Country Policy Development Support

Methodology Report

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COUNTRY POLICY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Methodology Report

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

The views expressed by any individual in this document do not necessarily represent the official views of the Agency, its member countries or the European Commission.

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With a view to greater accessibility, this report is available in accessible electronic format on the Agency's website: www.european-agency.org

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Agency/European Agency: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

CPDS: Country Policy Development Support

CPRA: Country Policy Review and Analysis

CSM: Country System Mapping

EASIE: European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education

MAWP: Multi-Annual Work Programme

MIPIE: Mapping the Implementation of Policy for Inclusive Education

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SRSP: Structural Reform Support Programme

RB(s): Representative Board member(s)

TCCA: Thematic Country Cluster Activities

TSI: Technical Support Instrument

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the background and the methodology of the [Country Policy Development Support](#) (CPDS) activity, carried out by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency).

CPDS is central to the Agency's role as an **agent for policy change in inclusive education**. It is a process to help countries improve policies and practices for inclusive education. The CPDS work supports reflection on country policy development and implementation issues for inclusive education. CPDS is an individualised activity for all Agency member countries[1].

The main target audiences for the CPDS work are the Agency's country representatives (Representative Board members – RBs), as well as other decision-makers at national, regional and/or local levels who work with them. The secondary target group is the Agency itself, informing and being informed by all on-going Agency work.

By adopting a **collaborative approach to policy development**, CPDS also intends to have an indirect impact on grassroots stakeholders who are involved in implementing inclusive change.

Background to CPDS

CPDS has been developed as an extension to the Agency's [Country Policy Review and Analysis](#) (CPRA) activity, and in response to RB requests to extend the CPRA outputs and build on existing methodologies used in previous Agency activities (for example, [Indicators for Inclusive Education](#), [Mapping the Implementation of Policy for Inclusive Education](#) – MIPIE, [Technical Support Instrument](#) – TSI). Following scoping meeting discussions with RBs, it was decided that the overall goal of CPDS would be **to support countries from where they currently are in their policy development and implementation work**.

The Agency team and RBs agreed that the CPDS processes and outcomes would support countries in **their individual and collaborative policy development work** in the following ways:

- Consider priority themes for the [Multi-Annual Work Programme](#) (MAWP) 2021–2027[2] in an interrelated way.

- Tailor future activities to country contexts.

- Develop a range of collaborative working processes.

- Provide structured examples of country work.

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[1] The Agency works with representatives of 31 [member countries](#), covering 36 jurisdictions (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as Belgium's French, Flemish and German communities, are each represented separately).

[2] The [Multi-Annual Work Programme](#) (MAWP) is a long-term plan which guides the Agency's work from 2021 to 2027.

- Gain agreement from countries to consider possibilities for monitoring developments.

Considering the above, CPDS has been developed as an **overarching activity** that all MAWP work is organised around. All other work areas lead out of CPDS and all findings and outcomes feed into it. In this way, CPDS aims to ensure an all-encompassing MAWP that provides added value from all activities for the Agency's collective work.

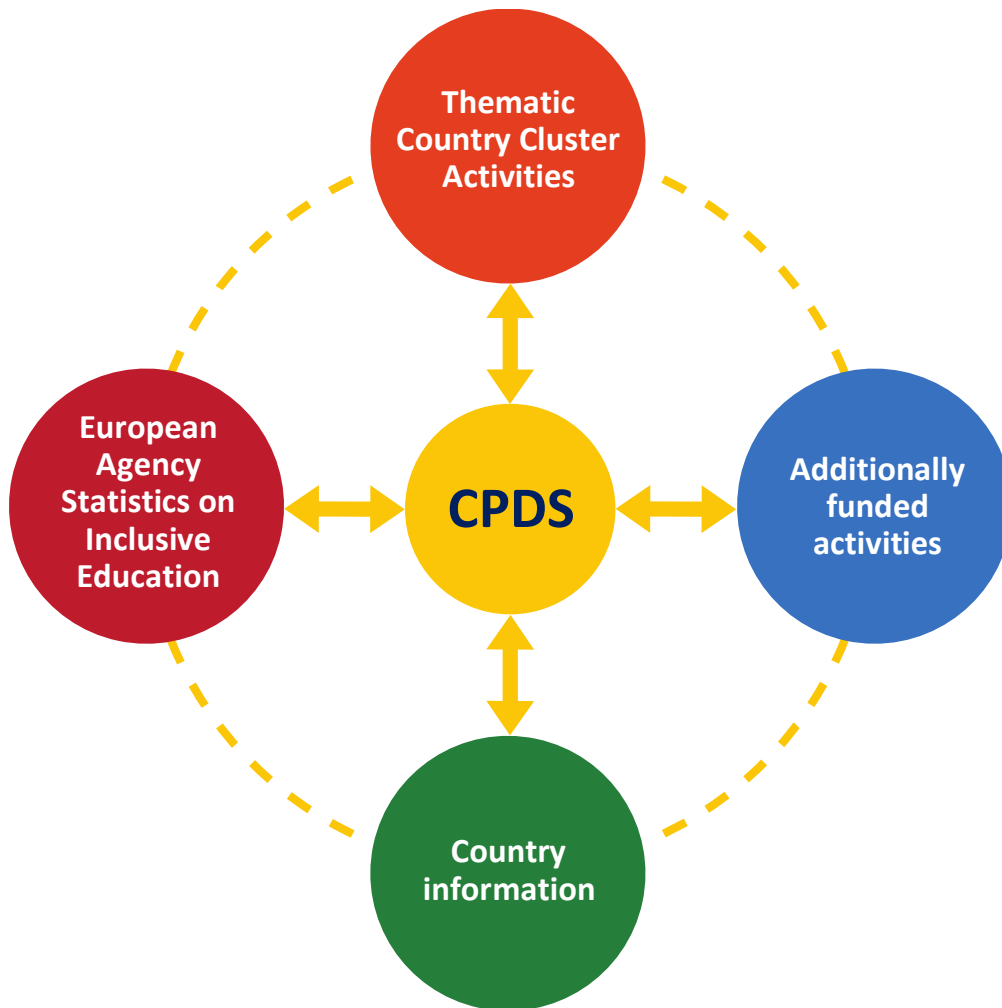Figure 1 shows how CPDS is interlinked with other areas of MAWP work:

Figure 1. CPDS as an overarching activity

The CPDS cycle

CPDS is based on **a systemic view of education systems** (European Agency, 2021a; 2021b) in relation to policy development and implementation. To this end, it involves the following key collaborative processes:

1. Mapping the country's inclusive education system

2. Identifying goals for improvement and developing standards/indicators

3. Implementing standards/indicators

4. Monitoring progress towards the goals.

In the first phase of CPDS, the Agency team pre-populates the main CPDS tool, the CPDS Framework, with available country information on policies and their implementation. The RBs then check and complete the pre-populated framework. As each country's framework is filled in, it becomes a **Country Repository** of current information. Each repository is individualised and gives countries a 'snapshot' in time of the status of their inclusive policy development and implementation. It is intended to be a guide to areas of strength, challenges or gaps in policy or the implementation of policy into practice. This focus on policy implementation aims to enable countries to address the policy-practice gap – that is, the difference between what policies state and how they are applied in real-life settings – in their systems.

On completion of the repository, the Agency team prepares a **synthesis report**, which highlights key findings for each aspect of the education system, based on the repository information. Countries then review the synthesis report and self-identify a minimum of one and a maximum of three priority areas they would like to work on.

In the second phase of CPDS, countries set specific goals for improvement, by establishing standards and indicators to work towards with the Agency team's support. The **Standards and Indicators Framework** specifies these standards and indicators. The framework includes stated goals, actions, responsible actors and timeframes. The framework is intended to be public, but this decision is at each country's discretion.

When the Standards and Indicators Framework is complete, the country sets out to implement the actions indicated in the framework and collects evidence of implementation. The Agency team follows the implementation process by **monitoring progress** and supporting the country to collect relevant evidence. The intention is to share information on implementing and monitoring progress towards the self-identified goals with other countries, as part of the MAWP's cluster working approaches.

Whenever new evidence of policy and/or implementation is collected, the Agency team adds it to the existing Country Repository. Country Repositories are therefore **dynamic documents** that are regularly updated to reflect changes or progress over time, with regular **cycles of review** where countries are asked to check, amend and update the information. This ensures that each repository continues to be a current record of progress in policy development and implementation.

Through this cyclical process, CPDS offers countries opportunities for **on-going self-reflection**. The aim is to aid policy revision, development and implementation as countries continue to progress towards more inclusive education systems.

Figure 2 illustrates the CPDS cycle (that is, the processes, along with their associated outputs).

1
Mapping each country's inclusive education system

Outputs
CPDS Repository and synthesis report

4
Monitoring progress toward these goals

Output
Updated Repository

2
Setting specific goals for improvement

Output
Standards and Indicators Framework

3
Implementation of standards/ indicators

Output
Collection of evidence

Figure 2. The CPDS cycle

Country Policy Development Support
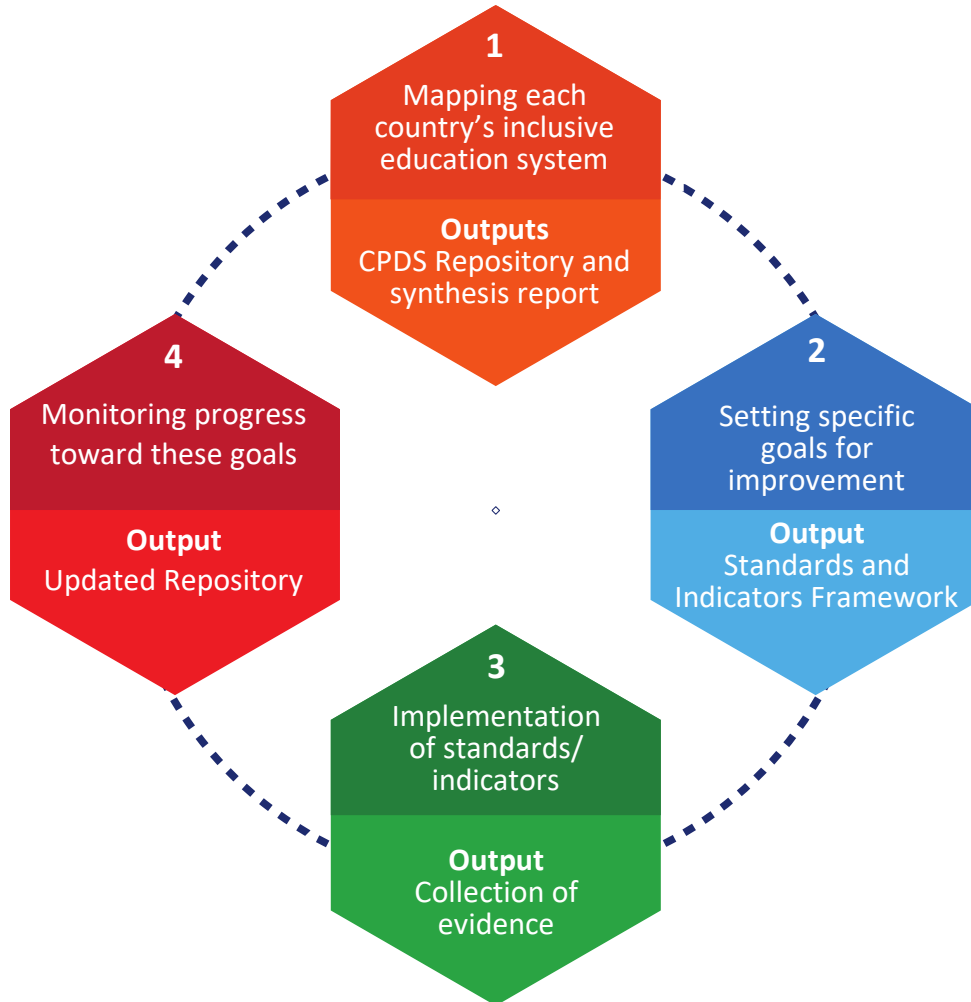
About this report

This methodology report has been developed throughout the CPDS piloting phase (2023–2024), which included collaborative work with three Agency member countries: Iceland, Lithuania and Malta. The piloting phase has resulted in:

- an agreed CPDS Framework;

- agreed procedures for mapping country policy information, completing the CPDS Country Repository, and summarising information in a synthesis report;

- agreed procedures for developing standards and an agreed Standards and Indicators Framework;

- three Country Repositories, synthesis reports and standards documents for the pilot countries – Iceland, Lithuania and Malta.

This report comprises the following sections:

- Section 1 describes the process of mapping the countries' inclusive education systems, including details on developing the CPDS Framework and the synthesis report.

- Section 2 explains the standards development process and presents the Standards and Indicators Framework.

- Section 3 describes the process of monitoring progress and the role of the Agency team 'duo'.

- Section 4 provides concluding comments and links CPDS with other areas of Agency work.

Finally, five annexes complement this report:

- Annex 1 describes the collaborative process used to develop the CPDS methodology with the pilot Working Group.

- Annex 2 presents an extract from the CPDS Framework.

- Annex 3 lists possible types of evidence of implementation.

- Annex 4 presents the CPDS synthesis report annex table.

- Annex 5 presents the Standards and Indicators Framework.

1. MAPPING COUNTRIES' INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

The CPDS Framework

As noted above, the overall goal of CPDS is **to support countries from where they currently are in their policy development and implementation work**. To establish each country's position, a number of processes have been developed for CPDS from existing methodologies, frameworks and data used in previous Agency activities.

The main CPDS tool is a **framework** to map the countries' current situation in terms of legislation and policy development and implementation. Mapping methodology has been widely used, both internationally (Brussino, 2020) and extensively in Agency activities (for example, MIPIE – 2011; CPRA – 2015–2021), with whole education systems or in relation to certain aspects of education systems.

As an outline model for CPDS, the Agency team identified specific elements from the CPRA mapping approach, such as the systematic collection and mapping of policy information, and the analysis of the information into synthesis sections. These key CPRA features were adapted for CPDS and used as a basis for further development after discussion and agreement with all RBs. They agreed that CPDS will extend the CPRA work in two distinct ways:

- Moving from a focus on policy/legislation review and analysis, to policy development **support**

- Moving from reviewing policy/legislation (only), to also exploring policy **implementation** issues.

Evidence from mapping aims to fulfil the purpose of CPDS, by showing countries where they are in their policy development and implementation work. This information enables countries to identify their future policy development and implementation priorities.

Following a documentary search of similar frameworks (such as those from TSI/Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) and CPRA), it was agreed that the CPDS Framework would be based primarily on the Agency's 2021 Key Principles (European Agency, 2021a).

The Key Principles set out the necessary elements for an **overall system** for inclusive education, aiming to support countries that wish to further develop their inclusive provision in education. As with the Agency position on inclusive education systems (European Agency, 2022), all Agency member countries agreed the Key Principles. They link to other Agency work, particularly the MAWP 2021–2027, Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA) and Country System Mapping (CSM). The format and language are familiar to member countries. Information in the CPDS Framework also creates links with current and future Agency work.

Annex 1 presents in detail the process of developing the final CPDS Framework with the pilot Working Group.

The final CPDS Framework is available as an open-source tool for recording and systematising country information on inclusive education systems in terms of:

- evidence of educational policies in relation to each of the areas represented by the Agency's Key Principles (European Agency, 2021a);

- evidence and indications of the implementation of these policies in practice.

Annex 2 presents an extract from the CPDS Framework.

The framework is divided into **15 sections**, with 14 sections based on the Key Principles, and one additional section related to policy and practice developed in response to unforeseen country or world events.

Each section begins with an overall statement, drawn from the Key Principles. This is followed by a number of **sub-sections**, each with a policy statement which focuses on an aspect of the main section statement.

Below each policy statement is a table with **three columns**: one column for **indications of policy** in relation to the policy statement, one for **indications of implementation** of the policy into practice, and one for **internal notes**. The Agency team uses the internal notes column to communicate directly with the country, by adding reflective comments and asking questions about specific policy and implementation issues. These comments and questions mostly consist of requests for clarification on policies and evidence of their implementation.

Once completed with country information, the framework is considered a **Country Repository**. The Repository has two purposes:

1. to provide evidence of policy and the implementation of policy, indicating the types of evidence available in relation to different aspects of policy, and the processes of evidence gathering and evaluation;

2. to indicate areas of strength, challenges and gaps in policy development or implementation.

Evidence of policy

As the CPDS Framework is a system-level document, there is variation in the range and type of documents linked to policy. Examples of policy documents could include:

- existing legislation on inclusive education and the rights of learners and their families (for example, public laws, bills, resolutions, hearings, etc.);

- national policies and policy statements, containing the national government's principles and broad course of action in pursuit of inclusion;

- official public documents or reports;

- policy tools or mechanisms/measures to accomplish relevant legislation;

- policy recommendations;

- policy strategies: high-level plans designed to achieve a particular long-term aim for inclusive education. These should address major issues, principles and beliefs. Policy strategies may arise from government aims across a number of policy areas.

Evidence of implementation

The pilot phase explored in depth what constitutes evidence of implementation in relation to policy. There may be differences in the possible interpretation of implementation in relation to policies across the whole education system, incorporating all levels.

To establish a sound basis for CPDS evaluation of policy implementation, the Agency team conducted a desk review. This drew on information from Agency activities, international organisations and academic literature to address two key questions:

1. What can be considered as evidence of implementation?

2. How can the extent of the implementation of policy be evaluated?

Regarding the first question, there are numerous ways to evidence policy implementation. It depends on the policy's intended aims and purposes, the level and area of the education system addressed, and the subjects/objects of policy. Evidence of policy implementation occurs in many different forms and includes a wide range of evidence, in the form of data, documents, visual and physical objects, strategies, statements, etc.

The following list shows the main broad **types of evidence of implementation**. List items marked with (x) are from the Agency's Analysis Framework for Mapping Inclusive Education Policies (European Agency, 2018a, pp. 7–8), used in many SRSP and CPRA activities:

- Regulations and policy directives: statements of and instructions for implementing important, high-level internal direction and positions that guide schools' decisions and actions

- Implementation strategies: clear guidance on strategies and processes to follow

- Existing standards (x), supporting practice that aims at high expectations for all learners, as well as effective and equitable education systems

- Requirements outlined to schools (x), describing the commitments school stakeholders need to make to ensure that inclusive education is embedded within schools' policies and strategic action plans

- Quality assurance mechanisms (x), supporting high-quality inclusive education policies and practices

- Monitoring mechanisms, to ensure effectiveness, quality, equity and cost-effectiveness

- Tools and guidance (x), empowering stakeholders to be innovative and inclusive on a daily basis

- Guidelines for schools/education professionals, in the form of statements/instructions/recommendations on how to ensure high-quality inclusive education.

Annex 3 provides further examples.

Establishing implementation progress

The second question that the desk review sought to answer was: 'How can the extent of the implementation of policy be evaluated?' Step one in the process of identifying policy implementation is to establish clear evidence of practice. However, a further step is required to establish the extent of implementation, and how this might be evidenced against standardised criteria that are generally applicable to all types of policy. The CPDS desk review then focused on establishing the key parameters and steps in the implementation process.

The implementation process is often a staged process, with different implementation goals for aspects of a policy. Three general stages, used previously in TSI/SRSP work, were considered as a basis for measuring progress achieved over time:

- Fully implemented: all aspects of the policy are fully embedded and sustainably established in policy and practice.

- Partly implemented: policy and practice are moving towards implementation but are not yet fully embedded or sustainable

- Not yet implemented: policy and/or practice require major development and attention.

Several factors influence the extent to which policies are implemented effectively and their intended outcomes are accurately interpreted into practice by the end users. Viennet and Pont (2017) highlight that a policy's design can influence the success of its implementation. They note that if a policy is clear, based on evidence that aligns with the education system's challenges, and well understood by those who have to implement it, it is more likely to be implemented and reach its objectives (ibid.).

Drawing on the findings of the desk review, the following criteria were decided as stages in the progress of policy implementation:

- **To be initiated** – planning is at an early stage/practice is yet to be started

- **Requires development** – implementation is partial or inconsistent across schools

- **Embedded in policy and practice** – policy and practice are established and sustainable.

Each of these stages allows for a degree of flexibility in interpreting what counts as evidence of implementation processes.

Establishing evidence of policy implementation: Reflecting with countries

Even where there are guidelines for mapping evidence of policy implementation, areas where implementation is unclear may remain. For this reason, the Agency team works closely with individual countries to discuss and agree on what counts as evidence in their policy development work. The Agency team initially analyses and maps evidence from the documents consulted to pre-populate the framework, but open discussions about the Country Repository content follow with the individual country. This is part of the reflection process, to enable countries to explore their policy strengths, gaps and challenges.

During the framework pre-population stage, the Agency team initially seeks evidence and examples of practice to support implementation in response to the following questions:

- Is there evidence of strategies for policy implementation?

- Are the short- and long-term goals of policy implementation identified?

- Is there evidence to indicate these goals have been achieved?

- Is there evidence (monitoring and evaluation) of sustained changes?

These questions are then explored further with the individual country.

The questions address aspects of the implementation processes, from the general to the more specific. To answer these questions, one of two approaches – or a combination of both – may be used in the analysis: 'backward mapping' or 'forward mapping' (Elmore, 1979). Backward mapping looks at where a country is now and identifies what needs to change to meet goals. Forward mapping starts with goals and outlines the steps needed to achieve them.

In **forward mapping**, policy-makers begin with a clear statement and proceed with a sequence of specific steps to define what is expected from the implementers. The Agency team looks at the policy statements and analyses the extent to which the end user has implemented the identified steps.

In **backward mapping**, policy-makers seek to understand the discrepancy between actual and desired practice or outcomes. They work backwards and ask what would need to change to result in the policy's target outcome. In this approach, the Agency team analyses the implementation processes that have taken place and looks for evidence that indicates where and how these differ from the policy's intended outcomes. This approach goes some way to establishing gaps or challenges, or aspects where barriers prevent full and successful policy implementation.

The Agency team also draws on the wide range of documentary evidence of policy implementation which is available, dependent on the types and purposes of policy for different aspects and levels of the education system (see Annex 3).

Synthesis of Country Repository

The Country Repository developed in the initial CPDS phase provides evidence of current legislation and policy, and its implementation into practice, across 15 key policy areas of inclusive education. Synthesising the information in the Country Repository is the next step in the CPDS work.

Specifically, the synthesis report provides a narrative overview of the existing evidence related to the 15 key policy areas of the CPDS Framework. The synthesis report aims to enable countries to consider the links between aspects of the whole education system and to **self-develop goals for future policy work**.

The synthesis report is intended to be a short and focused document, comprising brief summaries of the country's current situation in relation to the 15 policy areas. The

summaries conclude with short evaluations of the overall implementation level for each policy area, by indicating whether it:

- **is to be initiated** (planning is at an early stage/practice is yet to be started);

- **requires development** (implementation is partial or inconsistent across schools);

- **is embedded in policy and practice** (policy and practice are established and sustainable).

A **co-development approach** is taken to prepare the synthesis report:

- The Agency team and the RB review each area of the Country Repository and co-formulate initial appraisals about the implementation level for each policy area. The initial appraisals are noted in the 'internal notes' column, along with any examples of emerging policy or implementation.

- The Agency team then prepares the draft synthesis report, including summaries of all policy areas. This includes broad markers against the policy statements, including main strengths and challenges/gaps. The Agency team also makes an initial decision on the implementation level for each policy area, to be later discussed and agreed with the RB.

- The RB reviews the draft synthesis report and discusses it with the Agency team in a dedicated meeting. The RB makes final appraisals about the implementation level for each area, and final agreements are recorded in a table in the report's annex. This table shows the levels of policy implementation across all 15 areas of the repository (see Annex 4).

2. DEVELOPING STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

Following completion of the Country Repository and the synthesis report, the next step in the CPDS work is developing standards.

After reviewing the synthesis report, countries **select (up to) three priorities** as areas for development. CPDS work uses a **'standards' model** to monitor progress towards the country's indicated goals for a priority area. For each chosen priority, each country identifies certain standards to work towards over a stated period and develops a set of indicators to reach them. Indicators are then converted into actionable steps and tasks required to meet the aims of the priority areas, with clear statements of the roles and responsibilities of those involved, and a proposed timeframe. This may include short-, medium- or long-term timeframes for the whole priority area or selected aspects of each area. Countries may also prefer to indicate levels of priority for each action (that is, high priority for immediate action).

Each country's Repository will continue to be used to gather updated evidence of the developments in policy and implementation towards the stated goals, in cycles of review. The Agency team will continue to work with the country to collect evidence of the implementation level of each stated priority and use it to update the Country Repository during the next cycle of monitoring and review. This updating process is to ensure that the Country Repository continues to be an effective working document to guide policy implementation and evaluation.

The Standards and Indicators Framework

The Agency uses standards and indicators widely in its work (for example, Indicators for Inclusive Education, MIPIE, TSI, TCCA) and they are well developed within policy development in inclusive education more generally (Downes, Nairz-Wirth and Rusinaité, 2017; UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2023; Mezzanotte and Calvel, 2023).

The Agency defines **standards** as statements that indicate 'levels of quality or attainment that can be used as a measure, norm or benchmark' (European Agency, 2019, p. 5). For stakeholders, standards can be understood as **aspirational statements** for policy-makers and practitioners to aim towards (ibid.) and statements of what they would like to achieve within different areas of their education systems (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support and Portuguese Ministry of Education, 2022).

Indicators show the steps decision-makers need to consider to improve the targeted area and what needs to be measured, accessed and monitored more precisely (European Agency et al., 2022; OECD, 2022).

In CPDS, specific indicators are converted into **actions** that are needed to achieve the standards. Actions establish **specific tasks, roles and responsibilities** for individuals or groups of stakeholders, with agreed **timelines**. This approach incorporates an element of

monitoring and evaluation, as well as the **collection of evidence**, both internally and externally, where the standards are made public.

The developed/adopted standards and indicators for the individual country are clearly expressed in the Standards and Indicators Framework (Annex 5). This framework focuses on policy implementation and aims to enable the countries to improve implementation or address possible policy-practice gaps in their systems. It is intended as **a working document for countries to complete** as they work towards their stated aims for each priority area.

The Standards and Indicators Framework is generic to allow country-specific adaptations and to be applicable for inclusive education systems in different contexts and countries. By using this Framework, each country can identify its own indicators and actions, to address the needs of its own systems and policy contexts.

Completing the Standards and Indicators Framework

The respective country completes the Standards and Indicators Framework, specifically the RB and their team(s) within and beyond the respective ministries.

Developing indicators should be a reflective and transparent procedure. Therefore, the first step in completing the framework is to identify key actors and form a suitable team. This team may consist of:

- decision-makers at national, regional and local levels, from the education sector or related sectors (for example, health and welfare);
- school leaders and leadership teams, as well as practitioners from the mainstream and specialist sectors (including support staff and specialist staff);
- representatives of learners, families, training organisations, youth and community organisations, administrators, as well as elected officials, such as school board members, city councillors and state representatives.

This list is indicative, as the stakeholder groups may differ between countries. Countries may also wish to involve those who worked on different aspects of the CPDS Framework and completed the repository.

It is worth noting that involving stakeholders in defining indicators 'helps ensure the relevance of indicators, meaning that stakeholders are more likely to embed them in their practices' (OECD, 2022, p. 6).

Once the team is established, the selected decision-makers/stakeholders discuss the priorities set. This may be through meetings, workshops, focus groups and/or individual/group interviews to explore different perspectives.

The following reflective questions can be used for this purpose:

1. What specific aspects of policy and practice do we need to develop/improve in relation to this priority?
2. What should our goals be?
3. What would be some key actions to consider?

4. Who do we need to work with to complete the actions and reach our goals?

By reflecting on these questions, decision-makers can agree on specific actions needed to complete the standards document. This process can set the course for future developments at national, regional and local levels.

The text box below contains instructions on how to complete the Standards and Indicators Framework ([Annex 5](#)).

Instructions for completing the Standards and Indicators Framework

CPDS policy area

*Insert policy area **statement** from the Country Repository*

Priority

Insert country priority

Indicator

Goal to be reached

Action

Breakdown of goals into actions

Responsibility

State who will lead the action and who will be accountable for it

Roles

State which stakeholders will be involved, with a clear indication of their roles

Timeframe

Specify the timeframe for completing the action(s), or aspects of the action (short, medium or long term)

Monitoring and evaluation

State processes for on-going monitoring of the progress of the action, including those responsible

Outcome/evidence

State the intended outcome of the action, in terms of policy development and/or implementation (this section may be used as evidence for the Country Repository).

3. MONITORING PROGRESS

When the Standards and Indicators Framework is complete, the country sets out to implement the actions indicated in the framework and collects evidence of implementation. The Agency team follows the implementation process by **monitoring progress** and supporting the country to collect relevant evidence.

Within the CPDS activity, the Agency team uses 'duos' – that is, two dedicated desk officers who keep close contact with the country and follow its developments. The duos are responsible for monitoring not only the final outcomes, but the whole process of developing and implementing the indicators.

The country can contact its duo whenever it needs further support or advice, or faces a particular challenge. The duo may involve other Agency colleagues or external experts if the country needs more support in developing the indicators, implementing certain actions or monitoring progress towards its goals.

The timing of the duos' reviews is **flexible and individualised**, according to the country's framework, and in agreement with each country. The reviews are expected to take place **at least twice a year**. Countries are also expected to indicate the specific timing of their duo's review in the 'Monitoring and evaluation' column of the Standards and Indicators Framework.

After monitoring the progress on the actions and the stated outcomes, the duo adds any new developments to the Country Repository. The duo also liaises with the Agency's Country Overviews team to update the country information on the Agency website.

The intention is to be able to share information with other countries for implementing and monitoring progress towards the self-identified goals, as part of the MAWP's cluster working approaches.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the next steps of the CPDS work, a new group of countries will enter the CPDS cycle. From 2025 to 2027, the CPDS activity will gradually involve cycles of implementation and review for all Agency member countries.

The CPDS processes, outcomes and outputs will enable the Agency team to support countries in both individual and **collaborative policy development work**. As more countries become involved in CPDS, they will be enabled to consider priority themes for the MAWP in an **interrelated way**.

Specifically, the CPDS Framework, or elements of it, can serve as a mapping and analysis tool in other Agency activities. The information from the Country Repositories and the synthesis reports can be taken forward within TCCA and/or additionally funded activities, to explore implementation issues and generate new outputs and recommendations. Similarly, outcomes, findings and recommendations from TCCA and/or additionally funded work will be used to update the CPDS Country Repositories.

The information in the Country Repositories will be regularly checked and cross-linked with the [country information](#) on the Agency website, as part of the Country Overviews work. Any new data received for developing or updating the Country Repositories will feed into the respective country's European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education ([EASIE](#)) database, and vice versa.

Finally, if the countries' Standards and Indicators Frameworks indicate any gaps and/or priority areas, these will be collectively reviewed to inform the MAWP and tailor the next cycle of Agency activities to country contexts. In this way, it is expected that CPDS will ensure an all-encompassing MAWP that provides added value from all activities for the Agency's collective work. This will enable all Agency member countries to benefit from the knowledge and findings from all Agency activities.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: The piloting phase

The CPDS piloting phase took place between 2023 and 2024. Early development work on CPDS began in 2023, to refine the aims and ideas and to co-develop activities with a pilot Working Group. The pilot Working Group consisted of the Agency team and the RBs from three countries: **Iceland, Lithuania and Malta**. Iceland and Malta were chosen based on their previous involvement in similar types of Agency work. Lithuania was selected as a country that was less familiar with working with Agency mapping frameworks.

In addition, Professor Roger Slee, from the University of Leeds, acted as the activity's external expert, on account of his extensive knowledge of policy implementation and practice in inclusive education systems. These processes ensured that internal and external quality assurance was inherent in the development process from the outset.

Initial discussions within the pilot group focused on the overall CPDS methodological approach. The group reflected and agreed upon the following points:

- **Individualised country focus**: Each Agency member country is expected to work directly and collaboratively with the Agency team, in terms of inputs and outputs. This personalised approach is a key aspect of CPDS – responding to what individual countries want and need.

- **Methods of working with RBs**: A desk officer model was proposed, which was also used in CSM. According to this model, each country works with identified Agency team members, thus ensuring a personal point of contact at all times. This model also enables Agency team members to build knowledge of individual countries' education systems and adds consistency to the activity.

- **Drawing on existing and recent information sources**: The information used to establish the baseline position for countries in policy development and implementation is drawn from established sources. The main source is the CSM Country Reports. This ensures the basis for data on policy and implementation is up to date (CSM Country Reports were completed in September 2023). Other sources are reports derived from countries' participation in previous Agency activities and EASIE data collections. Further international sources may be accessed for some countries (for example, European Commission, United Nations, OECD, UNESCO, etc.), where relevant. To ensure that information is current, as far as possible, information sources should be under 10 years old. If earlier policies are still in place, these can be included.

Following the initial discussions, the Agency team drafted the CPDS Framework, which the pilot countries reviewed. Extensive discussions about each element of the framework took place in a series of dedicated Working Group meetings. The CPDS Framework was then revised and finalised at the end of 2023.

The Agency team then pre-populated the framework for each country from the agreed sources. The pilot countries gave feedback on the process and updated the framework

content. The development process was undertaken in detail with the three pilot countries, to explore different possibilities. As agreed, the main source was the CSM Country Report and/or other Agency activities the country had participated in over the previous eight years. Additional sources that were used for each country, such as publicly-available policy documents and reports from international organisations in English, were recorded in the list of references at the end of the framework. The completed and agreed framework was considered the **Country Repository**.

After discussions with the pilot countries, it was agreed that the Agency team should complete the pre-population process in one month. Following this, the RBs had two months to check and amend the pre-populated framework. In total, **the process of completing the Country Repository is intended to last three months**.

In the next phase, the Agency team produced a **synthesis report**, based on an analysis of the information in the repository. This synthesis report indicates areas of strength, as well as challenges and gaps in policy development and the extent of policy implementation into practice.

The steps below show the whole process of mapping the countries' systems, including the development of the Country Repositories and the synthesis reports:

- Step 1: Agency team review of previous mapping tools to develop the CPDS Framework

- Step 2: Consultative process with pilot Working Group to agree and finalise the suggested framework

- Step 3: Agency team pre-population of each country's framework; amendments and updates by RBs

- Step 4: Agency team development of synthesis reports for each country; individual meetings with pilot countries to agree on final appraisals and identify priorities.

Pilot countries then self-identified areas to prioritise for future development work. They developed **standards and indicators** using a suggested framework, which the Agency team provided, to support the standards development. The process of developing and piloting the Standards and Indicators Framework included the following steps:

- Step 1: Agency team desk review of the international literature and previous Agency work, to conceptualise a framework for standards/indicators

- Step 2: Consultation meeting with the pilot Working Group to agree on and finalise the suggested framework

- Step 3: Validation and consolidation of the suggested framework in the country contexts. Countries 'tested out' the framework by developing indicators with their ministry – and wider – teams

- Step 4: Working Group meeting to discuss the feedback on the validation process and finalise the methodology for measuring progress towards the indicators set.

When piloting of the Standards and Indicators Framework was complete, at the end of 2024, a new group of countries was invited to join the CPDS activity. From 2025 to 2027, the CPDS activity will gradually involve all Agency member countries.

Annex 2: Extract from the CPDS Framework

Section 1: Legislation and policy

There must be a clear concept of equitable high-quality inclusive education, agreed with stakeholders. This should inform a single legislative and policy framework for all learners, aligned with key international and European-level conventions and communications, as the basis for rights-based practice.

Policy statement 1.1: There is a clear concept of equitable high-quality inclusive education within the single legislative and policy framework implemented for all learners, in all phases of education and into adult life

Indications of policy	Indications of implementation	Internal notes

Annex 3: Types of evidence of implementation

- Regulations and policy directives: statements of and instructions for implementing important, high-level internal direction and positions that guide schools' decisions and actions

- Implementation strategies: clear guidance on strategies and processes to follow

- Existing standards, supporting practice that aims at high expectations for all learners, as well as effective and equitable education systems

- Requirements outlined to schools, describing the commitments school stakeholders need to make to ensure that inclusive education is embedded within schools' policies and strategic action plans

- Quality assurance mechanisms, supporting high-quality inclusive education policies and practices

- Monitoring mechanisms, to ensure effectiveness, quality, equity and cost-effectiveness

- Tools and guidance, empowering stakeholders to be innovative and inclusive on a daily basis

- Guidelines for schools/education professionals, in the form of statements/instructions/recommendations on how to ensure high-quality inclusive education

- Administrative actions

- Organisational arrangements at national, regional and local level

- Governance strategies that influence implementation

- Outcomes, observable effects on a target population

- Information on implementers' capability to carry out the policy

- Policy evaluations: information on the capacity of the system at different levels to shape, monitor and adapt implementation

- Results of consultation processes with stakeholder groups/national representatives

- Statistical data

- Research evidence (that is, from large-scale studies, qualitative/analytical studies, statistical analyses, case studies, observations, media analyses, etc.)

- Financial reports (cost-effectiveness/economic evaluations)

- Resource analysis reports (human/financial resources)

- Expert knowledge of individuals/groups/networks

Sources: Bowen and Zwi, 2005; European Agency, 2018a; 2018b.

Annex 4: CPDS synthesis report annex

Policy area	To be initiated	Requires development	Embedded in policy and practice
1. Legislation and policy			
2. Funding and resource allocation			
3. Governance			
4. Quality assurance and accountability			
5. Learning opportunities for all education professionals			
6. Curriculum framework			
7. Collaboration and communication			
8. Early childhood education and family support			
9. Support for transitions			
10. Co-operation between school-level stakeholders			
11. Data and information collection			
12. Transforming specialist provision			
13. Inclusive school leadership			
14. Learner voices			
15. Resilience within the education system			

Annex 5: Standards and Indicators Framework

CPDS policy area:

Priority:

Indicator:

Action 1

Responsibility	Roles	Timeframe	Monitoring and evaluation	Outcome/evidence

Action 2

Responsibility	Roles	Timeframe	Monitoring and evaluation	Outcome/evidence

Action 3

Responsibility	Roles	Timeframe	Monitoring and evaluation	Outcome/evidence

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