Country System Mapping

Methodology Report

COUNTRY SYSTEM MAPPING

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European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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Editors: Amanda Watkins and Margarita Bilgeri

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the methodology for the Country System Mapping (CSM) activity. CSM was an in-depth information-gathering and analysis exercise open to all member countries of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency). It ran throughout 2022 and 2023. CSM aimed to identify, map and analyse the key features of all Agency member countries' education systems that impact upon the effective implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice.

In a departure from previous Agency thematic activities, CSM considered the whole education system from the perspective of implementing policy for inclusive education in practice. However, within this system-wide view, CSM focused on specific priorities that Representative Board members (RBs) had already identified, namely monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working, and quality assurance mechanisms.

The overall goal for the CSM work was to generate information that could be used within the Agency's Multi-Annual Work Programme 2021–2027 (MAWP – European Agency, 2021a) to organise thematic activities that are more closely aligned to individual country approaches to key issues for inclusive education. This report describes the steps and procedures implemented during the CSM activity.

The next section presents the conceptual rationale for the CSM focus.

It is followed by a description of the information collection with Agency member countries. This covers the initial pilot activities that were implemented to trial procedures, before the full roll-out of information gathering with all countries. Annex 1 presents the questions from the final information-gathering template in full.

The report then describes the different information analysis activities, with details of the Mapping analysis and Thematic Analysis work that was undertaken.

Finally, this report outlines how the Thematic Country Cluster Activities build upon the CSM findings.

All the outputs from these activities are publicly available on the Country System Mapping area of the Agency website.

WORK WITHIN A SHARED VISION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

All Agency work is aligned with the Agency [position on inclusive education systems](). This agreed position paper 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).

In line with this vision, all Agency work supports 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]()).

Many learners may face a combination of these factors, so the intersectional (interconnected) 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 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 acknowledges that countries have different ways of thinking about, identifying and making provision for the various groups of learners who may be considered vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

Within all countries, key conceptual changes in thinking and in policy priorities have helped to advance the journey towards inclusive education being seen as an approach for ensuring high-quality education for all learners. Across countries, a first shift was from the concept of special educational needs, to special needs education. This moved the focus away from the learner (identified as having special educational needs), towards the provision they receive (special needs education for learners who experience difficulties at school). The term 'special needs education' also widened the focus beyond learners with disabilities to include learners who appeared to be failing in school for a 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 used consistently across countries. The groups of learners considered as having special educational needs that require additional provision to be made for them largely differ across countries.

The most recent shifts have been towards thinking around inclusion and inclusive education as an approach for all learners. This thinking moves away from a concern with the types of special needs or categories a learner may or may not fall into, to focus on the barriers that learners experience. The overall focus is on learners who may, for different reasons, be vulnerable to exclusion from educational opportunities.

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

Therefore, the information collected and analysed within the CSM activity provided a reflection on the whole education system and a consideration of all learners, as well as the specific situation of those learners who may be considered vulnerable to exclusion from mainstream, inclusive education.

Overall approach

The basic methodology for the CSM activity centred upon **desk research for information gathering and then analysis**.

The work was mainly co-ordinated through online meetings, with some in-person meetings between the Agency team and a pilot group of country representatives who trialled the information-gathering procedures (see the section on pilot work). The information-gathering procedures and the final tool used a co-development approach. This involved the pilot group working with the Agency team, but with key inputs from all RBs and a Reference Group (see the External Reference Group section) at specific points in the activity implementation process.

The CSM activity was open to all Agency member countries. Either country representatives participated directly in the information-gathering work, or Agency team members centrally co-ordinated the information gathering for later RB approval.

The entire process took place within the framework of the Agency's agreed activity management and quality assurance procedures.

Aims and objectives

As previously stated, the CSM activity's overall goal was to collect key information on country systems to guide Agency MAWP activities from 2023 onwards. As such, CSM's main aims and objectives were linked to two distinct stages for implementing the work and did not address specific research-based questions.

Stage 1 aimed to **collect relevant information** on all Agency member countries' education systems. The specific objectives for stage 1 were to:

1. establish a pilot group and agree its working procedures;

2. develop the information-gathering tool and identify the procedures for implementing the information-gathering work;

3. conduct a pilot study to trial the information-gathering tool and procedures;

4. evaluate the pilot study and roll out the information gathering to all other countries.

Stage 2 aimed to **systematically analyse the country information** and then identify the framework for possible country clusters in future work. The specific objectives for stage 2 were to:

1. identify a framework for analysing the country information;

2. analyse and map the key characteristics of each country's education system that must be considered when planning future thematic country cluster work;

3. systematically highlight the parameters for forming country clusters;

4. identify how the country information collected may be used to inform other Agency activities;

5. agree on and then develop the internal and public outputs for dissemination;

6. prepare for discussions with RBs to agree the framework of thematic working groups to be implemented in the next stages of the MAWP.

The following sections of this report describe the two stages of information collection and information analysis in detail.

Intended audience

The main target group for the CSM activities was the Agency collectively. This was because the CSM outputs were primarily intended to inform all future MAWP work, and particularly the organisation of Thematic Country Cluster Activities from 2023 onwards, which are more closely aligned to individual country approaches to key issues for inclusive education.

The main outputs – country system reports – were also intended to directly inform other areas of Agency work, particularly the web-based country overviews of inclusive education systems.

However, the main outputs were considered of interest for wider public dissemination. Therefore, individual country RBs decided on how to disseminate the information more widely.

CSM INFORMATION COLLECTION

This section describes how the CSM country information was collected and what tools were used. The overall information collection covered two phases: piloting and country roll-out, both of which are outlined below.

This section also outlines who was involved in drafting, completing and approving the final country information, as the CSM team composition differed from the Agency's usual activity approaches.

CSM pilot work

The CSM activity was supported by a Project Advisory Group (PAG) comprising the five members of the (then) Agency Management Board, from Belgium (Flemish community), Germany, Greece, Hungary and United Kingdom (England). The PAG also acted as a pilot group, co-developing and trialling several activity procedures and the tool – the country information-gathering template.

The five countries piloted the information-gathering procedures and the template. These countries have very different geographical situations and education systems, and represent a range of approaches to inclusive education. This pilot specifically involved the five PAG members:

- reviewing and providing feedback on various drafts of the information-gathering template;

- agreeing a profile for and then nominating Country Analysts to work with them to collect CSM information;

- agreeing the focus of and possible sources for the Agency team's pre-population of the information-gathering template;

- collecting information and completing the template as far as possible;

- reviewing the entire process with the Agency team;

- highlighting changes and improvements to be made to the information-gathering template and the working procedures.

At the end of the pilot phase, the PAG and the Agency team co-evaluated the results of the work. Based on the evaluation, the working methods and tool were then adapted before the information gathering was rolled out to the other 30 Agency member countries.

External Reference Group

At the start of the CSM pilot work, a Reference Group was established with three international experts who could provide different insights and perspectives on national education systems to inform the overall CSM work. These experts were internationally recognised researchers Jón Torfi Jónasson (Iceland), Cecilia Simón Rueda (Spain) and Lani Florian (United Kingdom – Scotland).

The Reference Group's involvement and inputs were an important quality control mechanism for this activity. Its role was to provide conceptual inputs and critical reflections on proposals for working methods, activity tools, outputs and materials. Specifically, the members provided written feedback on the initial draft of the information-gathering tool and then the completed information-gathering templates developed at the end of the pilot work.

The Reference Group's feedback was integrated into the overall evaluation of the pilot work. It was an important input for the final agreed methods, procedures and information-gathering template for the country roll-out work.

Country information-gathering template

The tool used for the CSM information collection was an information-gathering template. The Agency team prepared it based on previous discussions with all RBs in the MAWP scoping meetings, as well as the specific pilot study evaluation findings and inputs from the Reference Group.

The final information-gathering template had three sections:

- Introduction with some background on the CSM work to put the information requests into context

- Overview of the information-gathering template, an outline of the steps and specific guidance for completing it

- An outlook on potential next steps, describing how the information would be analysed and then potentially used.

Information to be collected

The CSM work focused on the **whole** education system and how certain structures, mechanisms and processes may impact the implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice. Therefore, the information-gathering template covered the whole system and aimed to get insights into how individual countries consider the needs of all learners – including individuals or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

The template specifically focused on the priorities RBs have identified for wider future Agency work – monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working, and quality assurance – and how these impact effective policy implementation.

The template had seven sections:

1. Background on the inclusive education system

2. Overview of the education system

3. Legislative and policy framework

4. System governance

5. Quality assurance and accountability

6. Stakeholder collaboration, co-operation and effective communication

7. Final comments and reflections.

presents the **specific questions** included in the information-gathering template.

Each of these sections requested relevant information covering International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level programmes 02 (pre-primary education) to 3 (upper-secondary education). Each section had two subsections requiring different types of country information, as described below.

System description

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

Different types of questions were used to collect information that described important system features – structures, mechanisms and processes – relating to governance, monitoring, quality assurance and collaboration.

Some questions required narrative open texts; some required more closed responses.

The template was set up as a simple Word file. Respondents entered their replies to all questions directly in the file.

The descriptive information required the provision of sources for original material and, where possible, was supported with quotes and citations from relevant policy documents and published work.

Evaluative commentary

An important element of the template was the request for **evaluative, qualified and evidence-based reflection on the factual information** provided in sections 1 to 6.

The evaluative commentary provided a qualified reflection on the implementation of the legislation and policy framework for inclusive education in practice. Country teams were asked to provide confidential observations on and interpretations of the system factors that positively or negatively impact on inclusive education.

These evaluative commentaries were intended to allow country teams to reflect on **where and why the practice of inclusive education differs from or actively supports the policy intentions and goals stated** in the system description.

For the evaluative commentaries linked to each section, the following general questions were 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 were suggested.

The commentary was supported with information from any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews that provided evidence of impact on the implementation of inclusive education in practice.

In the roll-out work with all participating Agency member countries, the CSM country teams used the final information-gathering template.

The CSM information-collection team

The overall CSM information-collection process involved various steps. Different participants – Agency stakeholders – were active within each of these steps during the pilot and roll-out phases. These participants comprised a **CSM country team** for each of the participating countries.

An **Agency team member** supported the overall CSM country report completion process. The identified team member held an online 'kick-off' meeting with the country team to explain the work, the expectations for completing the template and the various inputs required. They were then available for any queries the country team had during the CSM work.

The Agency team member was responsible for compiling a suggested list of sources for CSM information collection and, once this was approved, preparing an initial draft of the CSM country report by pre-populating some of the system description factual information questions included in the information-gathering template (see Annex 1).

The pre-populated material from the Agency team member was intended as a draft to support the completion of the template by providing existing information and an example of the sort of material required. The country teams were expected to edit – that is, reduce, delete, update and add to as required – the pre-populated material.

The country teams also included the country **Representative Board member (RB)** and **National Co-ordinator (NC)** (where applicable). They were responsible for checking and amending CSM information as necessary and approving the completed CSM country report before it was submitted for analysis.

In addition, each participating country had the opportunity to appoint a **Country Analyst**. Country Analysts were experts with a sound understanding of the respective country's policy areas, overall governance issues, research and related data. They were able to provide a critical perspective on the topics covered within the CSM activity and recognise the underlying issues and impact of the respective country's policies.

Twenty-eight of the participating countries nominated Country Analysts to work within their country teams. These teams were responsible for checking, amending and adding to the pre-populated report as necessary. Most importantly, they also provided an evaluative reflection on the implications of system features, such as challenges and strengths, within the country system context.

Country roll-out

The CSM information gathering was implemented with all Agency member countries from mid-2022 to early 2023. The roll-out work was implemented in line with the findings and with the main steps used in the piloting work. It resulted in the completion of 35 CSM country reports:

- 28 were completed by country teams comprising RBs and NCs (where applicable), with the input of a nominated Country Analyst and supported by an Agency team member.

- 4 were completed by country teams comprising RBs and NCs (where applicable) and supported by an Agency team member.

- 3 were completed by an Agency team member.

Agency support for completing the template

The pilot work demonstrated that input from an Agency team member was useful in different ways. Therefore, an Agency team member was assigned to each participating country to support the overall process.

The steps for completing the template were in line with those trialled in the pilot. An Agency team member prepared an initial draft of the template **by pre-populating** some of the system description factual information questions. They used only public, English-language materials to pre-populate the template. The Agency team member did not pre-populate the evaluative commentary.

Before pre-populating began, the designated Agency team member compiled a suggested list of sources for pre-populating the template. This was sent to the country team for them to approve and add to if possible.

The initial draft was intended to draw on existing information from Agency, national, European Union and other sources the Agency team had access to. It was fully referenced and listed all sources.

Throughout the information-collection process, Agency team members were available to support the country teams.

Also in line with the pilot findings, before the work began, the identified Agency team member held an online 'kick-off' meeting with the country team to explain the work, the expectations for completing the template and the various inputs required. The team member was then available to address any queries the country team had during the work.

The country teams' work

The pre-populated material provided by the Agency team member was a draft to support the completion of the template by providing existing information and an example of the sort of material required. It was clearly understood that the quality of the CSM material depended on the currency of the material provided. The country teams were expected to edit – that is, reduce, delete, update and add to as required – the pre-populated material from the Agency.

During the roll-out phase, the five pilot country teams had the opportunity to revise and update their pilot information as they required.

All country teams were free to organise their information-collection work and divide their information-gathering tasks as best suited them.

In line with the procedures agreed upon as a result of the pilot work, each country team was tasked with editing, updating and completing the factual, descriptive information with references – including the document title, date and, if available, a link.

In addition, they completed the evaluative commentary for each section and included references where possible. They also completed the final section with any other information felt to be relevant that was not raised in the other sections.

Finally, the country RB was asked to check and amend final information as necessary and approve the completed template. They then sent it to the assigned Agency team member, who conducted a final fact check of the report information before it was analysed.

The next section details how the 35 CSM country reports were analysed.

CSM INFORMATION ANALYSIS

The central information-gathering activity within the CSM work resulted in 35 detailed country reports, developed by the country-specific and Agency teams.

Full teams consisting of country representatives and Agency team members prepared 32 country reports. These covered Belgium (Flemish community), Belgium (French community), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (England), United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), United Kingdom (Scotland) and United Kingdom (Wales).

The information provided in each of these country reports was analysed in two ways, both with the same goal – to inform future Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA), as described in the final section of this report – but each with a distinct focus:

- The Mapping analysis focused on system structures and processes countries have in common (or not). It was used to inform TCCA grouping proposals.

- The Thematic Analysis highlighted issues (strengths and challenges) countries described in their reports. It served as the starting point for the discussions and future planning.

Three reports were developed by the Agency team only, for Austria, Slovakia and Switzerland. However, the report for Slovakia was not available at the time the analysis work was conducted, so only the reports for Austria and Switzerland were considered. Only factual, descriptive information was available in these reports. As a result, they were not covered by the Thematic Analysis and only a partial Mapping analysis was conducted.

The Thematic Analysis and the Mapping analysis were conducted in parallel. Both analyses were designed to complement each other.

The various outputs available on the CSM web area present the full results of these analysis activities. The following sections describe the specific methods used for each of the analysis activities.

Mapping analysis

The Mapping analysis focused on facts about the system as described in country reports. The agreed goal was to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate which country systems are structured and/or working in different – or similar – ways.

Ten parameters – presented in full below – were identified as the basis for the Mapping. Nine of these were directly linked to or based on the structures and processes identified in the Agency's Key Principles (2021b). Some parameters mirror specific Key Principles; others cover a number of combined Key Principles that then correspond to specific elements within the CSM country report template. An additional parameter on the issue of system decentralisation was also included.

Steps within the Mapping analysis

Three Agency team members conducted the Mapping analysis of 34 country reports.

The first task was to *develop a framework* covering each of the 10 parameters, to guide and focus the analysis work. The framework included:

- A short descriptive text explaining the parameter's focus and its relevance for inclusive education systems, in the form of a question.

- A three-point scale indicating a high or low 'degree' of the parameter being evidenced in the country report. The wording of these appraisal scales differed for each parameter. The information gathering focused on an overall appraisal of the evidence for the parameter – there was no interpretation of the facts.

- Specific notes on links to the 2021 Key Principles, as well as where evidence for the parameter might be found in the CSM country reports. However, it was clear to the analysis team that information could be found in any question, especially the evaluative commentaries.

The final framework of parameters, along with the question used to guide the analysis and the three-point scale the team used to make the appraisal, was:

Legislative framework – To what extent is there a single legislative and policy framework for all learners that guides/promotes rights-based inclusive practice across the whole system?

- Highly integrated legislative framework
- Developing integrated legislation
- Separate, fragmented pieces of legislation

Level of decentralisation – To what extent are key decision-making and responsibility for implementation delegated across different system levels and structures?

- Highly decentralised system
- Mixed/transitioning system
- Highly centralised system

Exclusionary system structures – To what extent are there education system structures that promote or reinforce exclusion and take a compensatory, rather than preventative, approach to meeting learners' needs?

- Highly inclusive system structures
- Multiple track system structures
- Maintenance of and reliance on exclusionary system structures

Governance strategies – To what extent is there a governance strategy/plan that sets out clear roles and responsibilities regarding the implementation of inclusive education policies and supports collaborative working at/across all system levels?

- Highly integrated governance plans
- Developing integrated governance plans

- Separate, fragmented governance initiatives

Flexible funding mechanisms – To what extent do funding and resource allocation mechanisms support local communities' and schools' capacity to reduce barriers to learning?

- Highly flexible funding mechanisms

- Developing more flexible funding strategies

- Reliance on input-based funding mechanisms linked to learner labels and diagnosis

Quality assurance and accountability framework – To what extent does the quality assurance and accountability framework promote monitoring, review and evaluation that support high-quality provision for all learners?

- Comprehensive and coherent quality assurance and accountability framework

- Developing integrated quality assurance and accountability plans

- Separate, fragmented quality assurance and accountability initiatives

Collaboration and communication mechanisms – To what extent do system structures and processes enable effective communication, collaboration and engagement in shared activities at all levels?

- Comprehensive and coherent communication and collaboration processes

- Developing integrated communication and collaboration processes

- Separate, fragmented communication and collaboration

Data/information collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes – To what extent is there a system for data/information collection for monitoring that builds an evidence base to develop inclusive educational policy and practice at different system levels?

- Comprehensive data-/information-collection mechanisms

- Developing data-/information-collection mechanisms

- Fragmented or limited data-/information-collection mechanisms

Curriculum framework – To what extent is there a curriculum and assessment framework that is sufficiently flexible to provide relevant learning opportunities for all learners?

- A single curriculum and assessment framework covering all learners

- Developing an integrated curriculum and assessment framework

- Separate curricula and assessment strategies for different groups of learners

Inclusive school development – To what extent are there structures and processes to facilitate co-operation between and capacity building for school team members, parents and members of the community and support school leaders to ensure inclusive school development?

- Comprehensive and integrated inclusive school development processes

- Developing integrated inclusive school development processes
- Separate curricula and assessment strategies for different groups of learners.

Based on this framework, the Agency team prepared an *Excel file for recording the analysis*, with one sheet per parameter. In addition to the elements listed above for each parameter, the Excel included space (columns) for recording sources of evidence and team members' notes. An Excel file format was chosen to allow Mapping information to be exported and used within the CSM Thematic Analysis as needed.

The three team members *piloted* the Excel and the Mapping process, with each person covering two countries. They used both descriptive and evaluative information from the CSM country reports in the parameter appraisal.

The team then came together to *moderate the pilot appraisals* and discuss sources and the use of comments.

The team agreed that the three-point scales for the appraisals were applicable and led to relatively consistent findings across countries. They also agreed that if team members were in doubt about an appraisal, they would make a mid-point appraisal and provide specific comments to explain it.

Some *minor amendments* to the wording of parameter statements and the appraisal scales were agreed upon and implemented.

Overall, the Excel recording sheet was considered workable. However, the following *developments were agreed upon* and then implemented:

- An 'overview' sheet was added to provide instructions for completing the Excel.
- A column for recording examples of 'illustrative evidence' for each of the parameters was added.

The team then used the final Excel file to *record findings from 32 countries* with a full country report prepared with input from a country team. One Agency team member analysed the entire country report – covering descriptive and evaluative information – to ascertain how much evidence there was for the parameter.

For each parameter, the following information was recorded:

- Parameter 'appraisal' – the three-point scale was used to indicate a high or low 'degree' of the parameter being evidenced in the country report. The Excel sheet used a simple system of 1 to indicate yes or 0 to indicate no. A totals row indicated the overall numbers of countries presenting each parameter.
- Sources of evidence – up to three sources were identified. These included an indication of what and where (CSM report question and page number) evidence for the parameter could be found. The 'strongest' source of evidence was listed first.
- Illustrative evidence – in the form of a direct quote along with the CSM report question and page number.

- Comments – with team members' notes on issues that could be relevant to follow up in the Thematic Analysis and later work. Comments were also added if an appraisal was considered marginal between two ratings.

The country reports for Austria and Switzerland, which were based on information that the Agency team prepared, were also mapped. These reports presented more limited information, which meant that not all parameters were covered and extensive sources of information were not always available. The information added to the Excel recording sheet was marked as being 'Based on partial information – not all parameters could be mapped'. Where specific parameters could not be mapped, zeros were recorded.

When the analysis findings were collated, a final round of analysis moderation took place. Potential queries and questions over appraisals were flagged. For a small number of appraisals, the original country reports were re-consulted. Where considered necessary, additional evidence was highlighted and then the full team discussed and agreed upon the appraisal.

Team reflections on the Mapping analysis

During the activity's implementation, the team members involved highlighted several observations that should be considered in relation to the findings and possible next steps in using them within the TCCA development processes.

The different degrees of coverage and levels of analysis in the country report information impacted the appraisals of approaches taken for the parameters. There was missing and sometimes conflicting information across questions. Furthermore, some country reports mainly focused on describing the policies in place, but did not sufficiently comment on their implementation in practice.

As a result, the parameter appraisals must be understood as Agency team members' judgements based on the balance of information available. Appraisals and judgements were far easier to evidence – and are potentially more reliable – for the parameters focusing on structural system factors: levels of decentralisation, presence of exclusionary structures, legislative frameworks, curriculum frameworks, and funding mechanisms.

Based on this observation, the Mapping team members recommended to the wider CSM and TCCA teams that these parameters be prioritised as the basis for forming the TCCA groups. The other parameters may be considered to be linked to processes that are often dependent on the structural factors listed above. Most countries can be seen as 'working towards' the development of strategies linked to these processes. As a result, the indicative statements and team members' comments – not the overall appraisal – may be of most interest and the Mapping analysis findings linked to these process-oriented parameters may be used to directly inform the TCCA discussions and work, rather than the TCCA groupings.

Mapping analysis outputs

The Mapping analysis was presented as a tabular overview of countries and their approaches to each of the 10 parameters. This information was used as the basis for the individual country analysis reports, described in detail below.

Country representatives were then asked to fact check this overview information. Five countries (Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Portugal and Sweden) questioned elements of the appraisals linked to the parameters and amendments were made based on new and/or revised evidence.

The Mapping findings were used to directly inform the TCCA groups, as described in the [final section of this report](#).

Thematic Analysis

The Thematic Analysis focused on identifying issues – strengths (or opportunities) of and challenges (or barriers) to inclusive education – emerging from the full CSM country reports. All CSM analysis reports contain examples of both strengths and challenges.

The Thematic Analysis aimed to generate more specific information from each country to be used as the basis for content-related discussion and reflection within the thematic cluster activities.

A dedicated team of six Agency team members conducted the Thematic Analysis. They agreed on the following operational definitions to guide the analysis work:

- A strength for inclusion: an emerging issue or theme that encourages and reinforces inclusive practice in the country and could potentially be shown as an example to other countries.

- A challenge for inclusion: an emerging issue or theme the country needs to work on to reach an inclusive education system.

Steps within the Thematic Analysis

The Thematic Analysis focused on the 32 country reports prepared by the full country and Agency team.

To ensure consistency in the analysis process and support a well-documented exchange among team members, each team member started a 'research diary'. This also allowed them to review the analysis process and discuss it with the whole team.

The main steps the team followed for analysing each country report are outlined below:

- Firstly, the team considered the information presented in the country reports in an open way (*open coding*). This meant that no predefined criteria were used to analyse the text. Hence, while reading the document, codes were determined based on the text to prevent any interpretation at this early stage of analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

- After this initial coding process, the focus turned to strengths and challenges for inclusive education. Codes that were related to each other in the context of emerging strengths or challenges were collated into code groups (Birks & Mills, 2011).

- Once these code groups were concrete enough and further analysis would not add new elements, overviews in a graphical format supported the transformation of a code group into a category (Dey, 2007).

Having established the categories that represent strengths or challenges for inclusive education, the team identified those categories that were most evident in the individual full CSM reports. This led to the identification of three strengths and three challenges for inclusive education for each country. These were elaborated upon to be presented to the countries.

The qualitative data analysis tool Atlas.ti supported all these steps. Atlas.ti was used to code texts, compare codes and further develop code groups and categories. It enabled the team members to share the analysis process and outcomes with each other.

Team data analysis

The team conducting the Thematic Analysis of the full CSM reports planned regular exchanges and discussions. These exchanges between team members and a 'coding day', with in-depth discussions about processes and developing categories, ensured a consistent analysis of all country documents.

In addition to the coding and analysis process, the team used the previously mentioned individual research diaries to document the steps and decisions taken. This allowed them to revisit certain steps of the analysis process and compare and exchange with colleagues. The development of categories can also be traced back by referring to the individual research diaries.

Writing up the Thematic Analysis results, including the emerging categories of strengths and challenges for inclusion, took place amid on-going exchanges among team members. The aim was to reflect on the terminology used and discuss the meaning of the different categories. Furthermore, the team members undertook a peer-review process that ensured consistency of the final country analysis reports.

Team reflections on the Thematic Analysis

The Thematic Analysis complemented the Mapping by adding an open approach to the analysis of the full CSM reports. It allowed each report to speak for itself, without classifying its information into a predefined framework. In this way, more specific strengths and challenges for inclusion have been highlighted for each country that may or may not relate to the predefined priorities. These will offer TCCA participants a deeper understanding of specific aspects within countries' approaches to the implementation and sustainability of inclusive education.

The final selection of strengths and challenges entailed careful rereading of coded text and redefining of code groups whenever necessary to include all significant issues. Graphics helped to visualise the relationships that emerged. The graphics were included in the country analysis reports that were shared with country teams, to provide a concise representation of the many aspects related to a certain strength or challenge. Furthermore, they may form the basis for future country cluster discussions on specific topics.

However, in some cases, it was difficult to differentiate between challenges and strengths as categories, as the identification of a challenge by a country could also already be seen as a strength.

While the Thematic Analysis supports the TCCA work, it was completed before countries were grouped into thematic country clusters. Therefore, the country analysis reports did not include some strengths and challenges that may have been more relevant for the respective clusters but were less strongly emphasised within the full CSM reports.

Furthermore, the Thematic Analysis focused mainly on the evaluative commentary. Some countries were explicit in what they defined as a strength or challenge for inclusive education, while others were open to interpretation by the Agency team.

All information from the country analysis reports can be found in the full CSM reports and is therefore traceable back to the document that was prepared by the original country and Agency CSM team.

Thematic Analysis outputs

The findings of the Thematic Analysis for each country were included in the individual country analysis reports, detailed below.

For each country, different graphics presented the three identified strengths and challenges for inclusive education. Additionally, the graphics were described and contextualised for the reader.

Whenever possible, strengths and challenges for inclusive education were related to the countries' identified priority areas of monitoring and evaluation, developing strategies for cross-sector work for inclusion, and developing multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance and accountability frameworks.

Country analysis reports

The individual findings of the Mapping and Thematic Analyses were collated into a country analysis report presenting the overall CSM analysis findings for each country. These country-specific reports were developed as non-public, working documents with the clear aim of serving as crucial stimulus material for the later TCCA work.

Draft versions of the individual country analysis reports were sent to each Agency RB for a fact check. Based on the feedback received, agreed amendments were made to Mapping appraisals and the presentation of Thematic Analysis strengths and challenges, and final versions of the country reports were produced and shared with the relevant country teams.

Within the next steps of the TCCA work, the main information in the country analysis reports will be shared in different ways with all country representatives, as well as – where approved by RBs – more widely via the CSM web area.

However, it is recognised that the Mapping and Thematic Analysis findings present a dataset/information source that merits wider publication as a standalone output. The Agency and its member countries will explore possibilities for sharing the information more widely in 2024.

BUILDING ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE CSM WORK

During the scoping activities involving all Agency RBs to prepare the current MAWP, it was agreed that all future Agency thematic work would be organised as **Thematic Country Cluster Activities** (TCCA), working on the priorities identified by countries and subsequently examined via the CSM information-gathering work.

Therefore, CSM's main outcomes now provide the starting points for the TCCA work. CSM outcomes will be used within the remainder of the MAWP to organise country cluster activities that are more closely aligned to individual country approaches on key issues for inclusive education. This will support individual policy development needs and build upon learning points from across countries.

Different tracks of activities will specifically focus on supporting groups of countries with particular system features, structures or working processes. These may include the level or type of decentralisation in a country; structures supporting co-operation between ministries from different social sectors; the role of the private education sector, associations and/or non-governmental organisations in providing education opportunities; and the structures and mechanisms for external evaluation of school outcomes.

These tracks of activities will potentially include work in both homogeneous and heterogenous groups to provide a broad range of learning opportunities with and from other countries.

The proposals for the country cluster work, which began in autumn 2023, were based on the combination of the two sets of analysis information described in the previous sections.

Firstly, the **Mapping analysis** information was combined with findings from the Agency's 2023 Operational Survey. As part of this wider survey, countries indicated which of the three thematic priorities for the CSM activity – monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working, and quality assurance – they wished to work on first *and* whether they preferred to work with countries taking similar (homogenous) or different (heterogenous) approaches to the parameters. Annex 2 presents the final grouping of countries for the TCCA work.

Secondly, the **Thematic Analysis** findings have been used as the basis for designing and informing the activity plans for the individual country clusters by highlighting identified strengths and challenges for inclusive education that groups of countries are facing.

The ambition for TCCA is to ensure the Agency can fulfil its mission to act as an agent for change. As such, all TCCA work will have the goal of supporting policy-makers' efforts to translate identified policy priorities for high-quality inclusive education for all learners into practical actions for implementation. TCCA will provide Agency member country representatives with activities (processes) and resources (outputs) that:

- explore policy development issues;
- support self-reflection;
- share information about what other member countries do;
- aid policy review and development.

This also means examining issues around the policy into practice implementation gap that countries recognise they face.

The CSM information-gathering work has provided the essential evidence base for the TCCA organisation (i.e. grouping countries into systematic clusters) and focus (i.e. the content focus for each cluster's work). CSM has provided the required information foundation to ensure that future Agency MAWP activities can effectively:

- be organised around countries' priorities;

- be tailored to support policy development needs;

- use peer learning and experience exchange approaches;

- focus on work with small groups of countries around identified shared challenges.

This robust foundation will provide a solid basis for taking Agency work within the current and future work programmes forward using a co-development approach with its member country representatives.

More details are available on the TCCA web area.

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ANNEX 1: INFORMATION-GATHERING TEMPLATE

The CSM information-gathering template was prepared to support country teams in providing systematic information on their country's systems for inclusive education.

It provided an introduction with some background on the CSM work to put the information requests into context, an outline of and guidance on the steps for completing it, and an outlook on potential next steps describing how the information would be analysed and then potentially used.

The actual questions used for information collection were organised into seven sections. These questions are presented in full below.

Section 1. Background on the inclusive education system

This section asks you to provide key background information in relation to inclusive education in your country.

Questions 1.1 and 1.5 are optional. All other questions should be answered as fully as possible.

1.1 Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) narrative **overview of the historical development of inclusive education in your country**. Please highlight important policy decisions taken that have guided the development of your inclusive education system. (*Optional*)

1.2 Please indicate in the table below if there are **legislation and policy definitions linked to key concepts within inclusive education systems** and if yes, please provide details. Please include references and links where possible.

Definition	Yes/No	Description and source
Inclusive education		
Special needs education		
Learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education		
Learners with special educational needs		
Other(s)		

1.3 *The CSM work aims to cover the whole system and 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 in the template refer to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.*

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

Please describe **which individuals, or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education are focused upon in your replies**. Please also indicate **why your answers are focused upon these individuals or groups**.

1.4   Please explain how **current thinking around learners who may be considered vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education has developed in your country**. Please highlight any issues in current thinking that should be taken into account when considering the information provided in this template.

1.5   Please provide information on any **future developments planned for the education system that may impact positively or negatively on inclusive education**. (*Optional*)

Section 1 Evaluative commentary

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

Section 2. Overview of the education system

This section asks you to provide information on the structures and features of the whole education system that influence the development and implementation of inclusive education in your country.

All questions in this section should be answered as fully as possible.

2.1   Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) **narrative overview of the education system**. Specifically, provide information about the numbers of and different types of schools, institutions and educational provision within the system and the age range/ISCED levels of learners they cater for.

2.2   Please indicate in the table below if **specific features are present within your education system** and if yes, please describe that feature. Please include references and links where possible.

Area	Yes/No	Description of the feature
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)		
'Double-shift' patterns to the school day (i.e. learners attend for either a morning or afternoon session)		
Grade retention (i.e. holding learners back to repeat school years, instead of providing flexible support that enables learners to progress with their peers)		
Multiple languages of instruction		
Specific policies on access to compulsory education in local schools (i.e. school selection policies)		
Other(s)		

2.3   Please describe the **different authorities** – public and private – **responsible for different types of provision**, etc.

2.4   Please describe **the levels of autonomy open to educational institutions** – schools, local authorities, school maintainers, etc. – within your system.

2.5   Please describe the general mechanisms for funding schools. Give details on which institutions and authorities provide funding, what they provide, how they provide it and to whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources, and their respective roles and responsibilities.

2.6   Please describe **the specific mechanisms for funding the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education**. Give details on which institutions and authorities provide funding, what they provide, how they provide it and to whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources, and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Section 2 Evaluative commentary

*This section should provide a qualified, evidence-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of system features and structures for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. Your reply should specifically consider the impact of*

policy-making, structures and processes at national, regional, local and school levels upon inclusive education practice.

Section 3. Legislative and policy framework

This section asks you to provide information on the overall framework of legislation and policy governing the whole of the education system in your country.

All questions in this section should be answered as fully as possible.

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

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

3.1a   If yes, please describe the single legislation and policy framework.

3.1b   If no, please provide an overview of the **general** education legislation and policy framework guiding the whole system.

3.1c   Provide an overview of the **specific education legislation and policy framework impacting on the inclusion of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion** from inclusive education.

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

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

3.2a   If yes, please describe the single curriculum framework.

3.2b   If no, please provide an overview of the **general** curriculum framework.

3.2c   Provide an overview of **specific curriculum framework(s) for different groups of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion** from inclusive education.

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

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

3.3a   If yes, please describe the single legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development.

3.3b   If no, please provide an overview of the **general** legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development.

3.3c Provide an overview of the **specific legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development** and indicate what and who this specific framework focuses upon.

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

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

3.4a   If yes, please describe the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all throughout their school careers.

3.4b   If no, please provide an overview of the **general** legislation and policy framework that ensures support for **the majority** of learners throughout their school careers.

3.4c   Provide an 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.

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**?

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

3.5a   If yes, please describe the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life.

3.5b   If no, please provide an 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.

3.5c   Provide an 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.

Section 3 Evaluative commentary

*This section should provide a qualified, evidence-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of the legislative and policy framework for inclusive education in practice. Your reply should specifically consider the main challenges and opportunities for effectively translating policy into regional, local and school-level practice.*

Section 4. System governance

This section asks you to provide information on aspects of governance across and between different system levels, bodies and stakeholders in your country.

All questions in this section should be answered as fully as possible.

4.1   Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) **narrative describing shared responsibilities across and between central and local-level government within your system**. Please specify if your answer covers the whole inclusive education system, or a specific aspect of the system, such as the system for special needs education.

4.2   Please provide in the table below specific **information on areas for shared responsibilities across and between central and local-level government** within your system. Please specify if your answers cover the whole inclusive education system, or a specific aspect of the system, such as the system for special needs education. Please include references and links where possible.

Area	Yes/No	Description: who is involved and how
Policy development, implementation and co-ordination		
Identification of needs/referral for services		
Data collection and sharing		
Monitoring and evaluation		
Quality assurance and accountability		
Funding		
Other(s)		

4.3   Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) **narrative describing formal and informal collaboration across ministries within your system**. Please specify if your answer covers the whole inclusive education system, or a specific aspect of the system, such as the system for special needs education.

4.4   Please provide information in the table below on the **specific mechanisms for formal and informal collaboration** that impact on inclusive education.

Area	Yes/No	Description of the mechanism, whether it is formal or informal, who is involved and how
Development of a shared vision for inclusive education		
Policy development, implementation and co-ordination		
Identification of needs/referral for services		
Data collection and sharing		
Monitoring and evaluation		
Quality assurance and accountability		
Funding		
Other(s)		

Section 4 Evaluative commentary

*This section should provide a qualified, evidence-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of system governance for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. Your reply should specifically consider the impact of levels of decentralisation/centralisation in your country upon inclusive education in practice.*

Section 5. Quality assurance and accountability

This section asks you to provide information on the general and specific quality assurance and accountability frameworks and mechanisms informing your country's education system.

All questions in this section should be answered as fully as possible.

5.1   Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) **narrative describing school inspection processes and structures** for all forms of educational provision.

5.2   Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) **narrative describing other quality assurance processes** (e.g. standards for teaching, support services, etc.) for all forms of educational provision.

5.3   Please provide in the table below **information on the evaluation mechanisms within the education system used to monitor outcomes** at different levels of the system.

Mechanism	Yes/No	Description of the roles and responsibilities, what information is collected and how it is used
General outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for *all* learners		
Specific outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for learners vulnerable to exclusion		
Outcomes for schools (professional development, staff and personal well-being, etc.)		
Outcomes for parents and families (support, participation, family well-being, etc.)		
Other(s)		

5.4   Please provide in the table below **information on evaluation mechanisms within the education system used to monitor the effectiveness of processes** at different levels of the system.

Mechanism	Yes/No	Description of the aim, roles and responsibilities, what information is collected and how it is used
Effectiveness of teaching and learning processes		
Effectiveness of school management processes		
Effectiveness of teacher professional development processes		
Efficiency and effectiveness of funding mechanisms		
Effectiveness of (vertical) co-operation between stakeholders at different system levels		
Effectiveness of (horizontal) co-operation between ministries and ministerial departments		
Other(s)		

5.5   Please describe any **specific monitoring mechanisms** relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

5.6   Please describe any **specific evaluation mechanisms** relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

5.7   Please describe any **specific accountability mechanisms** to ensure the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

Section 5 Evaluative commentary

*This section should provide a qualified, evidence-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of quality assurance and accountability for inclusive education in practice. Your reply should specifically consider the implications of how different stakeholders across the education system are accountable for ensuring the effective implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice.*

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

This section asks you to provide information on the structures, mechanisms and opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and co-operation in your country.

All questions in this section should be answered as fully as possible.

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

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

6.1a   If yes, please describe the legislation and policy framework around the use of learner voice.

6.1b   If no, please give an explanation.

6.2   Does the **legislation and policy framework ensure curriculum development processes take account of all learners and their communities** (e.g. address differences due to gender, culture, religions, the ethnicities/nations living in the country, their history and culture, differences related to disability and socio-economic background, LGBTQ+ community)?

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

6.2a   If yes, please describe how the legislation and policy framework around curriculum development processes takes account of all learners and their communities.

6.2b   If no, please give an explanation.

6.3   In the table below, please indicate if and how the **legislation and policy framework supports the active involvement of different stakeholders** in ensuring inclusive learning environments. Please include references and links where possible.

Stakeholders	Yes/No	Description of stakeholder involvement
Parents and families		
School leaders/leadership teams, teachers and specialist staff		
Stakeholders in the local communities		
Local-level decision-/policy-makers		
Non-governmental organisations, disabled people's organisations, or other organisations representing vulnerable groups		
Other(s)		

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

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

6.4a If yes, please describe the legislation and policy framework ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum development processes.

6.4b If no, please give an explanation.

6.5   Does the **legislation and policy framework support the development of learning communities in local/regional areas**, e.g. support for schools to work together, involvement with universities, support services to provide research evidence and development of innovative practice?

Yes   ☐   No   ☐

6.5a If yes, please describe the legislation and policy framework that supports the development of learning communities.

Section 6 Evaluative commentary

*This section should provide a qualified, evidence-based reflection on the **challenges, opportunities and consequences** of stakeholder collaboration, co-operation and effective communication for the implementation of inclusive education in practice. Your reply should*

specifically consider how effectively different stakeholders across the education system are supported to increase their personal and collective ability to be inclusive in practice.

Section 7. Final comments and reflections

This section is **open** for you to provide any final information, comments or reflections upon the implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice you feel have not been shared in previous sections. *(Optional)*

ANNEX 2: THEMATIC COUNTRY CLUSTER ACTIVITY GROUPS

As the previous sections of this report explain, the goal for the **CSM Mapping analysis** was to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate which country systems are structured and/or working in different – or similar – ways. The Mapping essentially focused on facts about the system as described in country reports – that is, the evidence for certain system elements, or 'parameters', being present or not within the country information. Thirty-four countries were involved in the Mapping analysis work.

The 2023 **Operational Survey** collected information from Agency country representatives on several issues for planning future Agency work. This included asking them to identify country priorities for joining the TCCA that began in autumn 2023, focusing on: monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation for inclusive education; developing strategies for supporting collaborative, cross-sector working across all levels and sectors; and developing multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance and accountability frameworks for inclusive education.

Twenty-two countries responded to the operational survey. For those countries that did not respond, the CSM Mapping analysis information alone was used as the basis for proposing the country cluster membership.

For the country that did not respond to the operational survey or take part in the CSM analysis work (Slovakia), Agency team members proposed its placement in a cluster, based on their knowledge of this country's current policy priorities.

Country clusters

Six thematic country clusters were proposed for the work that began in autumn 2023:

- Three clusters focusing on **monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation for inclusive education**

- Two clusters focusing on **developing strategies for supporting collaborative, cross-sector working across all levels and sectors**

- One cluster focusing on **developing multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance and accountability frameworks for inclusive education**.

When grouping countries into the proposed clusters, the following was considered:

Firstly, the country's stated priorities in terms of thematic focus. All 22 countries that responded to the operational survey were placed in a cluster focusing on the thematic area and with countries taking approaches they requested.

All other countries were placed in clusters based on their approach to the parameter linked to that thematic area (see below).

Secondly, the country's stated priorities in terms of preferred type of group (similar or mixed country approaches). For each of the three thematic areas, a main parameter

underpinning each theme was identified as the basis for deciding on country cluster composition.

In relation to monitoring and evaluation, the main parameter was the level of decentralisation and the extent to which key decision-making and responsibility for implementation are delegated across different system levels and structures. For cross-sector collaboration and working, the key parameter was governance strategies and the extent to which there is a governance strategy/plan that sets out clear roles and responsibilities for the implementation of inclusive education policies. In relation to multi-stakeholder quality assurance and accountability frameworks, the key parameter related to exclusionary system structures and the extent to which education system structures promote or reinforce exclusion and take a compensatory, rather than preventative, approach to meeting learners' needs.

The CSM Mapping analysis work highlighted clear evidence that links these parameters to the three thematic areas covered by the clusters. The Mapping analysis work also identified these parameters as the most robust in terms of clear evidence for decision-making around the type of system structure in place in a country.

In proposing these country clusters, groupings with a predominance of countries that share a language or that come from a single geographical area were avoided as far as possible.

Table 1 presents the final thematic cluster composition.

Table 1. Thematic country cluster composition

Thematic area	Rationale for the country cluster	Proposed country members
Monitoring and evaluation	Similar country positions on the parameter of level of decentralisation: **decentralised or transitioning countries**	Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom (Scotland)
Monitoring and evaluation	Similar country positions on the parameter of level of decentralisation: **centralised countries**	Croatia, Ireland, Malta, Serbia, United Kingdom (England)
Monitoring and evaluation	Different country positions on the parameter of level of decentralisation	Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Latvia, Slovakia, Switzerland
Collaborative, cross-sector working	Similar country positions on the parameter of governance strategies: **highly integrated governance plans**	Finland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, United Kingdom (Wales)
Collaborative, cross-sector working	Different country positions on the parameter of governance strategies	Belgium (French community), Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Sweden

Thematic area	Rationale for the country cluster	Proposed country members
Multi-stakeholder quality assurance and accountability frameworks	Different country positions on the parameter of exclusionary system structures	Austria, Belgium (Flemish community), Greece, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)

Secretariat:

Østre Stationsvej 33
DK-5000
Odense C
Denmark
Tel: +45 64 41 00 20
secretariat@european-agency.org

Brussels Office:

Rue Montoyer 21
BE-1000
Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 213 62 80
brussels.office@european-agency.org

www.european-agency.org