questions were rephrased into statements for the purpose of this report.

System description

Sections 1 to 6 include specific questions that aim to provide a factual description of key aspects of the legislation and policy framework for inclusive education in the country. The system information aims to accurately describe the relevant policy frameworks in countries.

Different types of questions are used to collect information that describes important system features – structures, mechanisms and processes – relating to governance, monitoring, quality assurance and collaboration. The descriptive information includes sources of original material and, where possible, is supported with quotes and citations from relevant policy documents and published work.

The descriptive information will be analysed to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate how countries are structured and/or working. This mapping will be used to inform country cluster groupings based on system structures and processes that countries have in common.

The descriptive information will also be used to prepare thematic cluster activities with Agency member countries. These activities will elaborate and collect even more detailed country information for the different priority areas from 2023 onwards.

Evaluative commentary

An important element of the questions is the evaluative, qualified and evidenced-based reflection on the factual information provided in sections 1 to 6.

The evaluative commentaries aim to provide a qualified reflection on the implementation of the legislation and policy framework for inclusive education in practice. They provide observations on and interpretations of the system factors that impact positively or negatively on inclusive education.

The evaluative commentaries reflect on **where and why the practice of inclusive education differs from or actively supports the stated policy intentions and goals** in the system description.



For the evaluative commentaries linked to each section, the following general questions are posed:

- What have been the perceived main challenges (barriers and hindrances) for inclusive education? Why do they exist and what are the consequences?
- What have been the perceived opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusive education? What areas for development are identified and how can they be successfully implemented?

In addition, specific topic-related questions are also suggested.

The analysis of the evaluative commentary information will take a grounded approach. It will aim to identify issues that emerge as barriers to or supporting factors for meeting the needs of all learners in inclusive systems.

This analysis will be used to inform future Agency activities with member countries regarding country-specific and common system challenges and opportunities.



SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This section provides key background information in relation to inclusive education in the country.

1.1 Overview of the historical development of inclusive education

The special education services in Cyprus, like those of many other countries, developed out of private and charitable initiatives. In 1929, a school for the blind opened, followed by a school for the deaf in 1953. Following the independence of Cyprus in 1960, the first provision for teaching learners with disabilities was established with the introduction of a special class in a local primary school. During the 1960s and 1970s, special schools for learners with disabilities were founded in all districts of Cyprus (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Several legislation acts were introduced during the 20th century as a result of the segregation model. The most important law, in 1944, was the introduction of compulsory education for learners with disabilities and with special needs, as well as for learners who had spent a long time receiving treatment in hospitals. However, only in 1970, every single learner was entitled to attend school. By then, several special schools and institutions were established to meet the new educational needs. As a result, learners were split between mainstream and special schools. The need to 'tidy up matters' in special education led to the introduction of the 47/1979 Special Education Law, whose most important provision was that the government would take full responsibility for the education of learners with special needs between the ages of 5 and 18. This law gave the government the authority to spend public money on special schools and the education of learners with special needs took place in special schools or in special classes in mainstream schools (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)). This law established regional multi-disciplinary committees to review the cases of individual learners referred for special education and recommend the most suitable educational placement for each learner.

The next step was the inclusive movement: in the 1990s, the Ministry of Education made a serious attempt to align its policy with the modern educational trends, especially those referring to the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream schools. Regarding children with special educational needs, the government adopted the principles of the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, which proclaim that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, and that those with special educational needs must have access to mainstream schools which should accommodate them with a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting those needs. The above principles have been embodied in the Education of Children with Special Needs Law (113(I)/1999), which regulates all issues concerning the identification of children with special educational needs, their inclusion in mainstream schools and the provision of education according to their needs (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008, National Report of Cyprus, pp. 5–7). Therefore, children with disabilities have equal access to and participate equally in



education, based on the Laws on the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs 1999 to 2020. Special educational services are provided free of charge by the state to those learners in need between the ages of 3 and 18 years (extension of education up to 21 years can be approved, where deemed necessary). In each educational area, a District Committee (DC) is established which examines the cases of referred children and makes proposals to the Directors of the relevant levels of education regarding placement and educational provision. The DC has the duty to evaluate the needs of any learner considered to have special needs. The evaluation is carried out by a multi-disciplinary team, including a specialist psychologist, special education teacher, a doctor, a speech pathologist and any other specialist indicated. Learners to whom special education and training has been determined attend mainstream schools, special units or special schools with appropriate infrastructure adapted to their own needs; special teachers can be either fully assigned to mainstream schools or run special units at mainstream schools (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008, National Report of Cyprus, pp. 17–18).

The 113(I)/1999 Special Education Law gave a statutory basis for the provision of special education based on the learner's individual needs. Among other provisions, the law stipulates that one of the state's main responsibilities is to support the integration of learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream education by any means. With the implementation of the law, education authorities aimed to make special education an integral part of the education system, while providing the maximum level of flexibility to best serve the individual needs of learners with SEN. This actively supports the philosophy of integration and inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream education. Moreover, it recognises that the mainstream classroom cannot meet all the highly specialised needs of these learners. The development of the special units ensures that only the most demanding and specialised cases are referred to special schools (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)). Therefore, the majority of learners with SEN are integrated in mainstream education with only a very small percentage of them, approximately 5–6%, directed to separate public schools of special education (Eurydice, 2022: Educational support and guidance).

In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MOESY) secured technical assistance from the European Commission support group (Structural Reform Support Service) and closely co-operated with experts from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education to prepare new legislation (European Agency, 2019, Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA) – [Cyprus](#), p. 3). This co-operation led to the preparation of a draft law and relevant regulations in June 2021. It is noted that this legislation does not only concern children with disabilities, but also concerns all children, including those who belong to vulnerable and special population groups and experience barriers to learning, as well as gifted and talented children.

1.2 Legislation and policy definitions linked to key concepts within inclusive education systems

Inclusive education

No information.



Special needs education

No information.

Learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

No information.

Learners with special educational needs

Laws 113(I)/1999 and 69(I)/2001 specify that the following categories are recognised as learners in need of special support:

- any child who has serious learning or special learning difficulties, or who has difficulty in adapting or functioning, due to their physical or mental condition;
- any child whose learning, adaptation or functioning skills are impaired compared to other children of their age;
- any child who suffers from an incapacity which prevents them from using educational facilities of the kind that are generally available at school for learners of their age.

Source: [Eurydice, 2022: Educational support and guidance](#)

According to the 1999 Law, a child is considered to have SEN either:

- if they have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of a similar age;
- if a disability prevents or impedes them from using the standard educational facilities and resources available in mainstream schools.

Source: [European Agency, 2020: Legislation and policy](#)

1.3 Individuals or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education focused on in the report

Learners who need support within the Cypriot context belong to vulnerable and special population groups. These include:

- children with disabilities, as defined in the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006);
- children with any characteristic that differentiates their national or social identity, such as:
 - children from religious or cultural minorities;
 - Roma children;
 - refugees;
 - migrants;
 - repatriates;
 - juvenile offenders;



- victims of trafficking;
- children affected by natural disasters;
- children from disadvantaged family and socio-economic backgrounds;
- children with increased risk of developmental and learning difficulties;
- gifted and talented children.

The national policy framework covers all education opportunities provided to learners who need support by distinguishing between:

- learners with an official decision, whose eligibility for support results from an educational assessment decided by the DCs of Special Education;
- learners without an official decision, whose eligibility for support is decided at the school level.

They may be eligible for programmes designed by the MOESY to prevent ESL and drop-out (e.g. programmes for school and social inclusion and functional literacy) (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 25).

1.4 Development of thinking around learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

From the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, Cyprus was a colony of the British Empire. Consequently, the education system for special schools used in Britain was applied to Cyprus as well. British educational legislation of 1870 provided for the establishment of special classes for learners with physical and intellectual disabilities, as well as for learners with behavioural problems (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

At the end of the 1980s, the third period of special education begins, and the model of integration prevailed. During this period, special units for children on the autistic spectrum were established in public schools and there was a trend towards the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream schools. However, by the new millennium, a balance began to emerge between mainstream placement and special schools, but the practice of inclusion had no legislative foundation until the establishment of the Law for the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs 113(I) of 1999 (European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)). This law actively supports the philosophy of integration and inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream education. Also, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was signed in 1990 and ratified in 1991. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was signed in 2007 and ratified in 2011 (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 5). The inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream education is a major policy matter for the MOESY, in line with current international conventions and philosophical thought. The adoption of this policy has been accompanied by a change in society's perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards people with special needs, both in the education system and the community at large (European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)). Despite the



above, the European Parliament commented that although educational debate had changed from talking about special education to inclusive education, legislators, policy-makers and professionals had to move away from the medical model towards a rights-based system (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 5).

Nowadays, the parents of disabled children have created associations and claim their children's rights for inclusive education. When they disagree with the decisions made about their child, they have the right to appeal to the Central Committee of Special Education and can be involved in the processes around designing individual education plans. Parents can also attend disability assessments arranged by the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for the purpose of certification of disability financial and social benefits. The assessment also considers the child's views during the interview (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 5). Furthermore, the parents participated in the public consultation for inclusive education (2018), as well as in a conference organised by the MOESY in August 2022. In recent years, the majority of parents' associations for disabled children strongly claim the right of their children to inclusive education.

1.5 Future education system developments that may impact positively or negatively on inclusive education

The overall education strategy and key objectives across the whole education system, as described in the government programme, are based on five pillars of educational policy, as follows:

1. Human resource development and upgrading in education, with reference to the following content areas:
 - a. modernising the system of appointment in the public education sector;
 - b. upgrading the teachers' in-service education and training;
 - c. modernising the evaluation system for the teachers and educational work.
2. Modernising the administrative structures of the schools and the whole education system, with reference to the following content areas:
 - a. modernising the administrative structure of the Ministry;
 - b. promoting school autonomy.
3. Upgrading the educational content and promoting effectiveness in education, with reference to the following content areas:
 - a. the curricula;
 - b. the timetables;
 - c. textbooks.
4. Supporting and empowering all learners, with reference to the following content areas:
 - a. promoting new technologies in the educational system;



- b. pursuing educational success and literacy;
 - c. promoting differentiation in the learning process.
5. Expanding and upgrading tertiary education, with reference to the following content areas:
- a. increasing the number of students;
 - b. upgrading the private institutes/universities;
 - c. promoting international co-operation;
 - d. modernising the legal framework for the operation of private institutes of tertiary education.

Source: *Eurydice, 2022: On-going reforms and policy developments*

Also, the vision of Cyprus for Lifelong Learning Strategy of 2021–2027 is to assist citizens in pursuing their educational and training needs and goals in all educational settings (formal, non-formal and informal) throughout their life, and will guarantee them possibilities for personal development and fulfilment, well-being and successful work and family life. The priority axes of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2021–2027 are:

- increase in the participation of adults;
- reduction of unemployment among young people;
- upskilling and reskilling of low-qualified and low-skilled adults

Source: *Eurydice, 2022*

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of developments towards inclusive education. It specifically considers political decisions that have impacted (positively or negatively) upon the vision for and implementation of inclusive education in the country. It also considers how changes in thinking around learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education have impacted upon policy and practice.

From 1960 until today, the Republic of Cyprus created legislations and ratified international conventions which led to the transition from segregation to inclusive education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) commended the government's high level of commitment to reform and modernise the education system (UNESCO, 2015, Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Cyprus, p. 2 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 5). This follows the adoption of suggestions to the Educational Reform Committee in 2014 to take measures to include all learners in the school system, especially foreign learners (UNESCO, 2015, p. 22 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 5).

Nowadays, all children in Cyprus, regardless of gender or ethnic origin and irrespective of the residential status of their parents, are entitled to have access to free education and are eligible for educational support (Elementary Education Act 2008–2017 – cited in



European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 4). Unless there are exceptional circumstances, these services should be provided within a class at the learner’s local school that should have all necessary adaptations and resources (National Overview, p. 3 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 4). The state recognises that all learners have the right to an education appropriate to their needs and attempts to provide a legal framework where those with special educational requirements can receive, in the least restrictive environment, an education that meets their individual needs. While the Law is specifically for SEN, it has assisted in advancing the inclusion of special education in mainstream education. While special education has its own legal framework, special and mainstream education are part of one school system with common administrative procedures (National Overview, p. 5 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 4–5).

Compared to 2016, when data on learners enrolled in special schools first became available, schooling opportunities for learners with an official decision are relatively stable. The percentage of learners with an official decision enrolled in mainstream classes rose from 85.9% to 86.2% between the 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 school years. During the same period, the proportion of learners with an official decision enrolled in special units decreased from 10.1% to 9.5% of learners with an official decision. The percentage of learners with an official decision enrolled in special schools rose from 4% to 4.3%. However, the trend towards inclusive education varies depending on the education level. It is stronger at pre-primary level, where the number of learners with an official decision enrolled in mainstream classes increased by 2% between the 2014/2015 and 2018/2019 school years, while it remained stable in primary education. At secondary education level, the percentage of learners enrolled in mainstream classes fell by 7.5 percentage points (from 91.6% to 84.1%). It rose by 2.5 percentage points in secondary technical education. While the percentage of learners enrolled in special schools declined at the pre-primary and primary levels between 2016/2017 and 2018/2019, it rose by 1.5 percentage points in secondary general education during the same period (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], pp. 32–33).

In the school year 2019/2020, a Unified System for Learners’ Assessment was introduced in primary education. The philosophy of the new system is in line with modern pedagogical assessment principles. It is aimed at continuous feedback, reinforcement and support for learners with the continuous development and improvement of learning outcomes as a key objective. A school progress report has been introduced to monitor the extent to which the expected final results are achieved. Those with special needs are graded in the same way as their peers, although their individual needs are considered. The curriculum for pre-primary education was also restructured to focus on skills development rather than knowledge acquisition (including individualised instruction, new methodological approaches, etc.). In kindergarten, teachers have the flexibility to adjust teaching methods and take the time to alternate and repeat specific educational targets. This prevents the exclusion of some learners with SEN from mainstream classroom teaching. Specialist educators must co-operate and interact with the learner’s class teacher to develop and deliver an individual education plan for the learner (IECE – Cyprus Example of provision, p. 3 – cited in European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)).

In secondary school, learners with special needs are graded in the same way as their peers, unless they have a dispensation from the DC for Special Education. The Committee



can also give instructions for adjustments to evaluation materials and procedures that are usually designed to facilitate the learner's specific needs, e.g. visual impairment, etc. The underlying philosophy is that a disability should not impede the expression of skill and that a grade obtained by a learner with special needs should be comparable to that of a peer of equal ability without special needs (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

In August 2022, the Council of Ministers decided on the following four measures, with the aim of improving procedures and strengthening special education:

1. establishment of a Special Educational Needs Assessment Centre, using the relevant scientific documentation and expertise, through specialist scientists, for the most effective and faster examination and processing of cases;
2. strengthening and specialisation of the diagnoses carried out from the school year 2022/2023 in pre-primary and first grade of primary schools;
3. reinforcement of special schools with psychological support services and regular monitoring and supervision by school doctors;
4. final assessment and employment of care assistants, for the school year 2022/2023.



SECTION 2. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This section provides information on the structures and features of the whole education system that influence the development and implementation of inclusive education in the country.

2.1 Overview of the education system

Compulsory education lasts for ten years and extends from the age of 4 years, 8 months (pre-primary education) to the age of 15 years (end of lower secondary education). Public education is free for all learners in the age range of 4 years, 8 months to 18 years. Textbooks are also given to both learners and teachers free of charge. Public tertiary (non-university level) education is also free. Public higher education (undergraduate level) is basically free for Cypriots and EU citizens, as the government fully pays the fees which the councils of the universities set. International undergraduate students from outside the EU countries pay fees. Postgraduate students, Cypriot or international, pay fees set by the Council of Ministers. Adult education offered in public institutions is to a large extent free. However, a large number of training courses, mostly offered by private or semi-government organisations, involve fees ([Eurydice, 2022: Overview](#)).

The education system of Cyprus is centralised. All children must attend their neighbouring school and the schools cannot refuse to educate learners from their local community. Children with special needs attend their neighbouring schools unless there is an official decision from the DCs of Special Education (Government of Cyprus, 1999 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 31).

Early childhood education and care is organised on the pre-school system and the pre-primary system. The pre-school system comes under the remit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and involves day nurseries, where care and supervision is offered to children under the age of 3. The pre-primary system comes under the remit of the MOESY and involves kindergartens. It concerns children in the age range of 3 years to 6 years ([Eurydice, 2022: Overview](#)).

Parents of children aged between 3 and 4 years, 8 months can apply to register their children in any public pre-primary school. Registration priority is given to children of compulsory education age (4 years, 8 months and above). All other available places are offered to younger children aged between 3 and 4 years, 8 months on the basis of certain criteria. Priority is given to children with SEN. The rest of the children are selected according to specific criteria, approved by the Council of Ministers (81.735, 2 December 2016 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 19).

Primary education is provided in primary schools and it comprises a six-year course of general education beginning at the age of 6 years.

Lower secondary education is provided in the lower secondary education schools and comprises a three-year course of general education beginning at the age of 12 years.



Upper secondary education involves a three-year cycle which begins at the age of 15 years and is offered in two different types of programmes:

- the upper secondary general education programmes;
- the upper secondary technical and vocational education programmes.

The upper secondary general education schools are called *lycea* and their programmes include both common core subjects and optional subjects of specialisation.

Secondary technical and vocational education (STVE) is offered in the technical schools of vocational education and training. The STVE programmes include formal technical and vocational education offered in two streams – the theoretical and the practical stream. The apprenticeship scheme, which involves combined school and workplace courses, is also included in the programmes of the technical schools.

Adult education is the responsibility of both the MOESY and the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. It is offered in the form of formal education, non-formal education and vocational training, either in public institutions, or by semi-government or private organisations.

Second chance education is offered in evening schools, called *evening gymnasia* and *lycea* and evening technical schools of vocational education and training, which offer three-year duration programmes for each level of education to early school leavers (15–19 years old).

Special education is provided in mainstream schools for the vast majority of learners with special needs. In case full-time attendance in a mainstream class is not appropriate for the learner's needs, attendance at a special unit within a mainstream school is decided. If neither is considered suitable, the learner attends a public special school ([Eurydice, 2022: Overview](#)).

Through on-going re-evaluation, the state aims to ensure that the learner's individual education plan develops along with the learner and that every effort is made to create the least segregated educational setting possible. Special teachers who are fully assigned to mainstream schools, run special units in mainstream schools or are peripatetic are considered part of the school's teaching staff in much the same way as the music, physical education or art teachers (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Currently, there are:

- seven special schools for learners with multiple disabilities and severe psycho-motor impairments;
- one school for learners with visual impairments;
- one school for learners with hearing impairments.

The latter two schools provide services to learners with visual or hearing impairments who are included in mainstream schools and to adults requiring specialist assistance or guidance. Specialist educators are also provided to non-governmental institutions offering specialist services to distinct groups of learners, e.g. those with multiple or severe physical disabilities. Services are also provided to learners who are in hospital for a significant



period or who, for medical or other reasons, must be educated at home (European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)).

2.2 Specific features that are present within the education system

Early tracking of learners into a particular educational pathway (i.e. streaming learners by abilities into different types of provision or school; this includes placing children into separate schools)

Education at home is allowed according to the Law (113(I)/1999) for learners of pre-primary, primary and secondary education who either have disabilities or special needs. Education at home also includes learners who have very serious health problems and have great difficulty in attending classes, and also learners who have serious problems for a short period of time due to a number of reasons which inhibit them to attend classes. Education at home is allowed only if it is approved by the DC of Special Education (Eurydice 2022: Organisation and governance).

'Double-shift' patterns to the school day (i.e. learners attend for either a morning or afternoon session)

In 2019, the optional all-day school programme and the summer school programme represented seven per cent of resources allocated to the implementation of inclusive education.

The optional all-day programme addresses school failure and drop-out through additional teaching and learning opportunities. It complements primary schools' morning curriculum with afternoon sessions that may entail a reduced teacher–learner ratio. It helps learners to:

- complete their homework;
- acquire additional skills through supportive teaching;
- access additional subjects in line with their interests.

The summer school programme offers flexible creative and recreational activities to learners who need support and who may or may not have an official decision.

Recreational activities are based on learners' needs, abilities and interests. They aim to:

- reduce the gap between learners of different socio-economic backgrounds in terms of opportunities for and access to creative educational experiences during summer holidays;
- assist working parents with supervision of their children during the summer holidays when schools are closed;
- contribute to reducing unemployment by offering work to unemployed young teachers who work alongside more experienced, tenured colleagues.

Source: *European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report]*



Grade retention (i.e. holding learners back to repeat school years, instead of providing flexible support that enables learners to progress with their peers)

A learner progresses every year from one grade to the next on the basis of age. Only in exceptional cases, a learner may have to repeat a school year because of unsatisfactory progress with the curriculum. This may only occur once during the learner's attendance of primary education, and it must have the approval of the school inspector, following notification of the learner's parents/guardians.

In secondary education, progression of learners from one class to the next is not automatic. Provided that a learner satisfies the regulated criteria for progression at the end of the school year, they will be issued a certificate of progression in order to enrol in the next class. The certificate contains the grades of the two terms for every subject and the marks of the final examinations for the subjects of modern Greek, history, mathematics, and physics. Learners are allowed to repeat a class twice in the school they attend. If they are required to repeat a class for the third time, they have to enrol at a different school (Eurydice, 2022: Progression of learners).

Multiple languages of instruction

The country has one of the EU's highest asylum application rates by inhabitant ratio. The proportion of young people (aged 18–34) among recently arrived asylum seekers is especially high at 62% (2018). The implementation of enhanced education measures aimed at learners with a migrant background is on-going and supported by ESF+ (European Semester 2022).

The policy of the MOESY, as set out in the 'Policy Report of the Ministry of Education for Multicultural Education', has been to recognise the language and diverse cultural traditions of the different groups while supporting those learners who do not have Greek as their first language, to improve their language skills in order to facilitate a smooth transition into the society of Cyprus (Eurydice, 1922: Educational support and guidance).

Specific policies on access to compulsory education in local schools (i.e. school selection policies)

Education in Cyprus is compulsory, lasts for ten years and extends from the age of 5 years (pre-primary education) to the age of 15 years (end of lower secondary education). Learners are enrolled in the nearest public school to the place they are living, according to their educational district (Eurydice: Key features of the education system).

Other(s)

Private education is offered at all levels in Cyprus. Private schools are registered with the MOESY, which approves their curricula and is responsible for their supervision. Private schools are established by private individuals or businesses and they are usually run on a for-profit basis. They are mainly self-financed, raising their funds from tuition fees set by the owner of the school. Their fees must be prior-approved by the MOESY.

There are 171 private kindergartens in operation, 27 private schools of primary education, 38 private schools of secondary education and 544 private tutorial centres.

Source: *Eurydice: Organisation of private education*



2.3 Public and private authorities responsible for different types of provision

Support and guidance in the primary and pre-primary sectors come primarily from teachers, deputy head teachers and head teachers. At secondary school level there are counsellors for support and guidance to learners. They have usually had special training in counselling, and they have a reduced teaching load. In other cases, they have had higher-level studies in educational counselling and are regulated by their own schemes of service (Eurydice, 2022: Management and other staff).

The tasks of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), as determined by the Law (113(I)/1999), include:

- preparation in collaboration with teachers and parents of an individual education plan for the learner;
- monitoring the development of the learner based on the assessed needs;
- providing support and guidance to parents;
- collaboration with the school administration, teachers and any other person involved in the effective provision of the designated special education;
- solving problems that arise and providing any assistance under the concept of special education.

Source: *Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, pp. 32-33, paragraph 168 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 13*

2.4 Levels of autonomy open to educational institutions – schools, local authorities, school maintainers, etc. – within the system

Public schools are not free to decide either on the content of the curriculum, the textbooks used, appointment of the teaching staff or raising and managing money for the school (Eurydice, 2022: Administration at institutional level).

As a result of centralisation in education governance, autonomy is very limited at the school education level. Only a few elements of decentralisation can be identified at the school unit level, such as the teachers' autonomy in regards to the teaching methods they use in their class, or the head teachers' right to manage a small budget for extra expenses of the school unit (e.g. light equipment). At the higher education level, universities are academically autonomous bodies. Public universities are fully self-administered public corporate bodies. The council of the universities is responsible for the management and control of their financial affairs (Eurydice, 2022: Overview).

2.5 General mechanisms for funding schools

Public education at all levels is mainly financed by the government, either directly or through allotments to local school boards. Private institutions mainly raise their funds



through tuition fees. Receiving external money is not permitted for public schools in the pre-primary, primary and secondary level of education. Their only source of finance is the national budget and the management of school assets and property by the respective local school boards. Private institutions at all levels are not in any way restricted from receiving external funding. According to official data of the Cyprus Statistical Service (CYSTAT), public expenditure on *all levels of education in 2008* was EUR 1.29 billion, which accounted for 17.6% of the government budget and 7.5% of GDP. Pre-school and pre-primary education including special education absorbed 4.7% of total public expenditure, primary education 27.5%, secondary education 42%, tertiary education 24.6% and non-formal education including education of Cypriot communities abroad 1.32%. The biggest part (88.6%) of total public expenditure was directed to the public institutions of Cyprus, while 3.4% was directed to private institutions and 8% concerned government aid for Cypriot students and educational programmes abroad.

Public expenditure on *all levels of education in 2018* was EUR 1.25 billion, which accounted for 13.6% of the government budget and 5.8% of GDP. Pre-school and pre-primary education absorbed 5.3%, special education absorbed 4.2%, primary education 28.3%, secondary education 40%, tertiary education 20% and non-formal education including education of Cypriot communities abroad 2.2%. In 2019, public spending on education, total (% of GDP) was reported at 6.4% ([Eurydice, 2022](#)).

Funding in pre-primary education: Pre-primary education is compulsory and free in public schools for all children who are aged 4 years, 8 months and above. All younger children aged between 3 and 4 years, 8 months attending public pre-primary schools pay fees, apart from those whose families receive 'minimum income guaranteed' or 'public allowance'. Fees are defined by the Minister of Education, Sport and Youth, in co-operation with the Minister of Finance (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 20).

Public institutions at all levels of early childhood and school education (day nurseries, kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools) are directly or indirectly financed by the government. All expenses of public day nurseries are covered by the Social Welfare Services of the Deputy Ministry of Welfare. At the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education, the MOESY finances in full the running of public schools, either directly or by contribution to the budgets of the local school boards. It pays the salaries of the teachers, covers all expenses related to the construction of school buildings and provides books and teaching materials free of charge. All other expenses, related to the maintenance and improvement of school buildings and the management and maintenance of school equipment, are met by the local school boards. The only exception is with the technical schools for vocational education and training and the special schools, where the government undertakes full and direct responsibility for their financing, without any involvement of the local school boards.

The government is the main contributor to the budgets of the local school boards, and the amount given is based on enrolment figures, the school's location (urban/rural) and the ability of the school board to be self-sustaining. School boards may also have other sources of income, deriving from the management of properties and other assets belonging to schools under their responsibility ([Eurydice, 2022](#): Funding).



2.6 Specific mechanisms for funding the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Funding for learners with SEN

The government provides all of the funding for special needs. The law obliges the state to equip special schools or mainstream schools where special education is provided with all the required equipment and staff. The number of staff and the budgets for each school depend on the number of learners and the school provision.

If the DCs, which evaluate learners with special educational needs, decide that a learner should attend a special school or unit outside the area where the learner lives, the state is responsible for the learner's transportation to and from school. Learners in special schools are transported to and from school for free.

Part 9 of the Regulations for the Training and Education of Children with Special Needs (186(I)/2001) concerns the Building Specifications of Public and Private Schools. The Regulations state that all schools (public and private) in which learners with special needs study must comply with the building specifications. The state is responsible for making school buildings accessible to learners with special needs.

School boards are financed by the government to pay for school assistants for learners in mainstream classes, special units and special schools who need this provision, according to the DCs.

The state also provides special individual equipment (wheelchairs, special seats, assistive technology, etc.), according to the learner's evaluation (European Agency, 2020: [Financing of Inclusive Education Systems](#); National Overview, p. 4).

For early childhood education, the government, through the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, grants financial support for auxiliary equipment to persons with permanent or of non-determined duration physical, mental or psychological disability. The support may cover transport equipment, prosthetic devices, communication aid, escort expenses etc. (L. 127(I)/2000).

Special facilities are offered to learners with special needs in the framework of special education. Public expenditure on special education was EUR 16,860,000 in 2008, which accounted for 1.3% of the total public expenditure for the same year (Eurydice, 2022: Financial support for families of learners with special educational needs).

Financial support to families

A family allowance paid to all eligible families on the basis of the number of children they have can be considered as a first measure of state financial support for learners' families. This allowance is not means-tested, but families on low income receive a higher amount. State financial support is given to learners' families in several other ways.

At the early childhood care level, recipients of public assistance and children under the care of the Director of Social Welfare Services are exempted from paying fees in day nurseries.



At the kindergarten level, families with low income or with four or more children are entitled to a reduction of EUR 17–25 to the token amount of EUR 42 per month that parents of children below the age of 5 years pay. Furthermore, by a decision of the Council of Ministers on 20 April 2006, a number of specific categories of parents have been exempted from their obligation of paying fees. These include parents that receive public aid, parents with health problems and infirmities who are subject to treatment and do not work, and parents of children that have been absent for more than one month from kindergarten for health reasons (or their parents' health), who receive an exemption for the months the child has been absent.

At the primary and secondary education level, additionally to free education offered, the government provides financial support to learners' families in certain cases. At the primary education level, the government subsidises the meals of those children of families in receipt of welfare benefits and of Turkish Cypriots who are attending all-day schools. At the secondary level, the government provides free or subsidised transport for those children living in more remote areas (Eurydice, 2022: Early childhood and school education funding).

European Social Fund

A targeted European Social Fund (ESF) project 'Actions for School and Social Inclusion', has been launched. The project tackles issues of low performance, delinquency and early school leaving, in primary and secondary education, through assertive actions. The project contributes to the alleviation of inequalities in the participating school units (Europe 2020: National Reform Programme 2017, p. 65 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 32).

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of system features and structures for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the impact of policy-making, structures and processes at national, regional, local and school levels on inclusive education practice.

In recent years, important decisions have been taken and implemented by the Republic of Cyprus, which are identified with modern pedagogical concepts. Kindergartens are open to children from the age of 3 years. In September 2004, attendance for children aged between 4 years, 8 months and 5 years, 8 months became free and compulsory. The starting age for compulsory primary education has recently been raised: since 2020/2021, attendance has been free and compulsory until children are aged 5 years, 10 months. Starting September 2021, attendance is free and compulsory until children are 6 years old (Eurydice, 2022: Early childhood and school education funding).

Secondary education is also provided by the evening schools, either the evening gymnasia/lycea or the evening technical schools. The aim of the evening schools is to provide a 'second chance' education to individuals who have left secondary education without a leaving certificate (Eurydice, 2022: Secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education).



Intervention measures targeting educational risks linked to social disadvantage involve learners benefitting from the optional all-day and summer schools programmes. Intervention measures associated with educational risks linked to school violence involve learners receiving support from the Immediate Intervention Team. Intervention measures associated with educational risks linked to dependence on illegal substances involve learners benefitting from grants for non-school related actions (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 44).

Also, during the educational process specialist support is provided by a range of professionals. Special education teachers and speech pathologists teach in pre-primary schools, primary schools and special schools. Furthermore, care assistants are appointed to assist with learners' needs regarding toileting, feeding, etc. In secondary education, learners with special needs are taught by classroom teachers. Care assistants are also appointed in secondary schools. SENCOs and educational psychologists are appointed to serve the needs of learners in all schools (Government of Cyprus, 1999 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 22).

The MOESY co-ordinated the Erasmus+ project i-Decide (2016–2018), which has developed an innovative toolkit and induction course to support evidence-based policy-making. This tool aimed to reduce disparities in learning outcomes and marginalisation by supporting school leaders, school staff and policy-makers to engage in shared and inclusive decision-making (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 22).

Furthermore, the state implements programmes for preventing early school leaving and school failure. These programmes are carried out in schools that have been identified as having a high percentage of learner school failure or early school leavers. There are also programmes to support learners identified as high risk for functional literacy and numeracy (Raising Achievement Report, p. 3 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 32).

Despite the progress towards inclusive education, the current system seems to be framed by a placement approach that focuses more on access to mainstream settings than on participation and achievement opportunities. The resource analysis, which was implemented by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, indicates that:

- The trend towards enrolment in mainstream classes for learners with an official decision has been stable over the last three school years.
- Learners with an official decision have lower achievement opportunities than their peers, especially when enrolled in special units.
- There is a lack of data on achievement opportunities for learners who received support without an official decision.

Source: *European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 55*

Spending on education as a percentage of GDP is relatively high in Cyprus but it is not reflected in high educational outcomes. Cyprus exceeds the EU average of 10% for the proportion of total government expenditure devoted to education. However, the high overall levels of spending on education do not translate into corresponding good



educational outcomes compared to other member-states. This highlights challenges with regard to the effectiveness and efficiency of investment in education in Cyprus (European Semester, 2022, p. 49).

Finally, additional funding given to families does not promote inclusion; it actually does the opposite. Parents use it to fund individual therapies. This persuades everyone, parents included, of the need for separate and specialised education and the necessity of therapies as a method for ‘normalisation’ of the child (IECE Report, p. 14 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 17–18).



SECTION 3. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

This section provides information on the overall framework of legislation and policy governing the whole of the education system in the country.

3.1 Is there a single legislation and policy framework covering all learners in all educational settings?

No.

3.1a Description of the single legislation and policy framework

Not applicable.

3.1b Overview of the general education legislation and policy framework guiding the whole system

According to the decision of the Council of Ministers (84.078, 9 January 2018), compulsory *pre-primary education* is established at the age of 4 years, 8 months. At this age, all children are eligible for free education in public schools following the guidelines of the curriculum. In addition, in public pre-primary schools, the educational needs of a number of children aged between 3 and 4 years, 8 months are satisfied, provided that there are available places. All children attending public kindergartens are eligible for free special education and provision, irrespective of age (Special Education Laws of 1999–2020 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 19).

The Law 24(I)/1993 and its amendments provide for free education at the primary and secondary level and compulsory education at primary and lower secondary level. Parents or guardians of children who fail to register and send them to school during the specified period are subject to a penalty. The Law also provides for the textbooks to be published by the MOESY and be provided to teachers and learners free of charge. It also assigns to the Council of Ministers the authority to decide for provision of transport, either subsidised or free of charge, to learners living at a distance from the school they attend ([Eurydice, 2022: Legislation and official policy documents](#)).

3.1c Overview of the specific education legislation and policy framework impacting on the inclusion of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Laws

The MOESY serves the needs of children with disabilities, as provided in the *Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Laws of 1999–2020* and in the *Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Regulations of 2001–2013*. This legislation provides children with disabilities with all the opportunities for equal education, in order to develop their skills to the highest level (cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 4). The Laws for the Education and Training of Children with Special Educational Needs (1999–2020) ensure that all learners with disabilities or special needs are included in the school environment and specific measures are promoted to attend to all of their needs.



The goal is that all learners have the right to be educated together, regardless of any special need or disability (cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 6). Please also refer to answers to [Section 1.1](#) (Overview of the historical development of inclusive education) and the Section 1 [evaluative commentary](#).

The Special Education Law (113(I)/1999) is the legislative framework which regulates:

- the detection of learners with SEN;
- their assessment and development of an individual education plan;
- their placement in the most appropriate educational setting with provision of both teachers and educational resources to meet their needs;
- the on-going evaluation of the learner's progress.

The state provides free special educational services to learners between the ages of 3 and 18 who need them (if deemed necessary, education may be extended up to the age of 21). Learners with special needs are educated in public schools, which are equipped with suitable infrastructure, according to the Law. Most learners with SEN are educated within mainstream classrooms. Special educational provision may also be given in special units in mainstream schools. These learners are assigned to a mainstream class in which they attend inclusive lessons and participate in celebratory or festive events (European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)).

Learners with severe difficulties are educated in special schools. These are equipped with the appropriate staff (psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists and other specialists, as well as auxiliary staff) to support and provide essential means to achieve their mission. If learners with special needs cannot attend school for a long period, due to health or other problems, education may be provided in places other than public or special schools, i.e. at home or in hospitals.

The key elements of the Law are:

- defining special education for each individual learner, the process of implementation and where it should take place (mainstream school, special unit or special school);
- establishing Committees for Special Education (Central Committee, District Committee – DC, Board for Special Education);
- developing a mechanism for recognising learners with special needs;
- reducing the total number of learners in classes which include learner(s) with special needs;
- developing and implementing assessment procedures for every learner with special needs;
- recruiting officers to co-ordinate and oversee the implementation of the individual education plan recommended for each learner;
- differential assessment of the educational progress of learners with special needs according to their individual differences;



- parents' right to appeal against the decision of the Committee for Special Education;
- placements for learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms, in special units within mainstream schools or in public special schools, according to their individually assessed needs;
- the legal framework for the functioning of private special schools.

Source: *European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)*

Special educational provision can take place in any of the state school education levels. Hence, pre-primary institutions, primary schools, *gymnasia* (lower secondary schools), *lycea* (upper secondary schools) and technical schools must provide adaptations and facilities for learners with SEN. In secondary education, learners with specific learning difficulties are enrolled in support programmes, following a decision by the DC. Learners are offered educational support individually or in groups, according to their needs (European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)).

Cyprus had 108,505 learners in the 2018/2019 school year. Of these, 46.5% (50,543) received support, 9.4% (10,206) had an official decision and 37.1% (40,337) received support without an official decision (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 29).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was signed in 1990 and ratified in 1991. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was signed in 2007 and ratified in 2011. The state is responsible for safeguarding the rights of learners with SEN and is responsible for placing those learners in the united body of training (National Overview, p. 8 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 5).

MOESY's anti-racist policy

All schools in the three levels of education are encouraged to implement the MOESY's anti-racist policy 'Code of Conduct against Racism and Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents', developed and piloted in 2014/2015. The policy was developed based on the Follow-up Report of Cyprus for Recommendation 20 and a recommendation by the Anti-Discrimination Body. The anti-racist policy conceptualises racism in a broad manner, including all sorts of discrimination. It includes definitions of basic concepts, outlines the responsibilities and commitments expected by each member of the school community, and provides schools and teachers with a detailed plan on how to deal with and prevent racist incidents (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 24–25).

The Functional Literacy Programme (reformed in 2016/2017) aims to prevent school failure and social exclusion by developing basic skills (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 31).

The programme 'School and Social Inclusion Actions' that is implemented in schools that have been identified as having a high percentage of learner school failure or early school leavers (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 32).



3.2 Is there a single curriculum framework covering all learners in all educational settings?

No.

3.2a Description of the single curriculum framework

Not applicable.

3.2b Overview of the general curriculum framework

The education of children is ensured and enhanced through the new curricula, which have been applied to public schools since the 2010/2011 school year (Cyprus Report on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 24, 2015, p. 2 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 4).

The implementation of the new curricula is expected to meet the needs of all learners (in primary education). The new methodological approach to subjects and the changes of timetables aim to diversify teaching and overcome difficulties that may be experienced by learners from their class teachers (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 35 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 23).

The MOESY has organised the curriculum to focus on the learner's development, turning the attention of the teacher and the learner to what the learner learns (success), not on what material is covered, and refining the necessary teaching for each expected learning outcome (adequacy) (Raising Achievement Report – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 15).

The responsibility for providing guidance in the curriculum in public schools rests primarily with the teacher and, in the case of secondary schools, with the subject co-ordinator. Depending on the nature of the problem, they may choose to involve the head teacher who may deem it necessary to involve the school inspector or the school psychologist as well (Eurydice, 2022: Guidance and counselling in early childhood and school education).

3.2c Overview of specific curriculum framework(s) for different groups of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Most learners with special needs attend mainstream schools and follow the mainstream curriculum. Learners attending special units within mainstream schools have the same school day as the mainstream classes. Depending on their individual needs, they also attend inclusive lessons and participate in celebratory or festive events with this class. The amount of time spent in the special unit depends on the learner's level of learning difficulty. This also determines the amount of differentiation that the learner's personalised curriculum will have from that of their peer group.

If a special teacher is part of the learner's education, they must co-operate and interact with the learner's class teacher in developing and delivering an Individual Education Plan (IEP). During the development of the learner's IEP, staff will make every effort to ensure that the learner is fully involved in all school and class activities. The team developing the IEP will often determine what instructional methodology will be used for the learner. If a



learner requires individual assistance outside the classroom, this is arranged so as not to restrict access to all subjects of the curriculum.

With the introduction of the term ‘education and training’, the Law expands the concept of special education beyond academic subjects. It also includes areas of self-help skills, social skills, vocational training and anything that may assist the person in their holistic development (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Special educational support is usually provided for subjects that learners are examined in at the end of the school year (modern Greek, history, physics and mathematics). Learners are exempted, for provision of educational support, from lessons that they cannot attend due to their disability (e.g. ancient Greek and/or a second foreign language). Learners with specific sensory disabilities receive specialised assistance from the special schools.

Recently, the curriculum for pre-primary education was assessed and restructured to focus on skills development rather than knowledge acquisition (including individualised instruction, new methodological approaches, etc.). In kindergarten, teachers have the flexibility to adjust teaching methods and take the time to alternate and repeat specific educational targets. This prevents the exclusion of some children with SEN from mainstream classroom teaching (IECE – Cyprus Example of provision, p. 3 – cited in European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)).

Access to the curriculum is provided by:

- assistive technology;
- information in Braille, in large print, on audiotape, using a symbol system;
- sign language interpreters;
- additional time to finish an exam or use equipment in practical work;
- education at home in case of health problems;
- accessible visits/trips;
- changes to teaching and learning arrangements, class organisation, timetabling;
- support from other learners.

Source: UN, 2017, pp. 16-17 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 15

Facilitation includes:

- simplification of the test papers;
- leniency regarding syntax and spelling mistakes;
- oral assessment;
- transcriber;
- other facilities related to particular needs of learners with mobility, hearing and visual problems.

Special equipment as well as school assistants are provided to learners at school where needed. Under Preparatory Apprenticeship, learners under 15 years old are given the opportunity to return to the first cycle of lower secondary education (*gymnasium*) (Europe



2020: National Reform Programme 2017, p. 46; European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 28).

IEPs are developed for all learners in primary and secondary education. The IEP is prepared through a team effort by all teachers and/or specialists involved in the learner's education. Parents are also involved in the preparation of an IEP. The IEP defines the individualised objectives of a learner. It is tailored to the learner's needs and is reviewed periodically (Government of Cyprus, 1999). Learners in secondary education may be withdrawn from non-examination subjects or exempt from lessons due to disability while they receive educational support in other areas (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 23).

Special teachers must co-operate and interact with the learner's class teacher to develop and deliver an IEP for the learner. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, these services should be provided within a class at the learner's local school, which should have all necessary adaptations and resources. If school attendance in a mainstream classroom is not appropriate for the learner's needs, special education, speech therapy or attendance at a special unit within a mainstream school is provided. Special units provide more intensive special education to a small number of learners (usually up to six), while maintaining contact and inclusion with a specific reference class in the school. If none of these adaptations suit the learner's needs, they may attend a special school (European Agency, 2020: [Legislation and policy](#)).

Curriculum framework in special schools

Special schools usually have groups of no more than six learners, with a lot of individual work. Major elements of the curriculum for learners attending special schools are:

- self-help and independence skills;
- social and emotional skills development;
- recreational skills;
- communication skills;
- vocational training.

If learners can follow aspects of the mainstream curriculum, this will be accommodated. If learners have a specific disability (e.g. a visual, hearing or mobility impairment), specific training and therapeutic interventions will be part of the curriculum. The prevailing philosophy is that learners should receive an education suited to their developmental needs (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

3.3 Is there a single legislation and policy framework for all teacher education and professional development?

No.



3.3a Description of the single legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development

Not applicable.

3.3b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development

Mainstream teachers fall into two broad categories:

- Primary school teachers follow a four-year university-based general teacher education course and can then be employed as primary school teachers.
- Special teachers, employed to provide services to learners in mainstream primary schools, in special units attached to mainstream schools or in special schools, have specific job descriptions.

At present, special teachers are classified as specialising in:

- teaching learners with specific learning, functional or adjustment difficulties;
- teaching learners with visual impairments;
- teaching learners with hearing impairments;
- speech therapy;
- physiotherapy;
- special physical education;
- music therapy;
- occupational therapy;
- audiology.

Preparatory service

Secondary school teachers must complete a university degree in a specific curriculum subject. Upon employment, they must further complete a seven-month, pre-service training programme offered by the University of Cyprus. This consists of courses on psychology, methodology of teaching, didactics and school experience. In secondary education, mainstream subject teachers provide support for learners with special needs. Various seminars regarding special education are organised every year to assist them in this task (European Agency, 2020: [Teacher education for inclusive education](#)).

In-service training

All teachers are encouraged to attend professional development courses offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI), many of which have particular reference to special education. The Institute offers different schemes of school-based seminars, conferences and workshops. Afternoon optional series of seminars are at the teachers' and schools' disposal to formulate their professional learning action plan. Other programmes offered are school-based in-service training and support, afternoon seminars on various subjects and conferences organised in co-operation with other departments of the MOESY,



universities and NGOs. Attendance at in-service seminars is compulsory, while attendance at other seminars is encouraged. Attendance at continuous professional development courses is considered when determining a teacher's performance during teacher evaluation (European Agency, 2020: [Teacher education for inclusive education](#)).

The CPI is the official training agency. Professional learning is mainly carried out within the school and focuses on the units' own developmental/learning needs, the learners' needs and in general the priorities set out by the school itself. Professional learning aims to carry out small research in the school to identify its priorities and then to set out an action plan to deal with the specific issues and priorities. The actions set out are then evaluated and new goals are set (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 26).

The CPI aims to provide support to all teachers of all levels in different ways, taking into consideration the needs of teachers, the priorities set by the MOESY and the current scientific knowledge and practice in the area. This aim is achieved by organising:

- compulsory recurrent courses addressed to newly promoted secondary school head teachers; newly promoted primary school head teachers; deputy head teachers in secondary education; newly appointed teachers of all levels;
- an in-service programme for teachers working with learners who do not have Greek as their first language (teaching Greek as a second language);
- seminars based on the needs/priorities of the MOESY and the objectives arising, for example, a large-scale in-service training programme was offered to teachers of all levels on the new curricula;
- optional seminars, seminars addressed to parents, seminars tailored for different schools and their needs, conferences and day seminars.

Source: *European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 34*

3.3c Overview of specific legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development and what and who this specific framework focuses on

Beyond offering centralised training, the Department of Teachers' In-service Training focuses on adopting other forms of supporting teachers:

- a combination of central training courses accompanied by classroom implementation;
- e-learning courses develop supportive educational material;
- implementation of intervention programmes in school units.

Source: *Raising Achievement Report, p. 6 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 34*

Targeted training is also offered to teachers regarding learners with migrant background (cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 33).

National Action Plan for Disability

The National Action Plan for Disability aims to provide support on the area to all teachers of all levels in different ways. Actions have been included in the National Action Plan



regarding the training of teachers in mainstream schools, head teachers and special education teachers. The in-service training is provided by the MOESY or the CPI (National Action Plan for Disability 2018–2020 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 33).

The MOESY, in co-operation with the University of Cyprus, the CPI, the Fulbright Institution and the British Council, organise intra-service seminars and invite experts from Cyprus and abroad. The goal is to inform and educate teachers on disability issues. The co-operation between the MOESY and the School for Parents also promotes training and awareness-raising programmes so that parents are informed on such topics (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, p. 34, paragraph 180 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 13).

Seminars, conferences and actions relating to people with special needs and disabilities are provided in order to broaden the knowledge of teachers and to raise awareness and mobilise action on inclusion of learners with special needs in the school and in the general social environment. Specialised training on issues concerning special education is part of optional seminars (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 33). Educational psychologists carry out school-based seminars about special education subjects (identifying and dealing with learners presenting learning difficulties) (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 35).

Law of Child Sexual Abuse (2014)

Based on the Law of Child Sexual Abuse (2014), teachers have an important role in recognising, reporting and preventing child sexual abuse. In this line, a teachers' manual was prepared by the MOESY giving guidelines on definitions, symptoms and behaviours of sexual violence against children. In the manual, examples of children's reactions (from 0 to 18 years old) are given to teachers in order to recognise behaviours of an abused child. Moreover, procedures are described in order to report a case of child sexual abuse. The importance of sexual education in schools is also emphasised (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 18–19).

Teacher Training Programme for the Development of Digital Capacity

The CPI has announced the first phase of the Teachers' Training Programme for Digital Capacity Development, which lasted from March 2021 to June 2021. The Programme was offered by the Institute, in collaboration with academic institutions of Cyprus (Open University of Cyprus, University Frederick and European University) and included monitoring learning units, with content on topics that have been defined from a process of diagnosing the needs of teachers, but also European and national directions. The Programme was part of the government's transition policy in digital education and its design was supported by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy. The Programme was based on the principle that teachers, as adults but mainly as professionals, can take advantage of opportunities provided to them to implement their own personal learning planning through a cyclical learning process. Each teacher set their own learning goals (using online self-assessment tools), implemented learning actions (attending learning modules), and collected learning items and reflected on their learning path. For this purpose, the Programme offered flexibility and options so that it can satisfy



specialised needs of teachers as groups but also as individuals ([Eurydice, 2022: Teachers and education staff](#)).

3.4 Is there a single legislation and policy framework to ensure support for all learners throughout their school careers?

No.

3.4a Description of the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all throughout their school careers

Not applicable.

3.4b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework that ensures support for the majority of learners throughout their school careers

All children in Cyprus, regardless of gender or ethnic origin and irrespective of the residential status of their parents, are entitled to have access to free education and are eligible for educational support. All learners participate in school activities (Elementary Education Act 2008–2017). Unless there are exceptional circumstances, these services should be provided within a class at the learner’s local school, that should have all necessary adaptations and resources (National Overview, p. 3 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 4).

Within the secondary school system, support is primarily in the form of additional language and numeric tuition (National Overview, p. 6). Support is also provided by educational psychologists in all stages of education (Annual Report 2016, p. 563 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 10).

3.4c Overview of the specific legislation and policy framework that ensures support for learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education throughout their school careers

The Law (113(I)/1999) specifies that special educational support will be provided by the state free of charge for those identified as having SEN between the ages of 3 and 18, with a provision to extend this to 21 years of age if required. The state attempts to provide a legal framework where those with special educational requirements can receive, in the least restrictive environment, an education that meets their individual needs. Support measures are also provided for other categories of children, such as children of returnees and foreigners, or children of migrant workers.

Learners are assigned to special education and training attend mainstream schools, special units or special schools with appropriate infrastructure, adapted to their own needs (National Overview, p. 5 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 9). Learners in the special unit are enrolled as usual in the school and in the list of learners that attend the class according to their age (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 32 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 10).

Specialist support is provided by a range of professionals. Special education teachers and speech pathologists teach in pre-primary schools, primary schools and special schools.



Furthermore, care assistants are appointed to assist with learners' needs regarding toileting, feeding, etc. Special schools have the appropriate staff (special teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, music therapists, physiotherapists, nurses and other specialists, as well as auxiliary staff) to meet the needs of all learners (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 22).

In secondary education, learners with special needs are taught by classroom teachers. Care assistants are also appointed in secondary schools. SENCOs and educational psychologists are appointed to serve the needs of learners in all schools (Government of Cyprus, 1999 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 22).

In addition to the special education support staff, there are co-ordinators of special education, whose role is to offer guidance in mainstream schools, special units and special schools. They offer advice and support to special education teachers, mainstream teachers and head teachers, and they report to the Inspectors of Special Education (Inspectorate of Primary Education). One of their main responsibilities is the development of the learner's IEP in co-operation with a multi-disciplinary group and the parents of the learner ([Eurydice, 2022: Educational support and guidance](#)).

The MOESY accepts and recognises sign language following the Recognition of Cyprus Sign Language Law (66 (I)/2006) and sign language is used for **learners with hearing loss** (see also Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 5). A sign language interpreter is available for training seminars organised by the MOESY. Sign language interpreters are also employed in the School for the Deaf or any school necessary.

Learners with visual disabilities are taught writing in Braille. Translation of textbooks into Braille is undertaken by the School for the Blind and provided for all learners with visual disabilities who attend public schools. There is a small library of audio books in the School for the Blind. Increased access to a wide range of books, magazines and newspapers is achieved through technological support to allow direct conversion of printed material into spoken text (UN, 2013, pp. 19–20).

The information and content of all subjects taught in public schools are accessed through special technological equipment provided to learners with special needs after an evaluation by the DC of Special Education. The learners are provided with communication devices, closed circuit TVs and other equipment to enlarge letters, special keyboards, special software and other technological aids (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 33 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 8–9).

3.5 Is there a single legislation and policy framework to ensure support for all learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life?

No.

3.5a Description of the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Not applicable.



3.5b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework that ensures support for the majority of learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Learners in primary schools, including those with special needs, are promoted from one grade to the next. Under exceptional circumstances, a learner may repeat the pre-primary year if they are deemed to need more time to mature for the needs of the first grade. Similarly, under exceptional circumstances, a learner may be required to repeat one grade of primary school. Learners in primary school are promoted according to age, not level of attainment (Regulative Administrative Act 2008–2017, p. 9 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 6).

In secondary education, promotion from one grade to the next is based on exam results. At present, learners with special needs who cannot undergo the exam procedures can be promoted without exams and receive a certificate of attendance (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Each district has its own District Education Office which is responsible for co-ordinating multi-disciplinary meetings and the necessary arrangements for transition from home to early childhood education or to primary school (IECE Report, p. 1 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 19).

At secondary level, career guidance and counselling are regularly offered to learners by the Guidance and Counselling Service of the MOESY. In addition, in the last year of *gymnasium*, learners are offered career and vocational guidance (0.5 hours per week) as part of their curriculum. The aim is to help learners choose the field or combination of studies they wish to follow in the upper education level (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 39).

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education offers a wide range of technical and vocational initial training and lifelong training programmes to eligible *gymnasium* leavers and adults (Annual Report 2016, p. 464 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 37).

3.5c Overview of the specific legislation and policy framework that ensures support for learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Learners with special needs attending mainstream secondary schools receive transition services designed for their age-equivalent peers. These usually consist of advice on careers or further educational opportunities. Those with specific sensory disabilities receive specialist assistance from special schools. These schools have vocational training programmes for learners who attend full time (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Preparatory Apprenticeship allows the operation of two classes to cater for the needs of learners with different academic backgrounds and levels of maturity, and development of criteria for the assessment of learners, in co-operation with the Career Counselling and Educational Service. Learners under 15 years old are given the opportunity to return to the first cycle of lower secondary education (*gymnasium*) (Europe 2020: National Reform Programme 2017, p. 46). Pre-vocational training is offered to learners from special units in



specially equipped workshops (Annual Report, 2016, p. 466 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 37).

Learners in special units receive a certificate of attendance at the end of school that has no validity in the labour market (Government of Cyprus, 1999). Learners attending special schools are awarded a certificate of attendance, as well as an explanatory certificate stating their abilities in various fields (Government of Cyprus, 1999 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 37).

Special schools for those with learning disabilities or emotional and behavioural problems also have pre-vocational and vocational training programmes. These are designed to assist the transition from school to work, or from school to other vocational training authorities. Special schools also maintain close links with non-governmental agencies providing vocational training programmes to facilitate transition (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of the legislative and policy framework for inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the main challenges and opportunities for effectively translating policy into regional, local and school level practice.

The overall education strategy and key objectives across the whole education system include supporting and empowering all learners by promoting new technologies in the educational system, pursuing educational success and literacy, and promoting differentiation in the learning process (Eurydice, 2022: On-going reforms and policy developments).

The MOESY aims to enhance the quality and accessibility of education. These efforts are reflected in the following strategic goals, included in the MOESY's strategic plan:

- development, training and quality upgrade of the education system's human resources;
- modernisation of the administrative structures of the education system and of the school units;
- upgrading of education content, evaluation and effectiveness;
- support and reinforcement of every learner, acknowledging diversity;
- reinforcement and upgrading of technical and vocational education and of tertiary education.

Source: *Europe 2020: National Reform Programme 2017*, p. 45 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 3

Migrant children are accepted for enrolment in any public school and enjoy equal education rights. The policy of the MOESY, as set out in the 'Policy Report of the Ministry of Education for Multicultural Education', has been to recognise the language and diverse cultural traditions of the different groups, while supporting those learners who do not



have Greek as their first language to improve their language skills in order to facilitate a smooth transition into the society of Cyprus (Eurydice, 2022: Educational support and guidance).

In addition to above, programmes for preventing early school leaving and school failure are implemented in schools that have been identified as having a high percentage of learner school failure or early school leavers.

Being aware of the importance of meeting the Education and Training 2020 objective on inclusive education, the MOESY planned a legislative reform of special education. The aim of the reform was to make the education system in Cyprus more inclusive, aligned with the priorities stated at European level. Following a request from the MOESY, the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS), with the technical support of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, helped conduct analysis of the current policy framework regarding special needs and inclusive education and in preparing new legislation.

The MOESY had an open debate to hear the views from those who have a formal role in the education system, but also from parents, associations of people with disabilities, professionals from related fields, practitioners, other stakeholders and the wider community. Furthermore, the MOESY, along with the Agency's experts, had meetings with all stakeholders in separated groups in order to discuss their views. All stakeholders submitted their suggestions in writing and the Agency experts took them into consideration in order to prepare their recommendations (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 11).

Building upon the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from the MOESY, the resource analysis carried out by the Agency identified a clear and increasing political and financial commitment to inclusive education. Also, it showed that current inclusive education policies support:

- the enrolment of learners with an official decision of SEN in mainstream classes for the majority of the time;
- the development of a continuum of support that considers all learners' educational needs;
- increased continuous professional development and training opportunities on inclusive education topics provided to education system stakeholders, including teachers, professionals, head teachers and parents;
- the development of flexible learning environments by increasing schools' strategic and organisational autonomy and encouraging co-operation among stakeholders.

Source: *European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 10*

In June 2021, the preparation of both the draft Laws and the Regulations was completed. As a result, a new legislative framework was prepared to serve the needs of all learners. This legislation does not only concern learners with disabilities, but *all learners*, including those who belong to vulnerable and special population groups and experience barriers to learning, as well as gifted and talented learners.



In conclusion, the Republic of Cyprus has ratified international conventions and implements educational programmes and policies based on contemporary educational approaches, seeking to change the culture and improve the legislative framework towards inclusive education.



SECTION 4. SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

This section provides information on aspects of governance across and between different system levels, bodies and stakeholders in the country.

4.1 Shared responsibilities across and between central and local government

National legislation sets the aims and principles of education, the regulations of operation of schools or other educational institutions, examinations, funding and staff related issues. Education governance (covering the whole education system) is centralised with the following bodies exercising control over education:

- The Council of Ministers: This is the highest authority in policy-making in education.
- The MOESY: Overall responsibility for education rests with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. It is responsible for the administration of education, the enforcement of educational laws and the implementation of educational policies, the preparation of the education budget and educational bills and the construction of school buildings. It also sets out curricula, syllabuses and textbooks.
- The Education Service Commission: This is an independent, five-member body, appointed by the Council of Ministers for a six-year term. It is responsible for appointments, secondments, transfers, promotions and discipline (including dismissal) of teachers and school inspectors.
- The school boards: These are responsible for the maintenance and equipment of the school buildings in collaboration with the Department of Technical Services of the MOESY.

Source: [Eurydice, 2022: Overview](#)

School boards are responsible for the schools in their given area (which are the same as those of the local authorities). They are responsible for:

- the maintenance and improvement of school buildings;
- securing, managing and maintaining school equipment;
- submitting suggestions to the MOESY regarding the allocation of learners to primary or secondary schools;
- ensuring learners' welfare and safety in co-operation with the parents' associations.

The school boards submit their budget for the next school year both to the MOESY and to the Ministry of Finance for approval. At the end of each school year, the boards submit a detailed audited financial statement. The Law 108(I)/1997 and its amendments provide



for the establishment and operation of school boards and the election of their members (Eurydice, 2022: Main executive and legislative bodies).

4.2 Specific areas for shared responsibilities across and between central and local government

Policy development, implementation and co-ordination

SENCOs offer guidance in both special schools and mainstream schools. They work under the guidance of the inspector of special education, offering advice and support to special teachers and co-operating with teachers and head teachers in mainstream schools and with other professionals (National Overview, p. 6 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 10).

After assessment and diagnosis is made, SENCOs visit both special and mainstream schools and offer advice and suggestions to school staff, parents and learners (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Inter-sectoral collaboration for early childhood services is generally poor and begins with the participation of health professionals or social workers in the task of evaluating a child's needs. If there is a case of child abuse, the MOESY and the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare continue to work together in monitoring the child's attendance at school (IECE Report, p. 13 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 19).

Educational psychologists also develop and implement preventative programmes and interventions in school for the population as a whole (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 29).

Identification of needs / referral for services

Through the core articles of the Law, the state undertakes the early detection of learners with special needs from the age of three.

Any person – especially any parent, director of a nursery, kindergarten, primary school or secondary school or any other member of their education staff, doctor, psychologist or social worker – is responsible for informing the DC of any learner who may have special needs that comes to their attention (European Agency, 2020: Assessment).

The DC on Special Education is responsible for the evaluation process and each member of the committee assesses the learner individually (Government of Cyprus, 1999).

Multi-disciplinary assessment is also in place for learners in all schools (primary, secondary, tertiary education) (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 29).

The DCs form multi-disciplinary teams which are responsible for assessing learners. The multi-disciplinary teams consist of professionals from three ministries (education, health, welfare):

- a MOESY Chief Education Officer (Chair);
- a MOESY representative of the relevant educational level (pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical and vocational);



- a special education teacher;
- an educational psychologist;
- a clinical psychologist;
- a social worker;
- a speech pathologist.

Source: *European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 6–7*

In September 2004, the MOESY activated the mechanism for identifying and supporting learners with learning difficulties and emotional and other problems. This mechanism facilitates in-school support for learners and families before any official special education is carried out (National Overview, p. 5 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 12).

Every two years, or earlier if required, a re-evaluation takes place to assess the learner's progress, the IEP and any further needs (European Agency, 2020: Assessment).

Data collection and sharing

The Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation maintains a database to provide valid and reliable information about the education system to the MOESY (Raising Achievement Report, p. 5 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 17).

Monitoring and evaluation

The Central Committee, which is responsible for overseeing the operation of DCs, deciding on petitions of DCs and examining appeals against DC decisions, consists of representatives of three ministries (education, health and welfare) (Government of Cyprus, 1999, Law on Education and Training for Children with Special Needs, p. 341 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 6–7).

Quality assurance and accountability

All districts follow the instructions of the MOESY departments. Meetings between MOESY employees in all districts with ministry officials are held regularly. The goal is to ensure that legislation provisions and MOESY policies are followed in order to ensure the same quality of services in all districts.

Every early childhood education provision has its own supervisor. Besides meetings between the supervisors, the everyday practices vary significantly due to different interpretations of the legal framework instructions for practitioners (IECE Report, p. 14 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 21).

Funding

No information.



4.3 Formal and informal collaboration across ministries

Intersectoral collaboration is generally limited and begins with the participation of health professionals or social workers in the task of evaluating a learner's needs. If there is a case of child abuse, the two ministries (education, welfare) continue to work together in monitoring the learner's attendance at school (IECE Report, p. 13 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 19).

A multi-disciplinary team is formed (Decision of the Council of Ministers 84.368, 20 February 2018) for the early identification and support of deaf children under the age of 3 and their parents. The Ministry of Health is responsible for implementing this programme and the MOESY participates in the team (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 18).

4.4 Specific mechanisms for formal and informal collaboration that impact on inclusive education

Development of a shared vision for inclusive education

The educational policy of special schools involves a continuous system of contact between the special education and the mainstream schools in their area and the organisation of joint activities (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 4 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 10).

Policy development, implementation and co-ordination

New and existing special schools must develop networks of contacts and joint activities with mainstream schools to minimise segregation. Most special schools have developed contacts and joint activities with mainstream schools. The schools for learners with visual and hearing impairments have a wide network of co-operation and support for learners included in mainstream schools. If a special educator is part of the learner's education, they must co-operate and interact with the learner's class teacher in developing and delivering an IEP for the learner (National Overview, pp. 6–7 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 10–11; European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

In cases where full-time attendance in a mainstream class is not appropriate for the learner's needs, special tuition in a resource room for specified periods per week may be recommended, or alternatively, attendance at a special unit within a mainstream school. Staff members in the special units include the special unit teacher and care assistants who work in close co-operation with the teacher. Speech therapists are often placed in schools offering support to special unit learners, as well as mainstream learners with language problems. Special educational support staff who are either fully assigned to mainstream schools, run special units or are peripatetic, are considered to belong to the teaching staff of the school. When a member of the special education support staff is in class with a learner, they must co-operate and interact with the learner's classroom teacher in the development and delivery of the learner's IEP (Eurydice, 2022: Specific support measures).



Identification of needs / referral for services

A multi-disciplinary team is formed (Decision of the Council of Ministers 84.368, 20 February 2018) for the early identification and support of deaf children under the age of 3 and their parents. The Ministry of Health is responsible for implementing this programme and the MOESY participates in the team (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 18).

The Decision of the Council of Ministers (83.356, 27 September 2017) formed a Centre for Multi-Spectral Evaluation of Autism to undertake early assessment and diagnosis of autistic children from birth up to the age of compulsory education (4 years, 8 months). The Centre serves the needs of children (identification and provision) and their parents (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 18).

The DCs, which are responsible for assessing learners, consist of officers and professionals of three different ministries (MOESY, Ministry of Health and Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare). Also, the Central Committee consists of representatives of the above three ministries (Government of Cyprus, 1999, Law on Education and Training for Children with Special Needs, p. 341 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 7).

Data collection and sharing

No information.

Monitoring and evaluation

The MOESY is in close co-operation with the Pancyprian Federation of Parents of Children with Special Needs. Representatives of the Federation participate in the Council of Special Education and Training. The responsibilities of the Council are to monitor the implementation of the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Law, as well as the formulation of proposals for development projects concerning special education and conducting research on special education (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 6 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 15).

Quality assurance and accountability

No information.

Funding

No information.

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of system governance for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the impact of levels of decentralisation/centralisation in the country on inclusive education in practice.

Legislation and policy for inclusive education in Cyprus is cross-sectoral. The DCs, which are responsible for assessing learners, consist of officers and professionals of three different ministries (MOESY, Ministry of Health and Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare).



Also, the Central Committee consists of representatives of the above three ministries (Government of Cyprus, 1999, Law on Education and Training for Children with Special Needs, p. 341 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 7).

According to the Law (L113(I)/99), the DC has the duty to efficiently evaluate the needs of any learner considered to have special needs, wherever that learner attends classes or resides. It also decides whether a learner needs special education and training or facilities, or whether special education and training will be provided in a mainstream classroom, in a special unit in a mainstream school or in a special school (European Agency, 2020: [Assessment within inclusive education systems](#)). Also, in September 2004, the MOESY activated the mechanism for identifying and supporting learners with learning difficulties and emotional and other problems. This mechanism facilitates in-school support for learners and families before any official special education procedure is carried out. To ensure the appropriate staffing of the various services, the MOESY places a high priority on staff development through various training programmes. Many referrals are made by schools to the Committees of Special Education and Training in order to assess learners' needs. This causes delay in assessment and support. It is observed that many referrals are learners who can be supported by teaching staff and do not need special evaluation (Cyprus Report on UNCRPD Article 24, 2015, p. 35 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 30).

Each district has its own District Education Office which is responsible for co-ordinating multi-disciplinary meetings and the necessary arrangements for transition from home to early childhood education or to primary school. Meetings between MOESY employees in all districts with ministry officials are held regularly. The goal is to ensure that legislation provisions and the MOESY policies are followed in order to ensure the same quality of services in all districts (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 7). This policy ensures the same quality of service irrespective of differences in geographical location.

Formal co-operation mechanisms among special teachers and mainstream teachers are limited. Co-operation among mainstream and special education teachers takes place mainly during the development of learners' IEPs or during various multi-disciplinary meetings held at school to discuss learners' needs. As a result, their type and level of co-operation depend strongly on teachers' and head teachers' personal involvement and commitment. There is also a need for more formal co-operation mechanisms between professionals from specialist and mainstream provision. Co-operation between specialists from the Ministry of Health (clinical psychologists, neurologists, child psychiatrists) and the MOESY takes place during meetings of the multi-disciplinary teams of experts who assess learners. This is in order for the DCs to decide on the provision of special education. However, there are no governance mechanisms formally ruling co-operation between professionals from special and mainstream schools (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 79).

In recent years, Cyprus has taken steps towards increasing school autonomy. As part of this, schools have gained some autonomy. Schools are asked to develop action plans based on specific needs and strategic goals laid down by the MOESY. Many intervention measures aim to encourage innovation at school level. For example, within the 'School and Social Inclusion Actions' programme, funding mechanisms allow selected schools to combine several sources of funding to adapt additional equipment and educational



material to their needs. Schools have also gained organisational autonomy. The new system for teacher professional learning focuses on learning outcomes and aims to support school management in promoting more individualised approaches to teaching and learning. Schools can ask for support from the Immediate Intervention Team. They can also design their programme according to learners' needs, abilities and interests within the public summer schools' programme. Despite this, a high level of centralisation continues to curb implementation of inclusive education (World Bank, 2014).

Compared to other European countries, school funding and management are still central responsibilities in Cyprus. Head teachers are limited in their ability to act responsively to local needs and to show leadership in developing an inclusive education strategy at the school level (*ibid.*). Compared to other European countries, teachers in Cyprus have a limited ability to choose teaching methods, adapt textbooks to educational contexts and develop flexible learning environments by differentiating teaching and learning strategies within a universal design approach (*ibid.*). The high level of centralisation negatively affects the effectiveness of support for learners, especially when they have an official decision. For all types of settings (special schools, special units and mainstream schools), support for this group of learners is framed by an IEP designed by the DC. The DC's decision is sent to the Department of Education, which is responsible for allocating corresponding funds from its budget for the required support (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], pp. 78–98).

Current monitoring mechanisms may not support the development of accountable inclusive education systems. As the World Bank (2014) emphasises, existing external evaluation of schools is limited in scope, usually covering their accounts, health and safety measures and archives. Pedagogical review is limited to follow-up discussions in staff meetings. The role of inspectors is to advise and support schools and teachers in implementing the curriculum, rather than to evaluate or assess their ability to implement inclusive education. According to the World Bank, regular monitoring of all programmes, teaching and learning methods, curricula, resources, facilities and administrative structures is needed. In Cyprus, many of these assessment functions are lacking, while others need to be enhanced (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 81).



SECTION 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This section provides information on the general and specific quality assurance and accountability frameworks and mechanisms informing the country's education system.

5.1 School inspection processes and structures for all forms of educational provision

At the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education, overall responsibility for quality assurance rests with the inspectorates of the respective departments of the MOESY. The inspectors are responsible for supervising the public schools and appraising their teaching staff. They also supervise the private schools in order to assure that they comply with the provisions of the law, but they do not supervise their teaching personnel (Eurydice: Quality assurance).

The Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation conducts scientific evaluation of the whole education system and results from each innovation (Raising Achievement Report, p. 4). It promotes and supports research in schools, developing a research culture and strengthening the research infrastructure in schools (Raising Achievement Report, p 5 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 14–15).

School evaluation and quality assurance at national and local levels are available through school self-evaluation, the presence of school inspectors and data analysis.

The inspectors' evaluations and assessment during school visits provide important information about the quality of policy and practice. This information enables the development of in-service training programmes, which focus on specific teaching and learning areas (Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education – Cyprus Country Report; IECE – Cyprus Country Survey Questionnaire, p. 11 – cited in European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

5.2 Other quality assurance processes for all forms of educational provision

The Agency of Quality Assurance in Higher Education is the authority responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education in Cyprus and for the support of the processes provided by the relevant legislation, for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programmes of study (Eurydice, 2022: Organisation of private education).



5.3 Evaluation mechanisms used to monitor outcomes at different system levels

General outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for all learners

In the school year 2019/2020, a Unified System for Learners' Assessment was introduced in primary education. The philosophy of the new system is in line with modern pedagogical assessment principles. It is aimed at continuous feedback, reinforcement and support for learners, with the continuous development and improvement of learning outcomes as a key objective. A school progress report has been introduced to monitor the extent to which the expected final results are achieved (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Specific outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for learners vulnerable to exclusion

Those with special needs are graded in the same way as their peers, although their individual needs are considered (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Individual learner progress in special education programmes is assessed by a multi-disciplinary team (support teacher, assistant head teacher supporting the programme, counsellor, SENCO, educational psychologist or other specialists).

A written, individualised assessment from the support teacher is prepared at the end of a four-month period (Government of Cyprus, 1999 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 14).

In secondary school, learners with special needs are graded in the same way as their peers, unless they have a dispensation from the DC. The DC can also give instructions for adjustments to evaluation materials and procedures that are usually designed to facilitate the learner's specific needs, e.g. visual impairment, etc. The underlying philosophy is that a disability should not impede the expression of skill, and that a grade obtained by a learner with special needs should be comparable to that of a peer of equal ability without special needs.

Learners attending special schools for those with visual and hearing impairments are evaluated using criteria developed for their particular disabilities. Learners attending other special schools are evaluated according to their progress in learning, without a specific evaluation procedure (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

Outcomes for schools (professional development, staff and personal well-being, etc.)

Schools use self-evaluation and collect data, analyse and discuss in teachers' pedagogical meetings (Raising Achievement Report, p. 5 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 16).

Public schools also carry out an internal evaluation in the form of an informal summary report on the school, which the head teacher draws up with the co-operation of the



deputy head teachers and the teaching staff and submits to the MOESY at the end of each school year (Eurydice, 2022: Quality assurance).

Internal evaluation of educational institutions

There are not many features of institutionalised internal evaluation in public schools in Cyprus. The only feature in use is an internal evaluation that public schools carry out in the form of an informal summary report on the operation of the school. The purpose is to report whether the school has reached its stated targets and bring any other important issues to the attention of the MOESY. The report serves as feedback for the MOESY as regards individual school units (Eurydice, 2022: Approaches and methods for quality assurance).

Outcomes for parents and families (support, participation, family well-being, etc.)

No information.

Other(s)

Establishment of an advisory committee for the observance of health protocols in schools

The Minister of Education, Sport and Youth has established an advisory committee on issues related to health rules and compliance with the protocols, as well as the general operation of schools during the pandemic (Eurydice, 2022: Quality assurance).

5.4 Evaluation mechanisms used to monitor the effectiveness of processes at different system levels

Effectiveness of teaching and learning processes

Evaluation of the whole educational system is not regulated. However, evaluation studies have been carried out at times by experts. The [Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation](#) is also entitled to carry out research and evaluation studies on the whole education system (Eurydice, 2022: Quality assurance).

There is a system of **teacher evaluation** at all stages of their career in the public sector of school education, which is controlled by [Regulations \(223/1976\)](#). Teachers are inspected and assessed by the inspectors of the MOESY. During the teachers' two-year probationary period, their evaluation involves a report on their progress, completed every six months by their inspector as well as the head teacher of the school.

As part of the assessment procedure, teachers are usually observed in the classroom. Notice is given a day before that the evaluation will take place. Following the lesson observation, a meeting between the teacher and the inspector takes place, during which the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson are discussed. The inspector's comments may be sent to the teacher in writing as well, but this will take place in exceptional cases of very weak lessons or disagreement between the two.

At the end of the year of assessment, a team of three inspectors presided over by the teacher's assigned inspector are responsible for preparing a report based on the results of the classroom observation and informal reports by the school head and the teacher



concerned. The appraisal report contains both comments and quantitative evaluation of the teacher (Eurydice, 2022: Approaches and methods for quality assurance).

A proposal for the modernisation of the learner assessment system has been adopted. It is based on an extensive review of international experience and practice, which identifies and analyses current trends and perceptions regarding the monitoring and evaluation of learner progress. This process will lead to decisions of re-engagement for improvement and development of teaching practices, but also to the wider work produced, both at the level of the school unit and the educational system (Eurydice, 2022: Quality assurance).

Effectiveness of school management processes

Monitoring schools is the responsibility of school inspectors. Guidance staff are appointed at the secondary level (Eurydice, 2022: Management and other education staff).

Head teachers are evaluated by a team of inspectors (usually two inspectors) presided over by the Inspector General. The focus is on school management instead of teaching, therefore head teachers are not observed in the classroom. Notice is given some days before that the evaluation will take place. At the end of the year of evaluation, a report (the same as that for teachers) is prepared by the evaluation team (Eurydice, 2022: Approaches and methods for quality assurance).

Effectiveness of teacher professional development processes

The aim of the Professional Development Strategy is the quality improvement of teachers' and learners' education. Therefore, all schools are expected to prepare a Professional Development Action Plan (PDAP), which forms an integral part of the School Improvement Action Plan. The PDAP should be focused on a specific issue that would be set as a priority to be improved, according to teachers' and learners' needs assessment at each school. It should include focused school-based training as well as a number of school-based activities, according to teachers' decisions. Activities should be internally evaluated, so further decisions can be made. In parallel with the opportunity given to all schools to enhance teachers' professional development, an opportunity is also offered to a small number of schools, on a voluntary basis, to follow a more systematic procedure with annual systematic support from the CPI (Cyprus Pedagogical Institute). Each school follows a methodology (e.g. action research, lesson study, quality teaching rounds approach, case study), which is considered suitable according to the specific issue set as a priority and teachers' specific needs (Annual Report, 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, p. 92).

Schools' and teachers' PDAPs can also include school-based seminars, conferences, workshops and optional afternoon seminar series. The CPI offers school-based in-service training and support scheduled in one to five sessions, and afternoon seminars on various subjects (e.g. teaching methodology, diversity and inclusion, etc.). It also offers conferences organised in co-operation with other MOESY departments, universities and non-governmental organisations (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 69).

Efficiency and effectiveness of funding mechanisms

No information.



Effectiveness of (vertical) co-operation between stakeholders at different system levels

No information.

Effectiveness of (horizontal) co-operation between ministries and ministerial departments

No information.

5.5 Specific monitoring mechanisms relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

According to the **Primary and Secondary Education (Compulsory Schooling and Provision of Free Education) Laws of 1993 until 2022:**

Attendance at compulsory pre-primary education, primary school and junior high school is compulsory until the learner completes the course of junior high school or their fifteenth birthday, whichever occurs first (Article 3(1)).

Whoever has the custody of the learner and fails to enrol the learner or supervise their attendance, as defined in Article 3, commits an offence punishable by imprisonment up to three months or a fine of up to EUR 1,000 or to both such sentences (Article 4).

Each learner's absence from school must be justified by a written confirmation from the parent or guardian. For absences over five days for health reasons, a certificate of the doctor who attended the learner is required, unless the head teacher is convinced otherwise. For consecutive absences over six days with no reason that is considered by the school as a serious reason, the head teacher of the school should immediately notify the Director of Primary Education (respective District Education Office). Then the District Education Office notifies the police to investigate the case.

5.6 Specific evaluation mechanisms relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Evidence-based decision-making includes evaluation procedures developed within the programmes and projects aiming to promote inclusive education. For example, the School and Social Inclusion Actions programme includes school co-ordinators, district co-ordinators, head teachers, inspectors from each Department of Education responsible for the programme, and educational psychologists. Monitoring involves internal and external evaluation. Internal evaluation consists of annual reports from each stakeholder (teaching staff, school co-ordinators and head teachers) and quarterly reports drafted by experts providing psycho-social support. The external evaluation takes place at the end of the programme (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 81).



5.7 Specific accountability mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Not applicable.

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of quality assurance and accountability for inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers the implications of how different stakeholders across the education system are accountable for ensuring the effective implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice.

Learner assessment is one of the main policies systematically promoted by the MOESY. A special committee was formed towards this aim and submitted a proposal for a Unified Learner Assessment System. The underlying philosophy of the proposal follows the modern pedagogical approaches in the area of assessment and aims towards offering regular feedback and support to learners with the ultimate goal being the improvement of learning outcomes. The proposal was discussed with various stakeholders and was agreed that it would be implemented during 2019/2020. Two basic principles of the new assessment system are the following:

- Formative Assessment – Learner Assessment Records: Each teacher records and monitors learners’ progress, so that they can offer suitable feedback and better plan their teaching based on the needs of their learners.
- School Progress Report: This report indicates the learners’ level of achievement as regards the expected learning outcomes. It is completed for all pre-primary and primary school learners twice a year (in January and in June). The report is kept at the school and forms the base of teacher–parent meetings, which take place twice a year after the reports are completed and focuses on learners’ progress.

The new learner assessment system was implemented during 2019/2020. Its smooth implementation was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the first School Progress Reports and the parent meetings were successfully completed in January 2020, with positive feedback about the process received by all the parties involved. In the school year 2020/2021, the provisions concerning the School Progress Report were successfully implemented in both semesters in the context of the learners’ assessment. The feedback received by the Department of Primary Education, both for the implementation of the School Progress Report and, in general, of the new policy for learners’ assessment that was valid in the last two school years is particularly encouraging in relation to the continuation of the implementation of the new policy (Annual Report 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, pp. 70–71).

During the school year 2020/2021, emphasis continued to be placed on implementing the revised and restructured curricula with a focus on implementing ‘adequacy and attainment targets’ as tools for the planning of the teaching process, its implementation and the evaluation of teaching and learning outcomes. ‘Attainment targets’ refer to the



learning outcomes which learners are expected to achieve by the end of each grade or each level/stage, whereas ‘adequacy targets’ describe what needs to be taught in order for the outcomes to be achieved. Teachers can choose which adequacy targets to focus on, so that they can help learners achieve the attainment targets.

A number of professional development activities were carried out in order to support teachers. These were primarily in the form of school and teacher networks and conferences, while the development of educational material continued, as well as the matching of teaching materials to the attainment and adequacy targets. Online teaching and online seminars were used, when needed, to adapt to conditions caused by the pandemic. As regards pre-primary education, emphasis was focused on the implementation of the curriculum for pre-primary education and to the in-service training of pre-primary teachers on issues pertaining to the curriculum, in relation to the change in the age that learners leave pre-primary education (Annual Report 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, p. 55).

Each year, all the learners of grade 3 are assessed on their basic knowledge and skills in Greek and mathematics through tests developed by the Educational Research and Evaluation Centre. Once the tests are marked, the results are sent to each school informing them of learners who show increased risk of functional illiteracy. At the beginning of each school year, the school’s head teacher informs each teacher individually about the learners in their class who have been diagnosed according to the tests. Classroom teachers are called upon to support these learners through differentiation of teaching. The Department of Primary Education, through relevant circulars, guides the schools for the actions they must take to prevent and support learners with increased chances of functional illiteracy (Annual Report 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, pp. 73–74).

As referred to above in Section 4 – Evaluative commentary, current monitoring mechanisms may not support the development of accountable inclusive education systems, since the role of inspectors is to advise and support schools and teachers in implementing the curriculum, rather than to evaluate or assess their ability to implement inclusive education. Stakeholders’ ability to implement inclusive education seems to be hampered by a lack of forward planning that anticipates support based on knowledge of/data on existing learners who will progress through the education system. As international organisations stress, the task of inspectors is hampered by the lack of any objective criteria for teacher and school evaluation and the absence of public transparency (World Bank, 2014).

There is also a need for a governance framework to develop co-operation mechanisms among stakeholders. This will allow learners to receive a continuum of support and ensure cohesive planning of resource allocation, decision-making and monitoring (European Agency, 2020: Resource Analysis in Special Needs and Inclusive Education [unpublished report], p. 83).



SECTION 6. STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION, CO-OPERATION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

This section provides information on the structures, mechanisms and opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and co-operation in the country.

6.1 Does the legislation and policy framework specify learner voices are used to inform the development of learning and teaching environments?

Yes.

6.1a Description of the legislation and policy framework around the use of learner voice

A Learners' Council represents the learners' interests and co-operates with the head teacher and the Parents' Association. When there are meetings to discuss issues of relevance to the learners of the school, the head teacher will invite the president of the learners' council or all of the council members to attend. At the primary level, learner involvement is expressed as collaboration between staff and learners in the establishment of a mutually agreed code of conduct (Eurydice, 2022: Administration and governance).

'Children with disabilities are generally indirectly involved in decision-making processes through their parents' (Commissioner for Children's Rights, 2018, Commissioner's summary of positions in the context of the public consultation for the development of the new policy, p. 4; Government of Cyprus, 1999, pp. 10–11; UN, 2017, pp. 5–6 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 12).

6.2 Does the legislation and policy framework ensure curriculum development processes take account of all learners and their communities?

Yes.

6.2a Description of how the legislation and policy framework around curriculum development processes take account of all learners and their communities

For early childhood education there is no official policy on the ways in which parents are involved in the adoption of the curriculum. Each school unit has its own guidelines regarding the issue of parents and their involvement (Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) Report, p. 8 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 12).

Parents can be involved in the processes around designing IEPs. Specialists (such as educational psychologists) and teachers will take the views of the learner into consideration. Parents can also attend disability assessments arranged by the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for the purpose of certification of disability



financial and social benefits. The assessment also considers the learner's views during the interview (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 12).

Parents are not involved themselves in the assessment process. They have the right to be present and to be accompanied by the professionals of their choice, usually those who work with the learner during the afternoons and are employed by the parents themselves (IECE Report, p. 10 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 17).

The parents of the learner to be evaluated have the right to attend the evaluation and to participate alone or with a specialist of their choice. After the evaluation, parents are informed of the Committee's decisions concerning their child and have the right to appeal to the Central Committee for Special Education (National Overview, p. 4 –cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 12; European Agency, 2020).

6.3 Does the legislation and policy framework support the active involvement of different stakeholders in ensuring inclusive learning environments?

Parents and families

Yes. The Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Laws 1999–2020 give parents the right to refer their children for assessment. Where someone else refers the child, parents are immediately informed before the assessment procedure starts and their consent is sought. Parents can submit information to inform the assessment and can involve other specialists.

Educational psychologists offer psychological support and counselling to parents and families in all educational processes.

Where parents disagree with the decisions made about their child, they have the right to appeal to the Central Committee of Special Education.

Parents can visit schools and talk about their child's progress with teachers and other professionals involved in their education (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 12–13).

School-leaders/leadership teams, teachers and specialist staff

Yes. Management at school level is the responsibility of the head of the school assisted by the deputy heads. They are civil servants with their professional status and conditions of service detailed in their schemes of service and the governing school regulations (Eurydice, 2022: Management and other education staff).

The management focuses on the day-to-day administration of the school. This is the responsibility of the head, assisted by the deputy heads, the teachers and the clerical staff. The head teacher is responsible for the smooth and effective function of the school and the application of educational laws and regulations. They represent the school to the MOESY and wider society, and co-operate with the parents' association, the school board and other authorities.



The teachers' assembly led by the head teacher constitutes the highest body in the school, which approves the allocation of teaching and other tasks to the teachers, decides on the promotion or retention of the learners and imposes discipline measures to the learners in the framework of the existing regulations (Eurydice, 2022: Administration at institutional level).

The MOESY and the CPI co-ordinated the Erasmus+ project i-Decide (2016-2018), which has developed an innovative toolkit and induction course to support evidence-based policy-making. By implementing the i-Decide toolkit and collecting rich data, the project aimed to understand the complexities of how decisions at school-level influence marginalised groups and to develop concrete recommendations for policy and practice on how to engage in shared decision-making, giving voice to all stakeholders (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 22).

Stakeholders in the local communities

Yes. Major reforms on the restructuring of the educational system are usually based on the views and suggestions of experts' committees appointed ad hoc by the government. Public consultation with the various stakeholders is a common practice in the reform process. The teachers' and the parents' organisations are considered the main stakeholders in the process (Eurydice, 2022: Ongoing reforms and policy developments).

Local-level decision-/policy-makers

No.

Non-governmental organisations, disabled people's organisations or other organisations representing vulnerable groups

No.

6.4 Does the legislation and policy framework ensure that curriculum development processes involve the participation and contribution of different stakeholders?

No.

6.4a Description of the legislation and policy framework ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum development processes

As referred to in Section 6.2, there is no official policy on the ways in which parents are involved in the adoption of the curriculum.

6.4b Explanation

Please refer to the first paragraph of Section 6.2.



6.5 Does the legislation and policy framework support the development of learning communities in local/regional areas?

Yes.

6.5a Description of the legislation and policy framework that supports the development of learning communities

After assessment and diagnosis is made, SENCOs visit both special and mainstream schools and offer advice and suggestions to school staff, parents and learners (National Overview, p. 6 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 12).

School Violence Intervention Team

Following a study by a commission of specialists, the School Violence Intervention Team was established to support schools in developing action plans to deal with severe incidents of delinquency in schools. It co-ordinates all involved in school support services for an immediate response to the school's request and makes suggestions for financing specific programmes that contribute to the reduction of delinquency, e.g. alternative learner programmes, child psychiatric services, learner extra-curricular activities. It also provides on-site training to teachers on school violence, bullying, anger management, staff and learner support workshops and activities, etc. (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 18).

National Roma Platform

In 2016, a co-funded project started for the implementation of a National Roma Platform, covering a period of 12 months. It aimed at the promotion of dialogue on Roma issues among relevant stakeholders and the Roma population (Europe 2020: National Reform Programme 2017, p. 64 – cited in European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), p. 31).

Evaluative commentary

This section provides a qualified, evidenced-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of stakeholder collaboration, co-operation and effective communication for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. It specifically considers how effectively different stakeholders across the education system are supported to increase their personal and collective ability to be inclusive in practice.

The MOESY designs and implements policies and programmes that allow co-operation and effective communication between the stakeholders, such as the 'National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence in School'. In this way, all the services of the MOESY related to prevention issues are working towards a common target.

The main purpose of the 'Cyprus Observatory on School Violence' is the implementation of a safe and friendly school environment for all members of the school community. One of its goals is informing teachers and social partners about the phenomenon of bullying in Cyprus and internationally, empowering parents, learners, teachers and other professionals involved, and promoting the active involvement of learners in the



prevention and treatment of violence at school (Annual Report 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, p. 150).

The 'Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation' has taken on the responsibility for the co-ordination of the MOESY's policy on issues related to the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation. Through the Committee's co-ordinating action, the MOESY has made a decisive contribution, working together with other relevant ministries (Justice, Health, Labour) and a legal expert (according to the state's decision) to formulate a National Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation and Child Pornography. Within this framework, it strongly promotes a concrete policy at all levels of education, which focuses on the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation of children by raising awareness and empowering teachers in identifying and managing incidents, and by promoting the sexual education of learners.

The MOESY's main actions for the promotion of the policy focus on systematically informing/training teachers to broaden their knowledge and skills in recognising the phenomenon of child sexual abuse and adopting appropriate decisions in its management. A series of training activities for teachers at all levels of education has taken place over the last years. One of the most important actions is the publication of the 'Teacher Manual for the Recognition and Management of Child Sexual Abuse Incidents' (2017). This handbook covers a wide range of knowledge – legal, pedagogical, psycho-social – about the very serious phenomenon of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and its publication aims to further educate and empower teachers to prevent and combat the phenomenon (Annual Report 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, pp. 151–152).

The Committee of Health Education and Citizenship co-ordinates the policy of the MOESY in relation to all thematic areas of health education (smoking, addictive substances, road safety, occupational health and safety, consumer education, sex education, AIDS, addiction, racism and violence). This includes actions to support learners in a difficult phase of their lives and to strengthen schools to improve the school climate (Annual Report, 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, pp. 152–153).

The School and Social Inclusion Actions+ programme, co-funded by the European Union Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus, aims to promote social inclusion, to mitigate the negative impact of the economic crisis on education, to eliminate discrimination in education and to effectively educate and support learners with a migrant background. The programme also aims to directly support learners (and their families) who are at risk of discrimination or have been particularly affected by the consequences of the financial crisis, promoting equality in opportunities, ensuring social welfare and social integration of learners at risk of exclusion, supporting vulnerable learners and their families, and reducing early school leaving (Annual Report 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, pp. 154–155).

Educational psychologists use a number of psychological assessment tools that include cognitive abilities testing, assessment of educational attainment, developmental history, clinical interviews with parents, learners, teachers and other professionals, questionnaires, clinical observations, theories and procedures to support the well-being and learning of young people. Learners are referred to the Educational Psychology Service by their school, families and sometimes themselves when they face difficulties in their



school setting, such as learning difficulties, social and emotional difficulties, behavioural difficulties, sensory problems, syndromes and disorders. Referrals are accepted at the Service provided that the school has already put in place strategies to deal with these difficulties but did not achieve the expected outcome. Educational psychologists also provide consultation to schools and families, and recommend, develop and administer in collaboration with schools and families appropriate therapies and strategies. They also respond to referrals from the DCs, for psychological evaluation and recommendations and participate in these committees. In addition, the Service has expanded its involvement in several important standing and ad hoc committees, with the main objective to strengthen the planning, implementation and co-ordination of policies and programmes (Annual Report 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, pp. 143–144).

The CPI continues to organise and run school-based seminars and seminars for parents in schools across Cyprus. School-based seminars aim to provide information and support concerning the specific issue chosen by each school. These seminars take place within school hours, either integrated within the weekly staff meetings or as a separate activity for those who have expressed interest. During the seminars, particular emphasis is given on teaching techniques and methods, covering a vast range of the curriculum.

Additionally, the seminars address the immediate needs of the school, while combining theory and practice. Seminars for parents aim to support parents/guardians' needs within an educational setting and play a vital role in home–school collaboration (Annual Report, 2021, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, p. 93).

Special teachers co-operate and interact with the learner's class teacher in developing and delivering an IEP for the learner and SENCOs offer guidance in both special schools and mainstream schools. They work under the guidance of the inspector of special education, or another inspector. They offer advice and support to special teachers and co-operate with teachers and head teachers in mainstream schools and with other professionals, parents and learners (European Agency, 2020: [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)).

The Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Laws 1999–2014 give parents the right to refer their children for assessment. Also, the parents have the right to attend the evaluation of their child and to participate alone or with a specialist of their choice. After the evaluation, parents are informed of the Committee's decisions concerning their child and have the right to appeal to the Central Committee for Special Education (National Overview, p. 4). Also, parents can be involved in the processes around designing IEPs and visit schools and talk about their child's progress with teachers and other professionals involved in their education. Moreover, the MOESY works with the Pancyprian Federation of Parents of Children with Special Needs. Representatives of the Federation participate in the Council of Special Education (European Agency, 2019, [CPRA – Cyprus](#), pp. 12, 15).



SECTION 7. FINAL COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

The MOESY offers free and accessible education to all learners without prejudice based on gender, abilities, language, colour, religion, political beliefs or ethnic background. The Cyprus government has adopted the principles of the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, which proclaim that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs and that ‘those with special education needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them with a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting those needs’.

A learner with special needs may attend a general class with support, a special unit or a special school. Special units are for learners who are unable to follow the general curriculum. The curriculum is tailored to the learners’ individualised needs and is designed to cultivate and develop their functional knowledge and skills. Learners with serious difficulties attend special schools, which also provide therapy. In addition to the main services provided for the learners, such as special education and training, speech therapy, an individualised programme, special facilities and special technological equipment, the MOESY also organises activities and adopts inclusive education policies defined by the values of equality, recognition and acceptance of diversity ([MOESY Special Education: General Information](#)).

As previously mentioned, with the implementation of the 1999 Law, the education authorities aimed to make special education an integral part of the education system while providing the maximum level of flexibility to best serve the individual needs of learners with SEN. It actively supports the philosophy of integration and inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream education (National Overview, p. 8).