

EASPD REPORT

Inclusive Education in Post- Secondary Institutions in Selected European Countries



European Association of Service providers
for Persons with Disabilities

This is a report by the European Association for Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities' (EASPD) Member Forum on Education.

EASPD is the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities. We are a European not-for-profit organisation representing over 20,000 social services and disability organisations across Europe. The main objective of EASPD is to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality service systems.

EASPD's Member Forum on Education supports the work of the organisation in the field of education. Consisting of teachers, school staff, service providers, experts in the field of education and/or training and other stakeholders in the field of education, the Member Forum on Education cooperates in projects dealing with education and follows-up the political developments in the field. Among other commitments, Member Forum on Education is also dedicated to contributing to a European policy position on inclusive learning and promoting positive attitudes towards inclusion, diversity, partnership, and network opportunities.



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Abbreviations

EU – European Union

HE – higher education

IPSE – inclusive post-secondary education

NEET – Not in Employment, Education, or Training

PSE – post-secondary education

PW - people with disabilities

SEN – special educational needs

VET – vocational education and training

YPwD – young people with disabilities

Rationale

For many of us, leaving school is a key transition phase filled with new opportunities for our onward development and the realisation of our dreams. Such opportunities can include deepening our learning and skills by enrolling in higher education or acquiring a new vocation by participating in an apprenticeship or further training. While these pathways have the potential to enable individuals actively and fully to participate in and integrate into society as well as gain economic independence via employment, accessing these opportunities comes with additional barriers for many young people with disabilities (YPwD). This places YPwD at a higher risk of exclusion during the transition from secondary education to post-secondary education (PSE) and/or lifelong learning.

The lack of opportunities for young persons with disabilities is evident across Europe, starkly reflected in the statistics:

- According to Eurostat's 2019 report on Education and Training Statistics, the percentage of people with disabilities aged 15-44 who had completed tertiary education was 21% in the EU-28. This is compared to the 42.5% of 25-34-year-olds without disabilities who had completed tertiary education.
- According to Eurostat's 2019 report on Youth Unemployment Statistics, 681,000 young persons with disabilities aged 15-34 were classified as Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) in the European Union (EU). This represented 9.4% of all NEETs in the EU.

These statistics highlight the substantial gap in PSE opportunities for young persons with disabilities in Europe, painting a challenging landscape that warrants urgent attention and focused initiatives for inclusion and support.

Introduction

There has been noticeable progress in education policy in the last few years toward inclusivity, which is usually driven by increased awareness of the human rights of learners and social advancement. The experiences of students with disabilities in higher education settings have, however, gotten little attention in the conversation on inclusive education, which focuses largely on access to inclusive primary education.

There is both a need and an opportunity to increase inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) programmes in Europe to ensure equitable access to education, facilitate the holistic development of diverse learners, and promote a more inclusive and empowered society.

With this state-of-the-art report, EASPD's Member Forum on Education aims to compile comprehensive data on the current landscape of IPSE and lifelong learning for people with intellectual disabilities aged between 18-24 within Europe. The results of the report will serve as a foundational resource for EASPD and its members as well as other interested organisations, enabling them to inform stakeholders about pathways to IPSE throughout Europe. Additionally, these findings will significantly contribute to our policy position and recommendations on inclusive education both at the European and national levels.

Given the collaborative nature required to achieve the report's objectives, target groups are identified as follows:

- Learners with intellectual disabilities aged between 18-24 years old who face additional barriers in the transition from schools to further employment or learning opportunities;
- Families of learners with disabilities who face additional burdens in supporting their children to live an independent life following school;
- Support Service Providers who provide crucial support to learners with disabilities that enable them to fully enjoy their rights and take the life path they wish to take, while also serving as key connectors of stakeholders;
- Schools that struggle to support learners with disabilities to smoothly transition to their next phase of educational life;
- PSE providers, including higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET) institutions, who have a weak connection with schools and other stakeholders and lack a clear transition path for learners with disabilities into their institutions.

As a result, with this report, the EASPD Member Forum on Education aims to contribute to national and European implementation processes of inclusive education in PSE institutions for persons with special educational needs (SEN). The project partners and Members of EASPD's Member Forum on Education aspire to work together to enhance awareness of the rights of youth with disabilities and devise strategies to ensure their access to high-quality inclusive PSE, addressing their special needs and preventing discrimination based on their disabilities.

This report is structured into three main sections: concept, data collection and its results, and conclusion notes. The first section serves to provide an understanding of inclusive education and the position of post-secondary education within this system, offering insights into its normative basis and definition of terms. Building upon this conceptual foundation, the subsequent section focuses on the questionnaire used in the study and its findings. It offers an examination of different aspects related to inclusive post-secondary education across participating countries. Finally, the report concludes by addressing barriers, challenges, and opportunities identified throughout the study. Recommendations and further steps are also provided to guide future endeavours in enhancing the inclusion of young persons with disabilities in post-secondary education systems.

Through this structured approach, the report aims to provide valuable insights to the discourse on post-secondary education, facilitating informed decision-making and fostering continuous improvement in educational practices.

Concept of Post-Secondary Education

Normative Basis

The right to inclusive education is enshrined in several international human rights treaties, emphasising its importance and universal significance.

Being a milestone document in the history of human rights, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaims that: "Everyone has the right to education... higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit." Signatory nations commit to establishing an educational framework ensuring that every person is entitled to receive an education. The EU has fully embraced the Declaration's significance, incorporating it into its internal legislation and international agreements, and utilising it as a framework for shaping its external policies.

To increase attention to inclusive education, the Salamanca Statement (1994) played a significant role in calling for international efforts to develop inclusive educational systems wherever possible. With the Statement of Salamanca, inclusive education becomes an official but non-binding objective of the international community framed within a human rights perspective. Recognising the necessity and urgency of providing education for youth and adults with special educational needs (SEN) alongside all children, the 27 EU Member States have committed to implementing the necessary changes at all levels to achieve inclusive education.

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), established in 2006, not only acknowledges the right of individuals with disabilities to education, but also mandates the inclusion of individuals with disabilities alongside those without disabilities across all educational levels and lifelong learning opportunities. Specifically, the fifth provision of this article stresses:

"States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education, and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others."

Nations signing as States Parties are obliged to ensure the provision of reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Having signed and ratified, all European nations also uphold this commitment.

Meanwhile, the UN introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, also known as the Global Goals or 2030 Agenda, to establish a comprehensive global development framework. This collection comprises seventeen interconnected goals, each with specific targets and corresponding indicators. SDG4, dedicated to Quality Education, focuses on inclusive and equitable education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals.

Target 4.5 of SDG4 underscores the objective to achieve:

“By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.”

The indicators outlined for Target 4.5 encompass:

“Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.”

In the EU framework, the assurance of equitable access to high-quality education and training across all levels and opportunities for lifelong learning stands as a cornerstone within the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. This strategy not only aims to strengthen youth participation in formal education but also emphasises the promotion and acknowledgement of young people's involvement in non-formal and informal learning. Additionally, it seeks to facilitate a transition between education, training, and the labour market.

Within the 11 Goals, the following are particularly relevant:

- 3. Inclusive Societies
- 7. Quality Employment for All
- 8. Quality Learning

These international commitments and frameworks, which also comprise the basis of this report, collectively highlight the global recognition and dedication towards ensuring inclusive education as a fundamental human right. They emphasise its extension into PSE, aiming to forge accessible, equitable, and diverse educational environments and pathways for all individuals seeking post-secondary opportunities.

The right of learners with disabilities to access high-quality inclusive education alongside their peers is further asserted in the European Union's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. In particular, Article 5.3 of the Strategy stresses that:

“Persons with disabilities have the right to participate in all educational levels and forms including early childhood education and care on an equal basis with others.”

Despite education being a competence of Member States, the EU has placed the achievement of inclusive education high on its agenda via the creation of the European Education Area. Achieving inclusive education and lifelong learning for all is one of its six axes.

Definition

In accordance with the normative basis, for the purposes of this report and related questionnaire, the following terms have been defined as follows:

Higher Education (HE)

Higher education refers to educational programs typically provided by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions, aiming to equip participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills, and competencies. It normally requires the successful completion of secondary education with access to tertiary education and leads to a degree or equivalent qualification.

Post-secondary education (PSE)

PSE is sometimes referred to as “higher education,” “third-level education,” or “tertiary education”. In this questionnaire and upcoming report, the term PSE includes all forms of education and study programmes pursued after the secondary level, such as research universities, teaching universities, professional colleges, polytechnics, and vocational colleges.

Inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE)

IPSE for individuals with intellectual disabilities comprises programmes delivered in mainstream educational institutions where students with or without disabilities have the same access to all educational and employment opportunities to fully participate in academics, social events, and campus life.

Vocational education and training (VET)

VET covers learning which aims to acquire knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competencies required in specific occupations or more broadly in the labour market as well as to develop citizens' skills to remain employable and respond to the needs of the economy.

Methodology and Framework of the Report

Design

This report is the result of a research into the situation of IPSE at a national level in the participating European countries. It summarises a wide range of information and knowledge regarding inclusive education including the legal aspects, practices, and progress in the field.

The report was carried out in three phases: 1) design and inception; 2) collection of data from national experts; and 3) analysis of the collected primary data from respondents and the study of secondary data, including but not limited to research papers, government statistics, and reports of international organisations, culminating in the finalisation of the report and the development of recommendations.

After deciding on the framework of the report, the normative basis and definitions, the EASPD Secretariat in consultation with EASPD's Member Forum on Education developed a questionnaire, aiming to collect comprehensive data which will form the basis of a report that will provide further information on the state of IPSE in participating European countries.

The questionnaire was designed on the basis of a barometer assessment that was previously developed by the partners of the P2i consortium. For this report, the questionnaire was further developed by members of the Working Group, in consultation with EASPD's Member Forum on Education.

As our questionnaire addresses the national level in each country, answers were collected from national experts in the field of inclusive education. We defined experts as academics or professionals working at a national level in the field of IPSE (HE or VET) who can provide answers concerning the situation in their country/region.

The questionnaire is structured in three parts:

- Part A. Statutory Legislation
- Part B. The Situation in Practice
- Part C. Progression of Implementation

The questionnaire encompasses various question types, mainly yes/no and rating scales, designed to assess the availability and scale of specific aspects within the country. Following each question, a comment section is provided to allow for further elaboration on the provided answer, if necessary.

Although the data analysis was conducted according to valid and accepted methodologies, it should be noted that the data collected is comprised of a mixture of empirical and speculative data from a limited sample. In this respect, it can be used as a model for provoking debate rather than a clear diagnosis.

This is a wide and extraordinarily complex field, and resources are limited. As a result, the instrument conceptually follows the idea of an information-based rating on inclusive education of persons with disabilities and/or SEN in participating European countries. Using available data for a questionnaire assessment, the ambition is not to produce scientifically objective knowledge in the pure sense of the term. The objective is to identify tendencies and produce information that is relevant for policymakers and other stakeholders to promote the implementation process of inclusive education.

VET and HE

In the report, specific attention was directed towards gathering information on post-secondary institutions, with a distinct emphasis on VET and HE. Consequently, specific questions tailored to each type of education were incorporated into the inquiry, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the nuanced aspects of both VET and HE within the same content. Accordingly, specific points in the report draw explicit attention to key findings and considerations related to VET or HE.

The differentiation between VET and HE is crucial for understanding the diverse pathways and outcomes associated with each. VET programs typically emphasise practical, skills-based training geared towards specific industries or occupations, often leading to vocational qualifications or certifications. On the other hand, HE encompasses academic-oriented programs that focus on theoretical knowledge, critical thinking, and research skills, culminating in academic degrees.

By delineating between VET and HE, a comprehensive analysis of their unique contributions and challenges within the realm of post-secondary education can be facilitated. This approach can allow for a more targeted exploration of issues such as curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, workforce relevance, and student outcomes, tailored to the specific contexts of VET and HE.

Overall, this deliberate approach underscores the commitment to comprehensiveness and precision in the analysis, enriching the discourse on post-secondary education by shedding light on the intricacies of VET and HE practices and policies.

Participating Countries

With contributions from dedicated professionals in the education sector, this report evaluates inclusive education within PSE institutions sector across nine participating European countries (Graph 1): Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK (England).

The completion of this report was made possible through the support of education professionals who generously volunteered their time and expertise to complete to the questionnaire. Each national expert contributing to this report possesses a minimum of five years of professional experience in the field of inclusion.

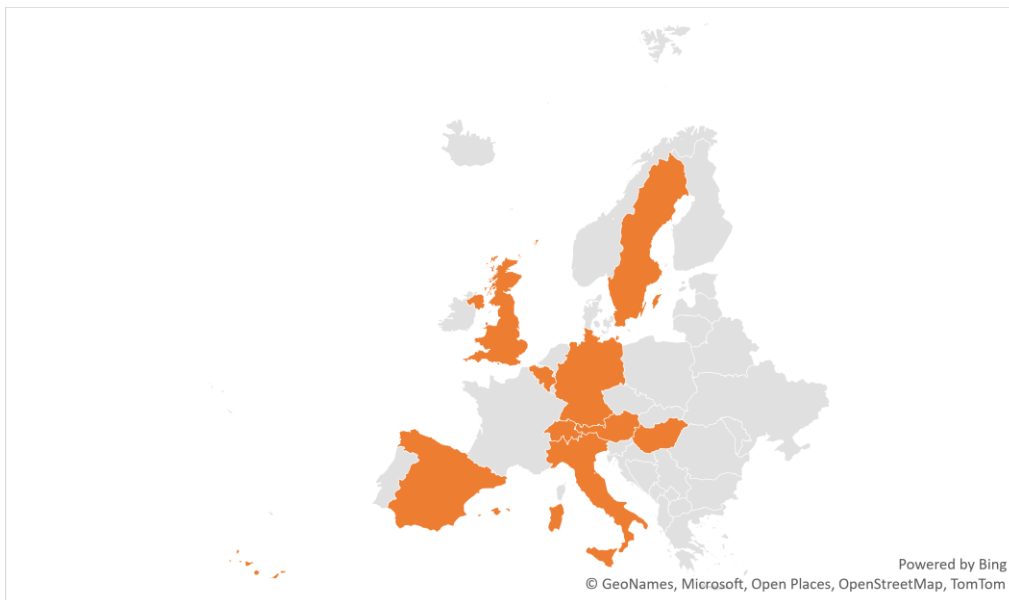


Figure 1: Participating countries

It is crucial to note that, particularly in some countries, variations in the educational landscape among regions may arise from differences in regional policies, administrative structures, resource allocations, localised educational priorities and cultural influences. These regional disparities could impact the implementation and accessibility of inclusive educational practices in PSE for young persons with disabilities. Therefore, a nuanced examination that considers regional nuances and contextual factors is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the state of IPSE across the entire country.

Orientation to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC)

Whether or to what extent inclusive education of learners with disabilities is implemented depends on the political will and the educational policies of governments and other political

actors. Laws, structures and procedures have to be changed, resources have to be provided or shifted, conflicts have to be solved etc. In European politics, it has become apparent that systematic comparison and reporting between member states according to agreed criteria can produce public and political attention. The 'Open Method of Coordination' (OMC) aims to create political dynamics and to develop a mutual learning process involving the scrutiny of specific policies, programs or institutional arrangements presented as acceptable practices in the national strategic reports. It is a political framework,

"for national strategy development, as well as for coordinating policies between EU countries on issues relating to poverty and social exclusion, health care and long-term care as well as pensions. The Open Method of Coordination is a voluntary process for political cooperation based on agreeing on common objectives and common indicators, which shows how progress towards these goals can be measured" (European Commission, 2016).

Relating to this, the concept of this report has been developed and used to assess and compare different national situations.

Results

This section of this report presents the culmination of questionnaire research and analysis, offering valuable insights into the state of IPSE. Through a meticulous examination of data collected from participating countries, this section unveils key findings, trends, and disparities across various facets of post-secondary education.

Divided into three parts, the section provides an overview of the current landscape, beginning with an exploration of statutory legislation governing inclusive education in post-secondary institutions. This is followed by an examination of the practical implementation of inclusive practices, shedding light on the realities experienced on the ground. Finally, the section delves into the progression of efforts towards advancing inclusive education PSEs.

Part A: Statutory Legislation

Education across European nations is highly governed, with legislation and recommendations establishing the foundation and structure of the educational system. Based on this guidance, a framework for the implementation and advancement of inclusive education is also shaped. This framework encompasses resource allocation, the environment of schools and other educational institutions, their conceptual approach, teacher training, and various other institutional prerequisites that support inclusive education.

With 13 questions (12 Yes/No, 1 rating) in Part A of the questionnaire, experts were asked to provide answers or legislative basis for inclusive education setting for people with intellectual disabilities.

Right to access VET

The international community, recognising the significance of inclusive education, increasingly emphasises its integration into VET programs globally. While the inclusive VET is also of high importance across Europe, the actual implementation and effectiveness of inclusive practices can vary significantly from one state to another.

In this report, while respondents from all countries affirm the entitlement of young individuals with intellectual disabilities to access VET (Graph 2), this entitlement is still not in line with non-discrimination and equal basis with others in certain countries (Graph 3).

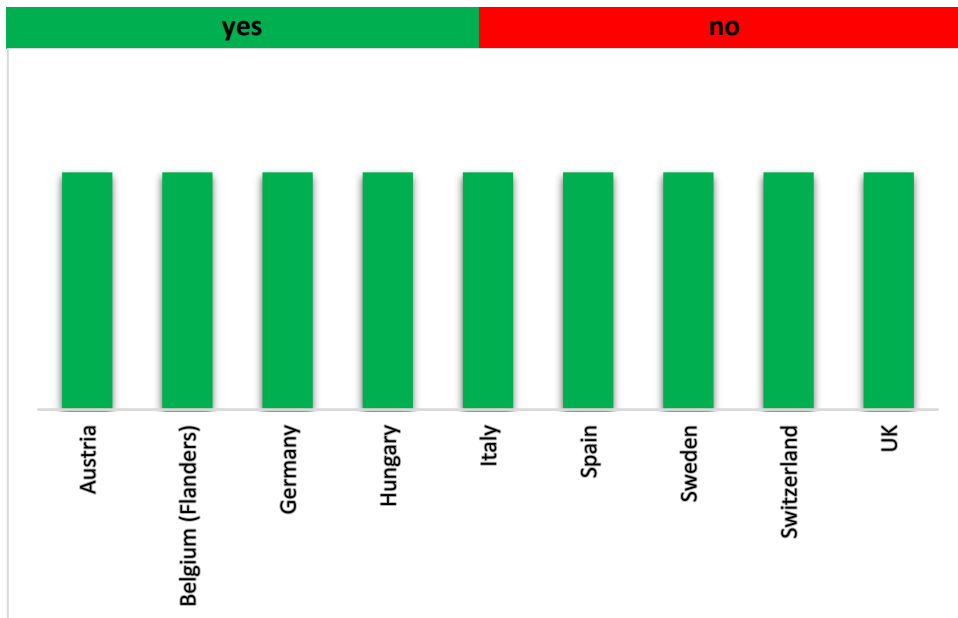


Figure 2: Right to access VET

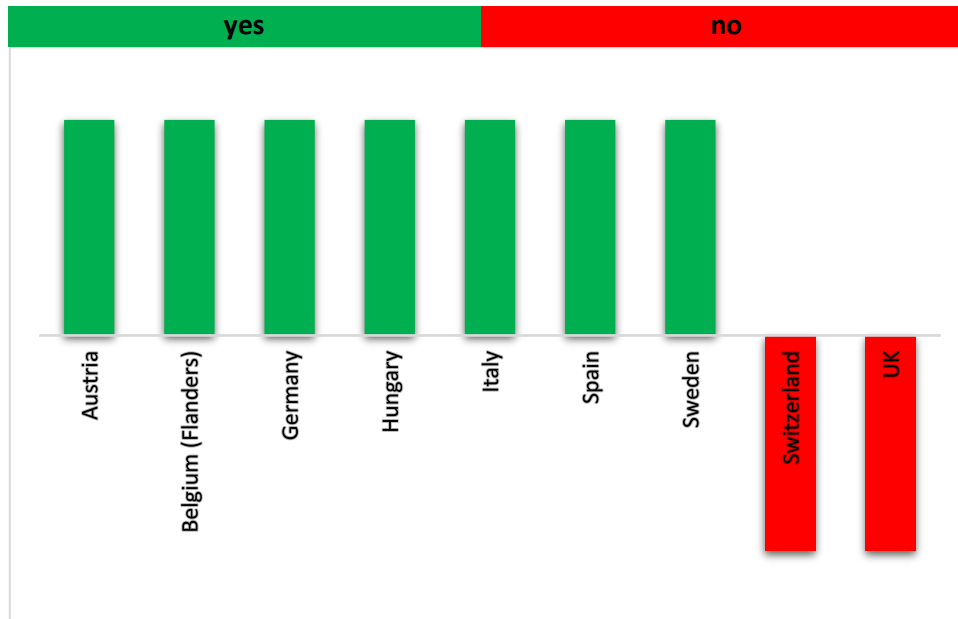


Figure 3: Right to access VET without discrimination and on equal basis with others

To illustrate, the presence of VET programs in the forms of special education in Switzerland presents a challenge to the legislative promotion of inclusive VET. Similarly, in Germany, there is a notable imbalance, with a significantly higher number of special VET institutions compared to inclusive ones.

The UK, in this regard, faces problems post-COVID-19 due to funding issues and the lack of available places to study, exacerbated by the absence of courses tailored for individuals with learning differences in its universities, which presently focus solely on intellectually capable students. Consequently, young people with learning differences are receiving education in special education providers that segregate them from their neurotypical peers.

One noteworthy aspect of the inclusion of young persons with disabilities in various countries is the coexistence of inclusive education alongside the presence of special education institutions. Taking Italy as an example, the educational landscape features three distinct types of curricula: inclusive, hybrid, and special, reflecting a continued reliance on segregated models, potentially hindering the full realisation of inclusive education principles.

Another issue occurs regarding the implementation of the legal regulations in practice, which is further analysed in Part B.

Right to access to HE

Inclusion in higher education is a crucial and evolving aspect of educational discourse across Europe and there has been a growing recognition of the importance of fostering an inclusive environment within higher education institutions worldwide.

Unlike VET, higher education exhibits divergent approaches concerning the incorporation of post-secondary education of young persons with disabilities into legislative frameworks. Statutory legislation, in some countries, does not adequately reflect access to higher education for YPwD (Graph 4), which sees heightened disparity when considering their entitlement to education without discrimination and on an equal basis with others (Graph 5).

Switzerland and Austria illustrate instances where access to higher education for YPwD relies on singular initiatives. In Switzerland, a solitary project, funded philanthropically, addresses this need. Similarly, in Austria, there is only one program allowing students with intellectual disabilities to engage in university-level learning, albeit without obtaining regular student status.

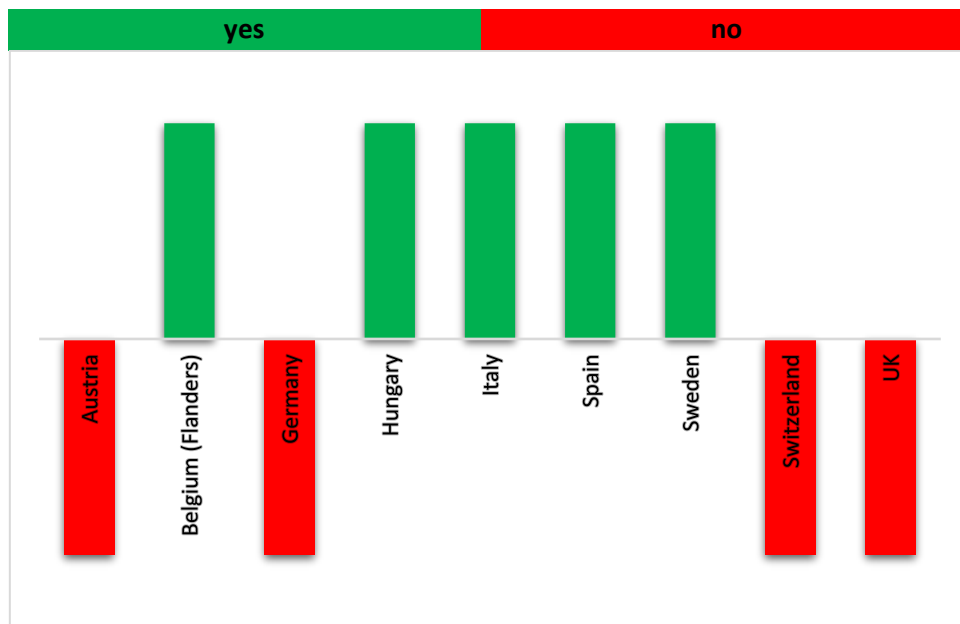


Figure 4: Right to access HE

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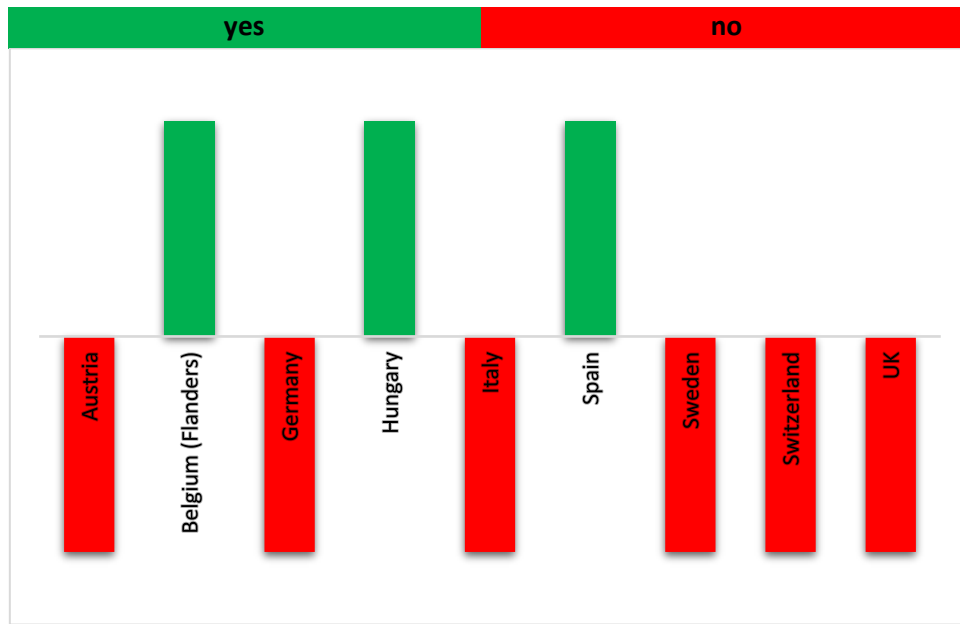


Figure 5: Right to access HE without discrimination and on an equal basis with others

Economic support to access IPSE

The affirmation of opportunities for students with disabilities from lower socio-economic backgrounds to receive economic support, in alignment with statutory legislation, is prevalent in the majority of countries, signifying the existence of such provisions. However, the UK (England) and Switzerland reported a lack of statutory frameworks for economic assistance (Graph 6).

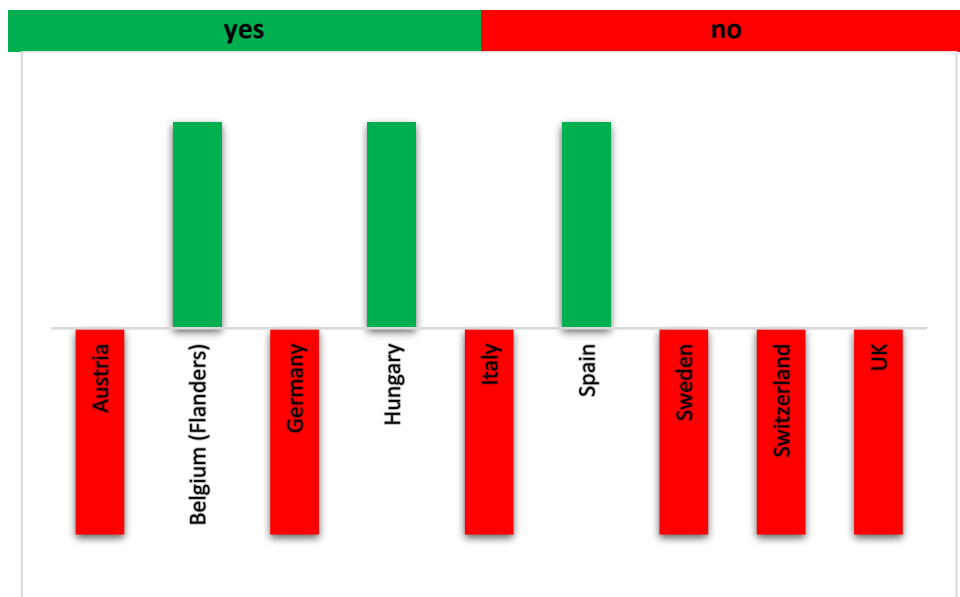


Figure 6: Economic support to access IPSE

The diverse nature of these provisions is evident, ranging from variations across institutions in Italy to comprehensive support for all disabilities in Spain. In the UK, incentives for individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds to access higher education are diverse, and universities are obligated by law to accommodate academically able students with physical disabilities.

Despite the availability of economic support in most countries, challenges persist, reflecting the gap between legal assurances and consistent implementation.

Consistency across different laws

The assessment of consistency across national and regional laws (e.g. education law, antidiscrimination law, disability laws, children's rights law, etc.) concerning the right to IPSE provides valuable insights into the legal frameworks shaping educational accessibility. Among the ten countries surveyed, six have reported a positive alignment across various laws. Conversely, four countries have indicated a lack of such consistency (Graph 7).

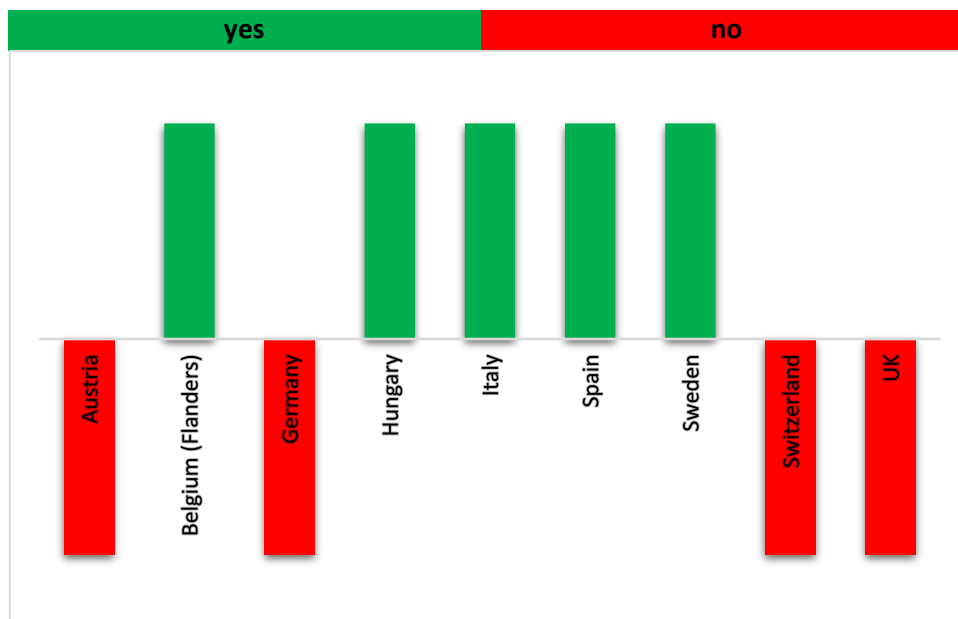


Figure 7: Consistency across different laws

The intricacies of legal landscapes are further highlighted in specific cases, such as the decentralised nature of education in the UK, which comprises four internal countries, namely England, Scotland, Wales, and the Northern Ireland, contributing to the diversity of legal frameworks. As Belgium is considered based on its Flanders region, differences among regions are not reflected in this report. Furthermore, in some countries, such as Spain, a lack of awareness about the adopted laws contributes to their underutilisation.

Participation in the decision-making process

The role of statutory legislation in facilitating the participation of students with intellectual disabilities, their representatives, and parents in the decision-making process of IPSE reflects diverse approaches across surveyed countries. While five countries acknowledge such involvement, four report a lack of participation (Graph 8).

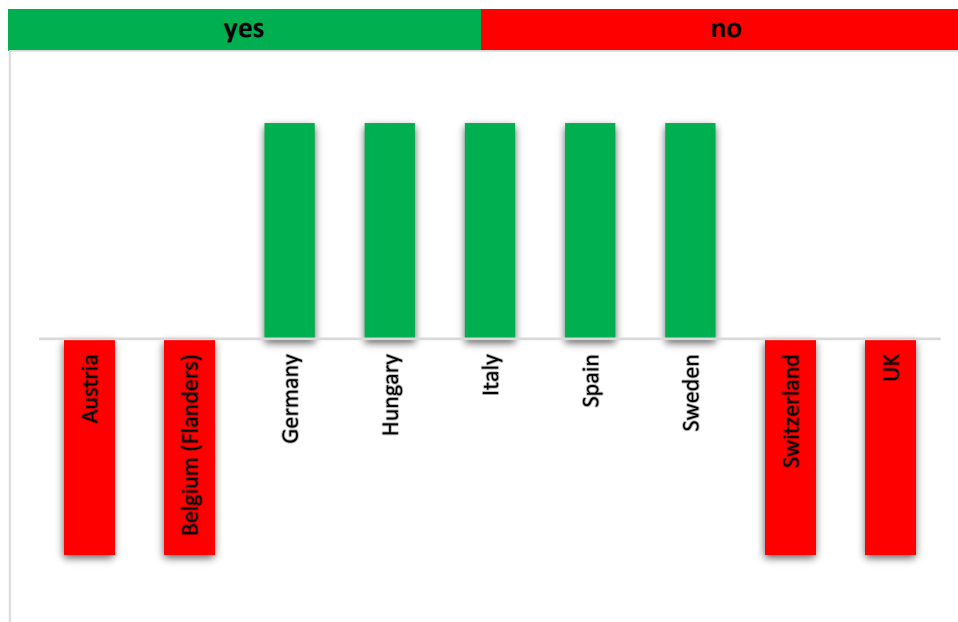


Figure 8: Participation in the decision-making process

Notably, in the UK, despite being considered good practice, parents lose legal rights after the age of 18 unless awarded deputyship.

Highlighting a common challenge, Spain exemplifies that many families are not actively involved in the decision-making process, emphasising the need for clear legislative guidelines in this aspect. Persistent challenges in implementing legal assurances are evident, with Italy noting a gap between law/policy and daily practices. Inclusion and participation, Italy emphasises, are contingent upon professionals managing these processes.

Assessment Procedures

The identification of procedures for assessing the need for additional educational support, as defined in statutory legislation, also vary across countries. In some cases, the reported procedures lack detailed specification, typically referencing reasonable accommodation in a general sense. However, there are instances where countries have clearly defined procedures (Graph 9).

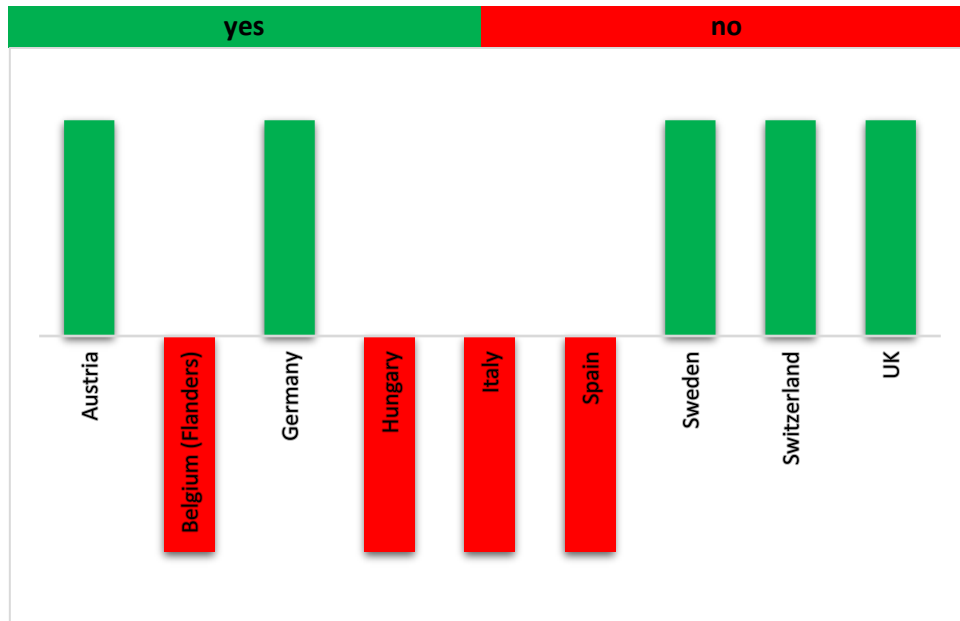


Figure 9: Procedures of assessment to identify the need for additional educational support

For instance, in the UK, students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) may have an Education Health and Care Plan, which holds legal binding status once established but the quality of this plan may vary among local education authorities.

The determination of additional support can also be contingent on the degree the student obtained in secondary education, as observed in Belgium.

Teacher Training

A pivotal aspect of progressing towards inclusive education is the training, continuous professional development, and upskilling of teachers, specifically tailored to meet the requirements of inclusive education. These requirements encompass a broad spectrum, including but not limited to inclusive teaching methods, incorporation of disability awareness, the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means, and formats of communication, as well as the adaptation of educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

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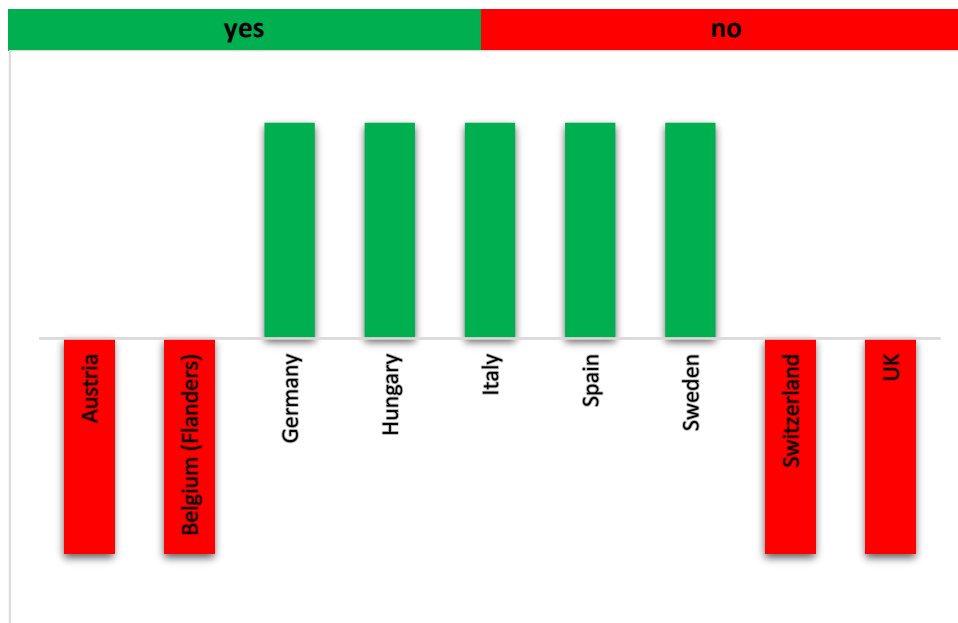


Figure 10: Teacher training oriented to the requirements of inclusive education

Despite the pivotal role of teacher training in fostering inclusive education, many countries lack explicit incorporation of this aspect in their statutory legislation (Graph 10). For instance, in Italy, training for teachers oriented to the requirements of inclusive education is suggested but not compulsory.

In Belgium, despite acknowledging the importance of the topic, there is no mandatory requirement for teacher training in inclusive education. Similarly, though not explicitly outlined in legislation, in the UK, OFSTED (the inspection body for UK education) may identify the need for such training in its reports.

Interestingly, even in countries where teacher training is applicable to primary and secondary schools, such as Austria and Switzerland, it is not extended to tertiary levels.

In Spain, where the importance of teacher training for inclusive education is clearly articulated in statutory legislation, implementation challenges persist. Despite the clarity in the legislation, many teachers do not change their procedures or methodologies, highlighting a crucial gap between policy intent and practical application in some contexts.

Qualified teachers and staff

The comprehensive assessment of inclusive education practices across various countries reveals a critical aspect concerning the assurance of employing qualified teachers and staff to facilitate effective inclusive education. This foundational element of employing qualified teachers and staff forms the backbone of creating an inclusive learning environment that caters to diverse needs. Few countries guarantee the availability of qualified professionals,

while most acknowledge challenges in ensuring this crucial aspect of inclusive education (Graph 11).

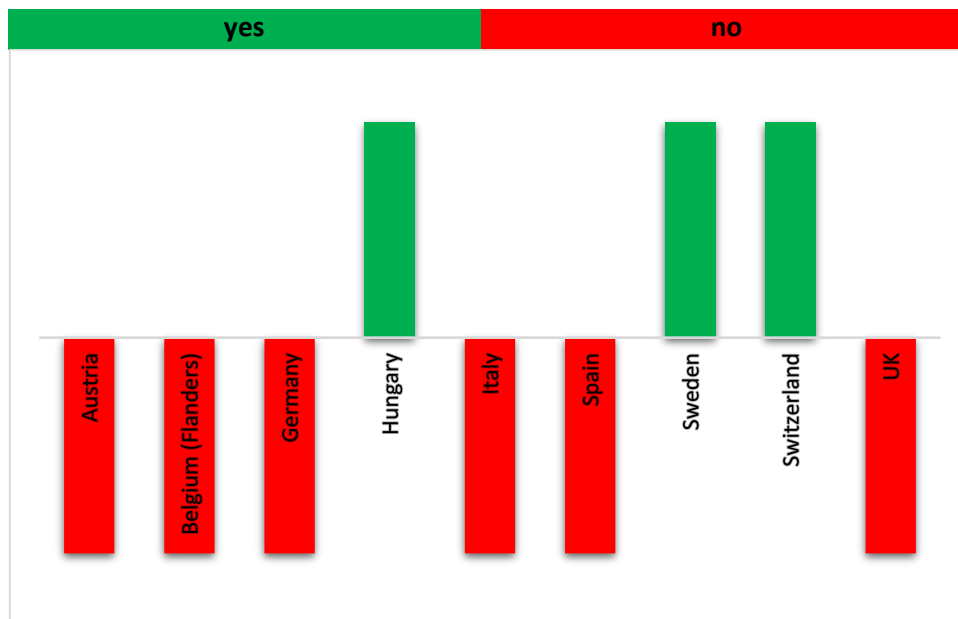


Figure 11: Availability of qualified teachers and staff

The employment of qualified teachers and staff for the provision of effective IPSE is identified as a challenging area. Italy, for example, faces a shortage of specialised teachers or scholars dedicated to IPSE, although staff with specific competencies is more prevalent. In the UK, there is a scarcity of teachers specifically qualified in SEN, with many transitioning from mainstream education.

While primary and secondary schools in certain countries, like Austria and Switzerland, have statutory provisions for the employment of qualified teachers and staff, it is again not extended to tertiary levels.

Accommodation of individual requirements

In the pursuit of fostering inclusive education, one of the fundamental points lies in tailoring educational provisions to meet the unique needs of learners, particularly those with special educational requirements. This encompasses a comprehensive range of accommodations, spanning from physical aspects like architectural conditions and classroom sizes to the integration of adaptive technologies. Furthermore, it extends to accommodating support staff to facilitate the learning process and ensure functional assistance and care provision. Additionally, the accommodation of educational measures, such as individualised curricula, didactical adaptations, and varied teaching methods, plays a pivotal role.

In examining these various aspects of accommodation, experts evaluated how well these considerations are reflected in statutory legislation. The results (Graph 12) indicate that

legislation in most countries is favourably positioned to support this crucial component of inclusive education.

Notably, in addressing classroom sizes, results suggest that this is one of the aspects experiencing gap in legislation. Efforts are required to enhance this specific dimension to ensure that physical spaces within educational institutions are conducive to inclusive practices, some countries face challenges in providing adequate accommodation in terms of classroom sizes. This finding underscores the need for increased attention and specific legislative considerations to ensure that physical spaces within educational institutions support inclusive practices, fostering an environment that caters to the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

	yes			no					
	Austria	Belgium Flanders	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	UK
Accommodation of the architectural conditions									
Accommodation of the staff to support the learning process						HE			
Accommodation of the classroom size						HE			
Accommodation of adaptive technology									
Accommodation of functional assistance and care provision						HE			
Accommodation of educational measures									

Figure 12: Accommodation of individual's requirements

This aspect of inclusive education receives comparatively less attention when compared to primary and secondary education. Therefore, there is a need for more emphasis and awareness regarding post-secondary education.

Another noteworthy aspect is the inspection of accommodation needs for learners with disabilities in post-secondary education. While some institutions undergo inspections, as seen

in the UK, it is crucial to note that inspectors may not always be specialists in inclusive education, highlighting a potential gap in building an inclusive education system.

Overall, the holistic approach to recognising and accommodating the multifaceted requirements of students with disabilities not only guarantees equitable access to educational opportunities but also establishes an inclusive culture that promotes a supportive learning environment.

Data collection and monitoring

The comprehensive evaluation of inclusive education extends to the collection and monitoring of data on the number or percentages of students with intellectual disabilities at mainstream post-secondary education and special learning institutions, and the prevalence of exclusions from the education system. While two countries affirm the collection and monitoring of such data at various system levels, seven countries indicate a gap in this critical aspect of driven approaches to understand and address the representation of individuals with intellectual disabilities in diverse educational environments (Graph 13).

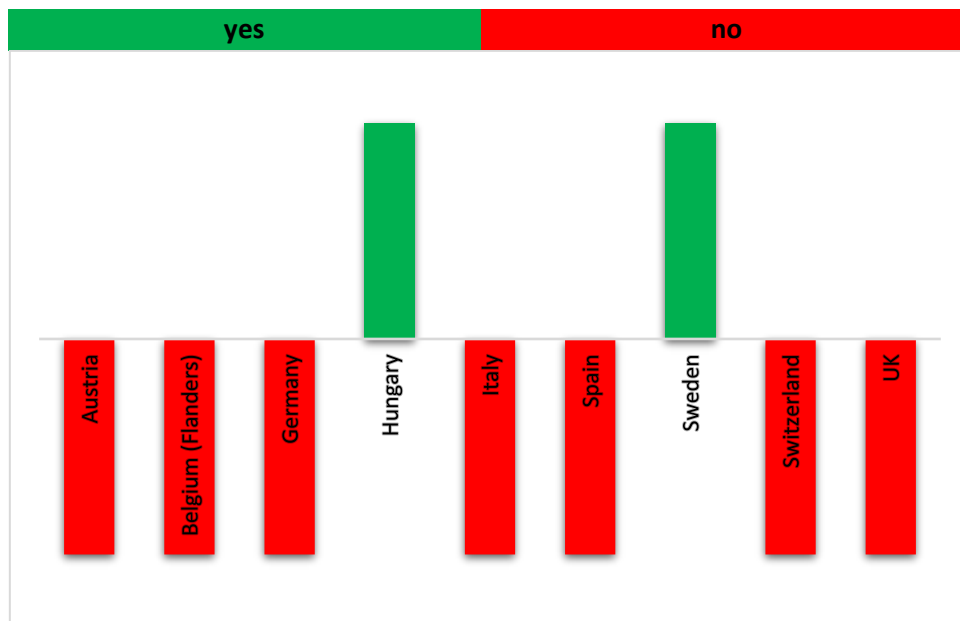


Figure 13: Data collection and monitoring

In certain countries, Belgium among them, although data on students with intellectual disabilities are monitored, due to GDPR regulations, communication of this data across various levels in the educational system are restricted.

Equal access to IPSE promotion

Countries' perceptions on the assessment of statutory legislation in promoting equal access to IPSE reflect diverse perspectives as reported by national experts (Graph 14).

Countries expressing lower agreement levels suggested the need for further enhancements in several areas, including the design of diverse curricula (even accommodating students without a high school diploma), comprehensive training for staff and teachers on inclusive perspectives, increased investments in learning technologies, and the development of regular degree programs and curricula adhering to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

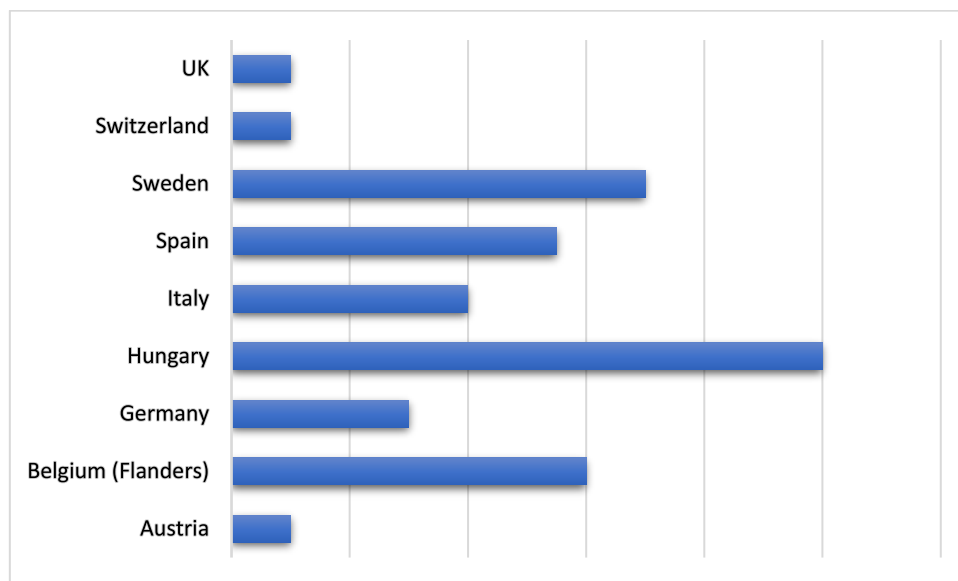


Figure 14: Equal access to IPSE promotion

In certain countries, cultural considerations play a significant role. For instance, in the UK, there is a prevailing tendency toward intellectual elitism within the culture. Higher education is often perceived as a provision for the most academically capable, maintaining high educational standards. This cultural perspective does not necessarily entail an expectation that all individuals should reach their full intellectual potential.

Part B: The Situation in Practice

While conceptualising inclusive policies and frameworks is undoubtedly crucial, it is the successful execution and integration of these ideas into practice that ultimately determine their impact and effectiveness. Accordingly, in the context of IPSE, the importance of the implementation phase in educational innovations cannot be overstated.

In Part B of the questionnaire, through a series of targeted questions, the national experts were asked to assess the practice of inclusive education in PSE in their countries.

Educational Attainment

The percentage of young persons with disabilities included in PSE and/or lifelong learning opportunities as reported by the national experts exhibits variation among participating countries (Graph 15). The extent of inclusion in PSE settings is notably influenced by the specific education level, with notable differences observed between HE and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Additionally, the degree of inclusion depends on the special educational needs or disabilities of the learners.

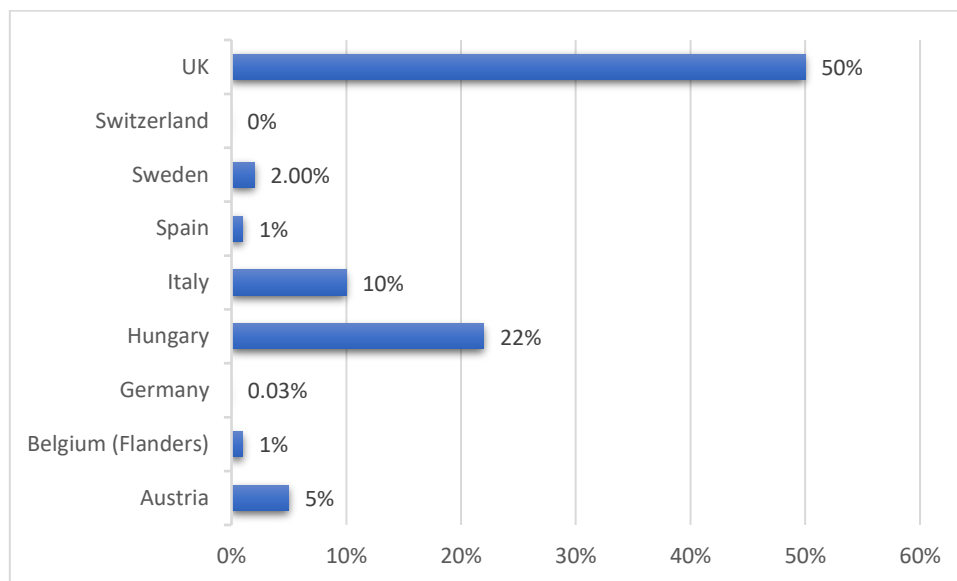


Figure 15: Percentage of YPwD included in PSE and/or LLL opportunities

In general, regardless of the specific conditions, learners with intellectual disabilities are consistently placed in the lower category in terms of inclusion at the post-secondary level across most countries. This points to a common challenge faced in ensuring the comprehensive inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in tertiary education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Access to VET

In practice, the access of young persons with disabilities to VET exhibits a positive trend, with four respondents reporting most have access to inclusive VET and another four indicating some level of assurance. Only one respondent reported no assurance. However, it is noteworthy that despite the affirmation of legislative entitlement to inclusive education without discrimination for young persons with disabilities by most surveyed countries, this practice is not uniformly followed across all respondents (Graph 16). Nevertheless, the observed trend in VET access contrasts favourably with the challenges faced in HE.

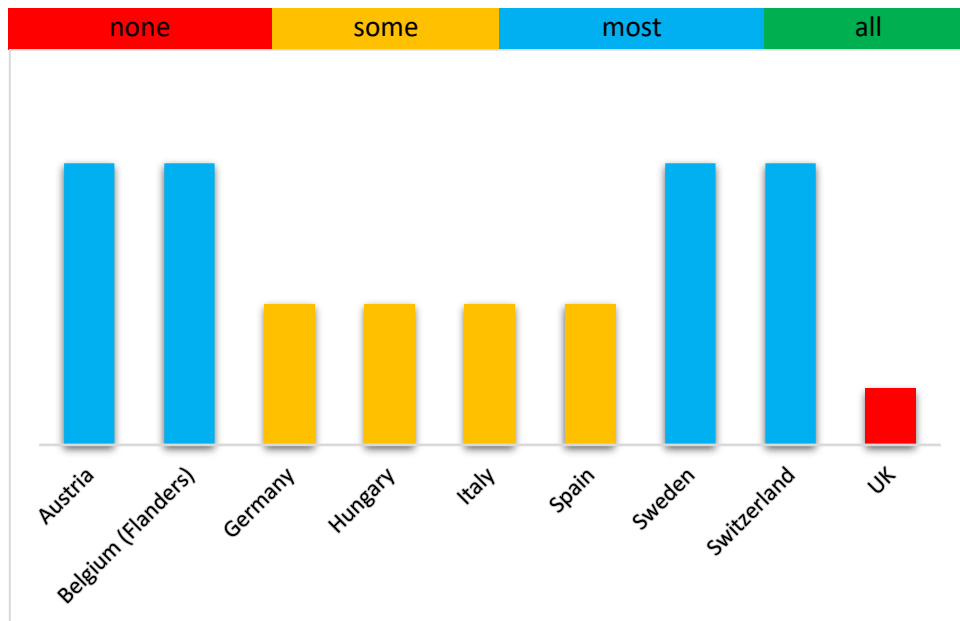


Figure 16: Access of young persons with disabilities to VET

In certain countries, the design and implementation of activities for students with intellectual disabilities are not well-executed. Frequently, parents of students with intellectual disabilities hold negative perceptions of their child's skills and competencies. These factors collectively contribute to a reduction in equality for these young people.

Access to HE

The survey results indicate a concerning trend regarding the assurance of access to higher education for young persons with disabilities in practice. Four surveyed countries reported almost no young person with disabilities has access to real inclusive education setting in PSE, while in other countries inclusion is realised partially (Graph 17). This overall negative tendency highlights challenges and disparities in ensuring equal and discrimination-free access to higher education for individuals with intellectual disabilities across the surveyed countries.

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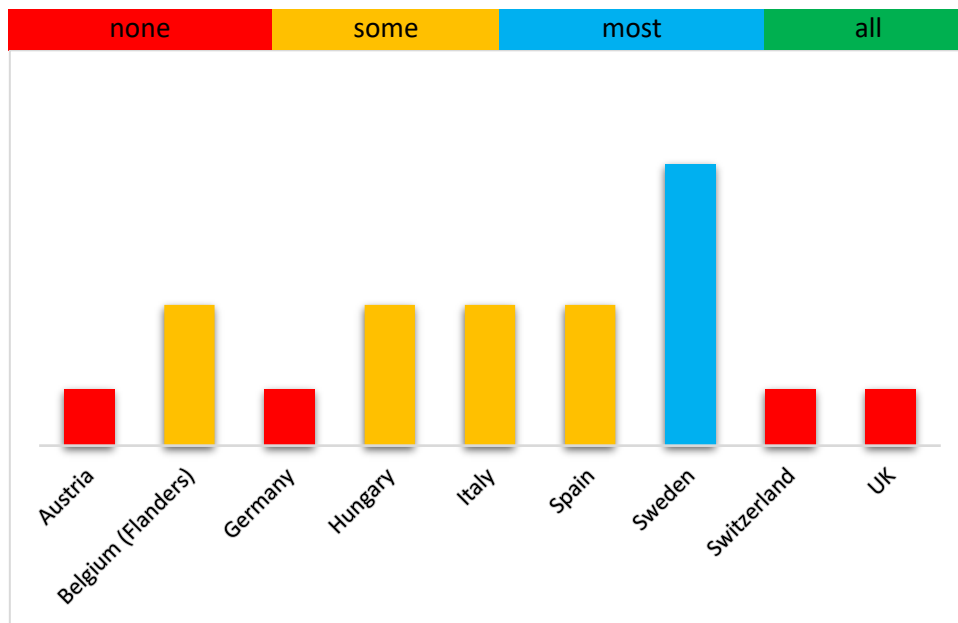


Figure 17: Access of young persons with disabilities to HE

Access to higher education for young persons with disabilities is constrained by the limited availability of programs, resulting in a very low number of participants. The need to establish projects to facilitate higher education access is reported, but the absence of additional funds limits the feasibility of such initiatives.

In some countries, for example Italy, the restriction arises from the prerequisite of a secondary school degree, which many young persons with disabilities lack, excluding them from university access. Furthermore, inclusive learning programs for students with intellectual disabilities who lack a diploma are seldom designed by universities, and these programs are often not officially integrated into university curricula.

Decision-making processes

The survey responses regarding the provision of IPSE upon expressed preference of persons with intellectual disabilities or their advocates (e.g. parents) indicate a varied landscape. Some countries reported that such preferences are followed "sometimes". Sweden and Belgium, in contrast, noted that these preferences are often adhered to. However, three countries indicated that such preferences are never followed in decision-making processes (Graph 18).

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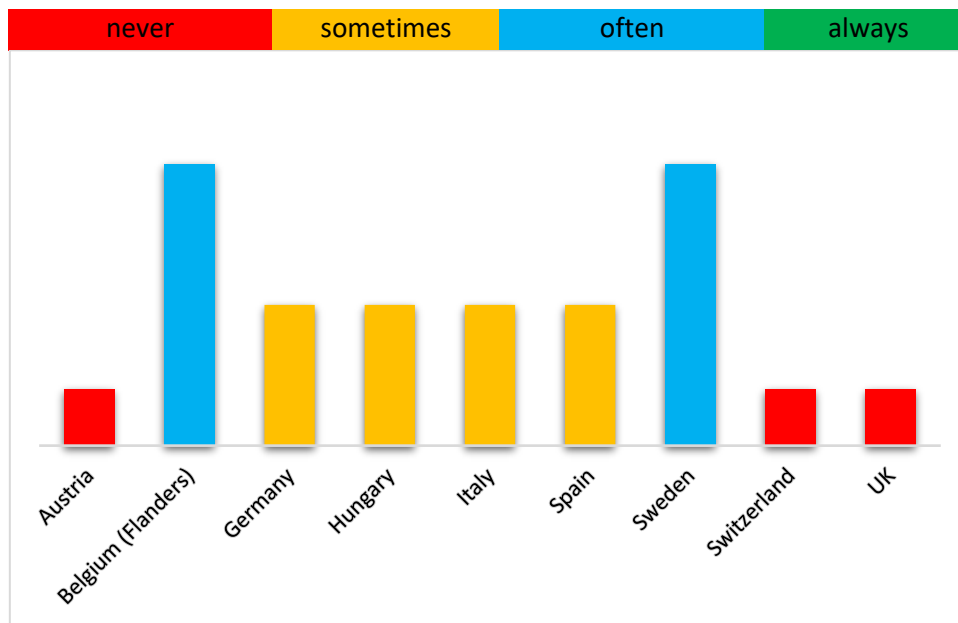


Figure 18: Consideration of preferences in decision-making processes

This diversity in responses suggests a complex scenario, highlighting the need for further exploration and potential improvement in ensuring the incorporation of preferences in decision-making processes. Differences between HE and VET, as reported by Spain, add a layer of complexity to the decision-making processes. Additionally, the consideration of preferences in higher education is intricately tied to the type of disability, being influenced by the nature or specific characteristics of the disability in question.

While the significance of self-determination and involvement in the decision-making processes of people with intellectual disabilities is emphasised in legislative documents, translating these legal mandates into practical implementation requires the development of a coherent culture, involving both families and professionals. Despite a gradual process, there is a positive trajectory, particularly noticeable among younger individuals and parents who are more aware of their proactive roles.

Assessment procedures

The inquiry into the procedure of assessing educational support needs and the subsequent provision of support in PSE institutions also reveals varied responses across surveyed countries. While the majority of countries affirm that the assessment procedure effectively leads to the provision of support for learners in PSE, Austria and Switzerland report challenges, indicating a divergence in the efficacy of the assessment process and subsequent support mechanisms in ensuring an inclusive educational environment (Graph 19).

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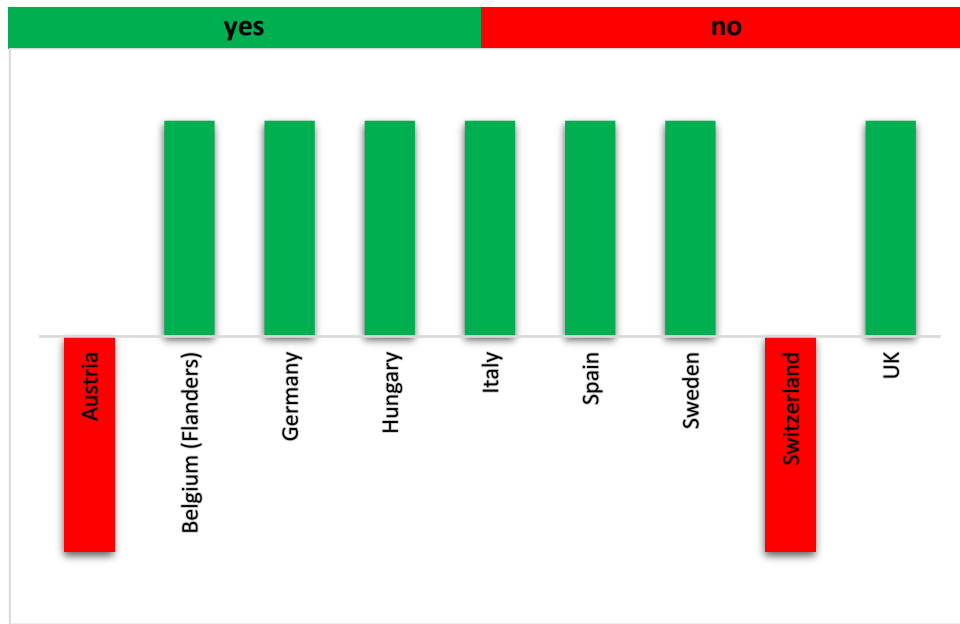


Figure 19: Role of assessment of educational support needs in provision of support

In the UK, provision is made for students with an Educational, Health, Care Plan (EHCP), albeit through a complex and lengthy process. Parents often find themselves engaged in a challenging process to secure an EHCP for their children.

Another notable challenge emerges when considering the distinctions between higher education and VET. For instance, in Spain, while the application of support following the assessment of needs is feasible in VET settings, higher education institutions encounter difficulties in this regard.

Accommodation of individual requirements

In the practical application of fostering inclusive education, the survey delved into how accommodations and provisions for learners with disabilities are implemented across educational institutions. Despite the favourable legislative support observed in the statutory framework (Graph 12), there are nuances and challenges encountered in practice (Graph 20).

	yes				no				
	Austria	Belgium (Flanders)	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	UK
Accommodation of the architectural conditions	no	yes	yes	no	no	HE	yes	yes	yes
Accommodation of the staff to support the learning process	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes

Accommodation of the classroom size	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red	Green
Accommodation of adaptive technology	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	HE	Green	Green	Green
Accommodation of functional assistance and care provision	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green
Accommodation of educational measures	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green

Figure 20: Accommodation of individual’s requirements

In the context of inclusive education, the accommodation of the comprehensive needs of students with disabilities to access education depends on the institutions where inclusive practices are implemented or within specific projects related to IPSE. In such institutions or projects, suitable measures are taken to accommodate diverse needs, ensuring that students with varying abilities can actively participate in the educational process. However, it is essential to note that these initiatives may still be limited, with only a few projects actively addressing IPSE. This underlines the importance of expanding inclusive practices within PSE institutions and projects to create a more universally accessible and supportive educational environment.

Meanwhile, discrepancy between secondary schools and PSE persists in the application of inclusive practices as well, emphasising the need for increased awareness, emphasis, and practical initiatives to bridge this gap and promote consistent inclusive education practices across all levels of the education system.

Systematic national data collection and monitoring

Similar to the lack of data collection reported in Part A regarding the number or percentages of students with intellectual disabilities across various educational settings, there is also a notable absence of systematic national data collection and monitoring on the progress of IPSE among countries (Graph 21). The lack of a structured approach to collecting and monitoring data is recognised as a significant challenge, posing obstacles to a comprehensive understanding of the status and advancement of IPSE.

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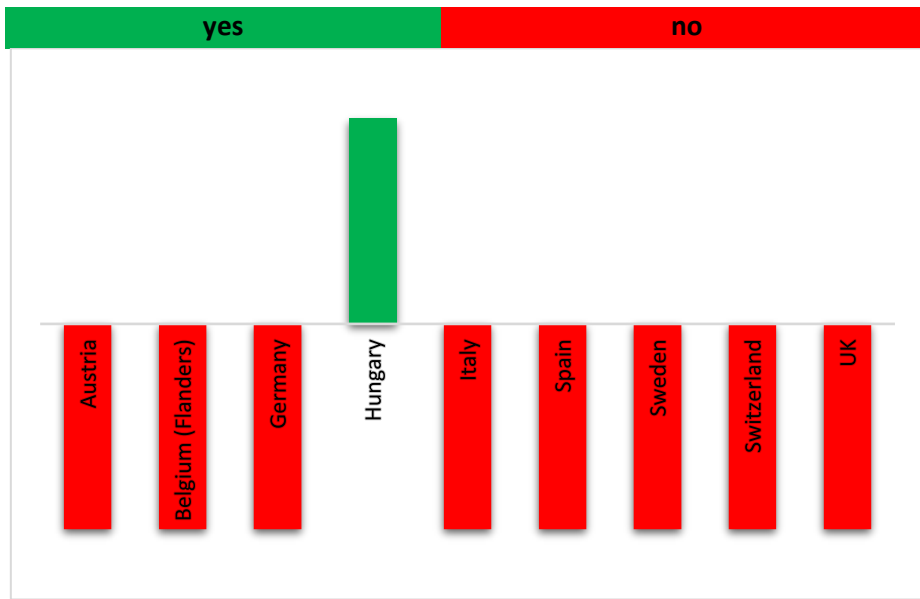


Figure 21: Systematic national data collection and monitoring

Teacher training

A trend observed in Part A, concerning laws mandating teacher training and professional development oriented to the requirements of inclusive education (e.g. inclusive teaching methods, incorporation of disability awareness, the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities etc.), is mirrored in application of this approach in practice. The countries that were identified in Part A as having legal provisions requiring teacher training and professional development also report that the training of teachers is aligned with the demands of inclusive education (Graph 22).

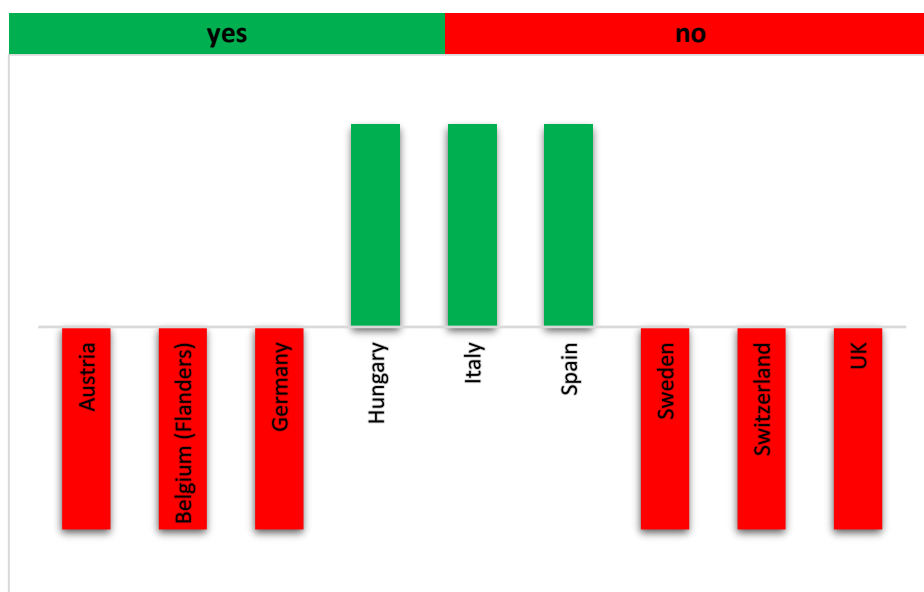


Figure 22: Teacher training oriented to the requirements of inclusive education

While this practice is available in primary and secondary education in countries such as Switzerland and Austria, it is not extended to higher education, highlighting a disparity. Despite its absence in some countries, like Belgium, there is an increasing focus compared to the past.

Another disparity is observed again between VET and HE, underscoring the distinct approaches and challenges associated with inclusive education between these two educational domains.

In Italy, two distinct tendencies emerge in practice: on one hand, there is a trend towards inclusive training covering values, culture, and teaching strategies. On the other hand, many teachers express a demand for special training, encompassing strategies for intellectual disabilities and approaches to address behavioural problems.

Qualified teachers and staff

The findings of whether qualified teachers and staff are employed to provide effective inclusive education reveal a concerning trend, with only three countries affirming the presence of qualified educators and support staff dedicated to inclusive education in practice (Graph 23). This underscores a gap in the practical implementation of inclusive education practices in PSE institutions across the surveyed nations.

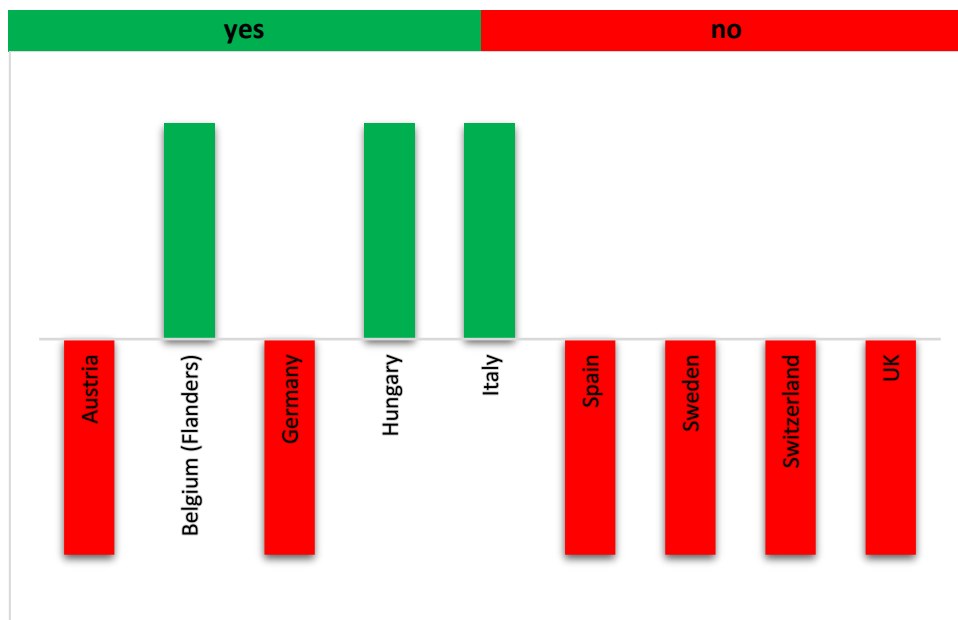


Figure 23: Employment of qualified teachers and staff

It is important to highlight that this does not necessarily imply an absence of qualified teachers for IPSE. As reported by Italy, for instance, the challenge lies in the lower number of qualified teachers compared to the demand. Consequently, a percentage of teachers assuming a special

role may not possess specific qualifications. Additionally, the absence of a requirement for a special profile among staff further contributes to this challenge.

Cooperation between schools and external stakeholders

The effective application of inclusive education practices is not an isolated effort but necessitates collective action, fostering collaboration between educational institutions and external stakeholders. The success of inclusive education initiatives often hinges on the joint efforts and coordinated actions of schools, communities, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders working together to create an inclusive and supportive educational environment (Graph 24).

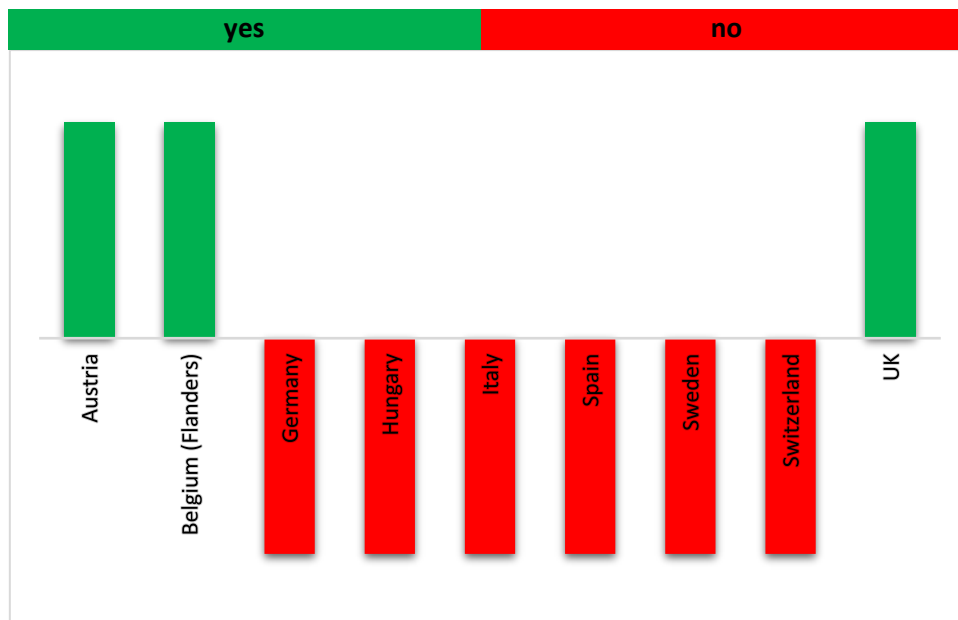


Figure 24: Cooperation between schools and external stakeholders

In countries where collaborative efforts exist, schools are reported to engage in cooperation with health and social care providers, network organisations in education, and professional support systems. However, in some countries such as Italy, this collaboration falters due to the uneven dissemination of successful practices, obstructing the widespread adoption of effective strategies.

Cooperation between schools and parents, teachers, and pupils

To enhance inclusive education practices, collaboration with direct stakeholders within schools — such as parents, teachers, and pupils — is also of great importance. This cooperative approach emphasises the significance of partnerships, shared responsibilities, and engagement with entities beyond the scope of school management. Fortunately, this cooperative tendency was affirmed by the majority of surveyed countries (Graph 25).

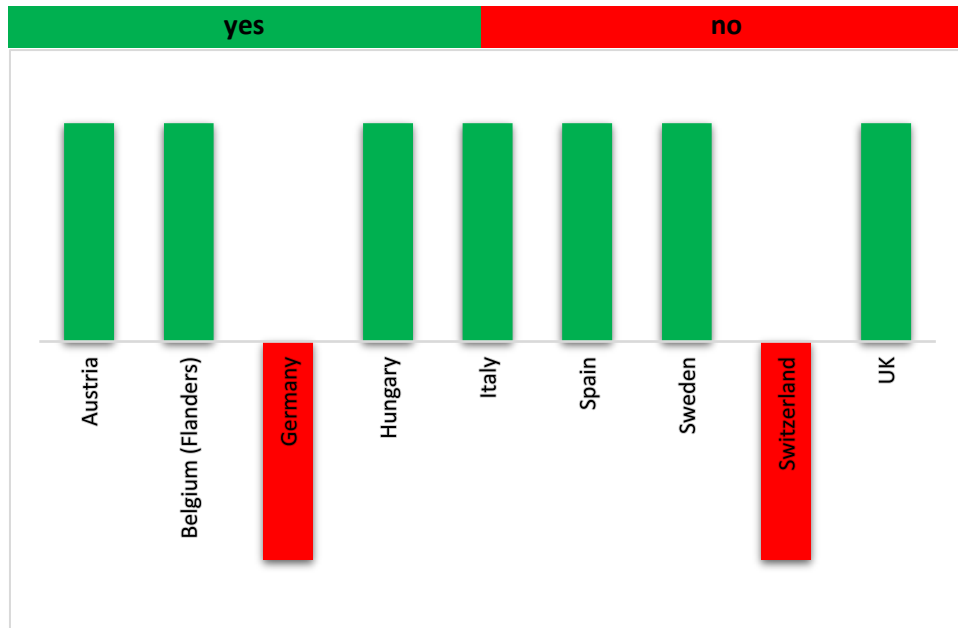


Figure 25: Cooperation between schools and parents, teachers, and pupils

The relevance of this practice may vary based on some factors such as the type of disability and the specific school context. Meanwhile, consistency also emerges as a concern, for example in the UK, with challenges noted in maintaining regular communication with parents, teachers, and students.

Globally, the overall cooperation is generally considered sufficient or decent. However, in cases such as Italy, there is a shared acknowledgement among all stakeholders involved that there is room for improvement, and a collective belief that "we could do more and better".

Furthermore, the approach to cooperation differs between VET and HE, reflecting unique challenges and strategies in each educational domain.

Competitive environment between PSE institutions

A competitive environment among PSE institutions for enrolling students with intellectual disabilities or learning difficulties has the potential to foster improvements in the development of IPSE. However, in contrast to this potential, the majority of countries reported the opposite scenario where such competition is lacking (Graph 26).

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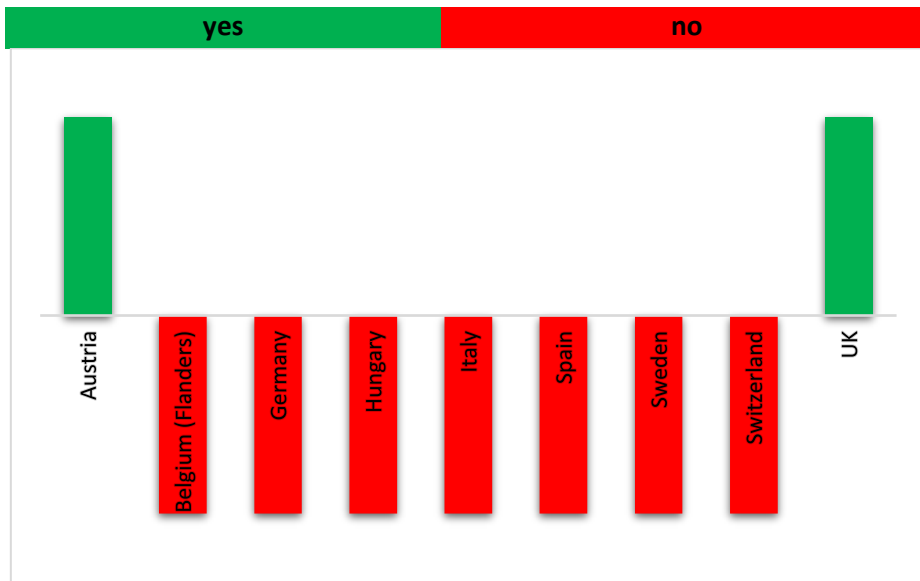


Figure 26: Competitive environment between PSE institutions

Among the two countries that affirmed the presence of competitiveness among educational institutions, in the UK this is also attributed to the necessity of attracting students to secure funding. In practice, there is rather cooperation between institutions, emphasising the dual nature of competition and collaboration in the educational landscape.

Private initiatives

The survey reveals a trend where a majority of countries acknowledge the presence of private initiatives that also increase inclusion in lifelong learning services (Graph 27). These initiatives can serve to complement and enhance public efforts, showcasing the collaborative synergy between private and public sectors in advancing inclusive education.

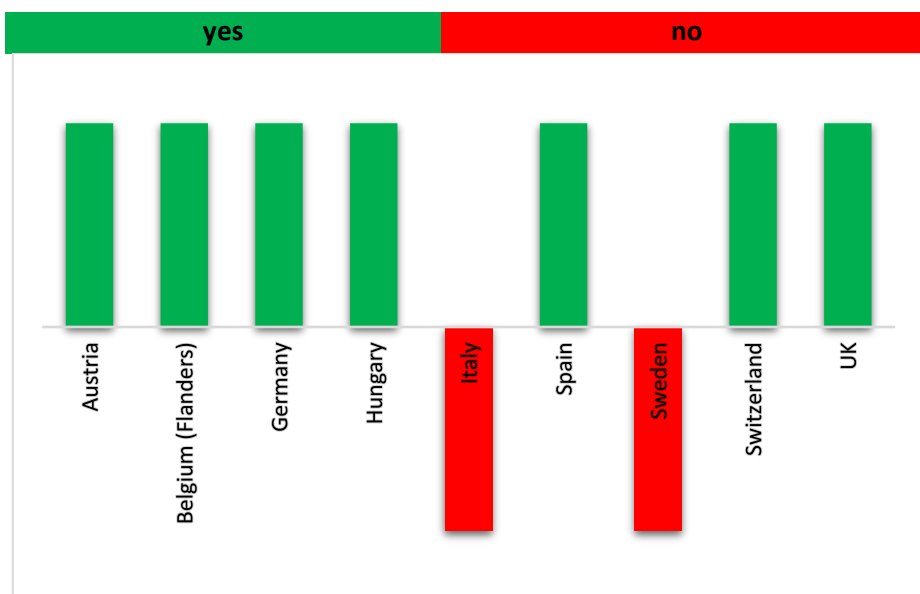


Figure 27: Private initiatives towards inclusive education

The nature and scope of private endeavours may differ based on the specific educational domain, reflecting a nuanced approach tailored to the distinct requirements and challenges of higher education and VET settings. Therefore, these private initiatives exhibit variability, especially when considering their focus on either higher education or VET.

The existence of these initiatives does not necessarily imply a significant impact, as the quantity and scale of these endeavours can vary. For instance, in the UK, the presence of such initiatives is noted, but their impact is described as patchy and relatively small in scale. This underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding, recognising that the effectiveness and influence of private initiatives in promoting inclusion can vary widely across different contexts and regions.

Part C: Progression of Implementation

As educational institutions embark on the journey towards inclusivity, it is imperative to recognise that this process is dynamic and evolving, requiring continuous growth and adaptation. Therefore, progression and development are essential elements of the journey towards inclusive post-secondary education.

In Part C of the questionnaire, every national expert was asked to evaluate the advancement and progression of inclusive education within post-secondary institutions in their respective countries.

Equal access to VET

The survey question sought evaluations of the development of equal access for individuals with intellectual disabilities to VET over the past five years. The majority of countries provided assessments indicating minimal progress, with the characterisation of "very little" being predominant (Graph 28). Only one country (Sweden) reported a more positive outlook, describing the developments as "rather positive". This is primarily attributed to the limited presence of national programs aimed at enhancing the opportunities for IPSE.

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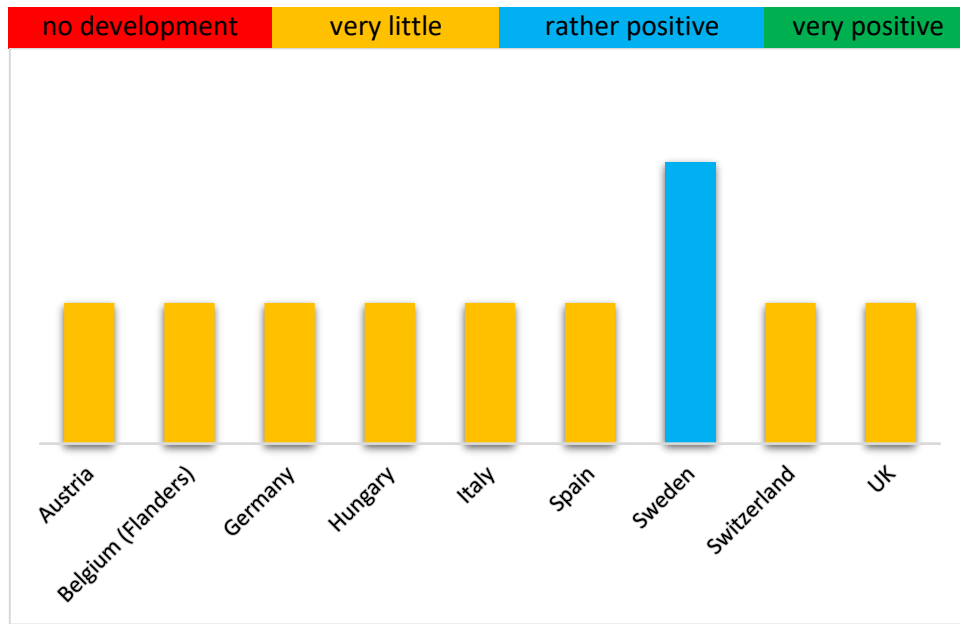


Figure 28: Development of equal access of young persons with disabilities to VET

Equal access to HE

When asked to assess the development of equal access for individuals with intellectual disabilities to higher education over the past five years, most countries reported very little progress, while two countries indicated no development. In parallel with the assessment of VET opportunities, it is noteworthy that while the majority of countries in the VET context leaned towards minimal advancements. The higher education assessments reflect a potentially more stagnant landscape in this specific domain (Graph 29).

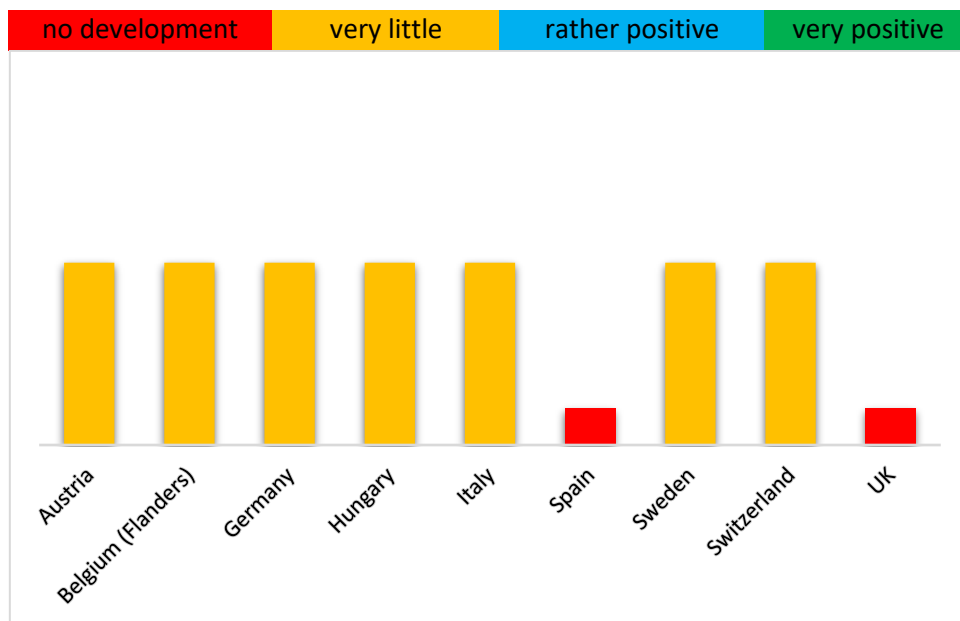


Figure 29: Development of equal access of young persons with disabilities to HE

Furthermore, the limited progress in equal access to higher education can be traced back to the absence of comprehensive national programs. A demonstration of this is evident in Austria, where the initiation of the first and sole program designed to enhance access for individuals with intellectual disabilities to higher education took place relatively recently (in 2017). This concretely exemplifies the recent establishment and limited presence of such initiatives.

Process to include young persons with disabilities or their representatives and parents in decision-making

When evaluating the development of the process to include individuals with intellectual disabilities or their representatives and parents in decision-making within PSE over the past five years, three countries expressed a relatively positive outlook. In contrast, the majority of respondents, namely six countries, reported minimal progress and described the developments as "very little" (Graph 30). It underscores the need for more concerted efforts, to enhance the participatory role of individuals with intellectual disabilities and their representatives in the decision-making spheres of their educational journey.

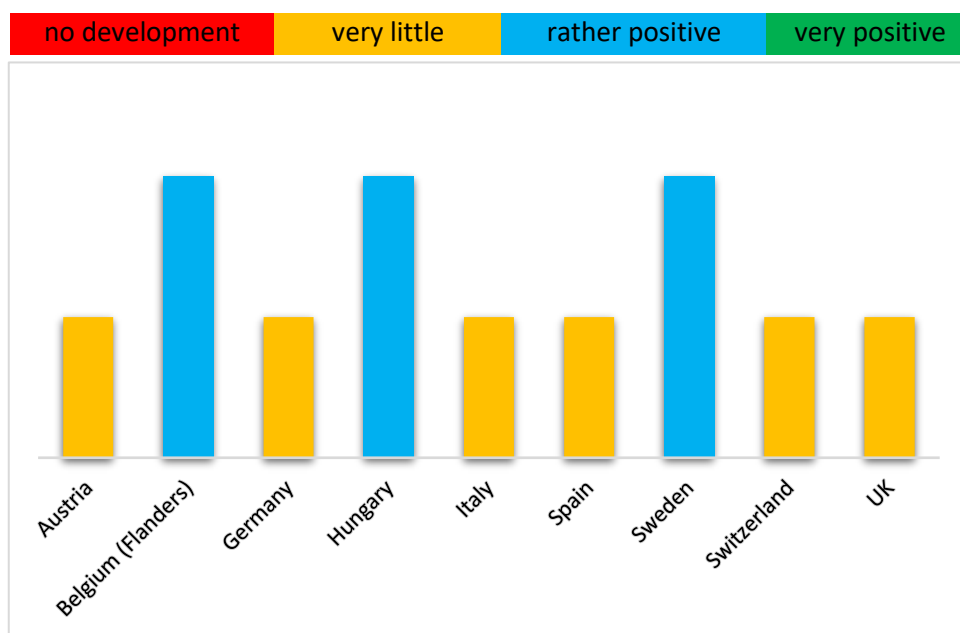


Figure 30: Development of participation in decision-making process

Assessment procedures

In evaluating the development of assessment procedures enabling support in PSE for individuals without a diagnosed special educational need over the past five years, a positive trend is observed. Four countries reported a relatively positive outlook, characterising the developments as "rather positive", while five countries acknowledged a more gradual progress, indicating developments that have advanced "very little" (Graph 31). While challenges persist, the overall mixed assessment reflects a generally positive trajectory,

implying that efforts have been made to enhance assessment procedures and support mechanisms within the context of PSE.

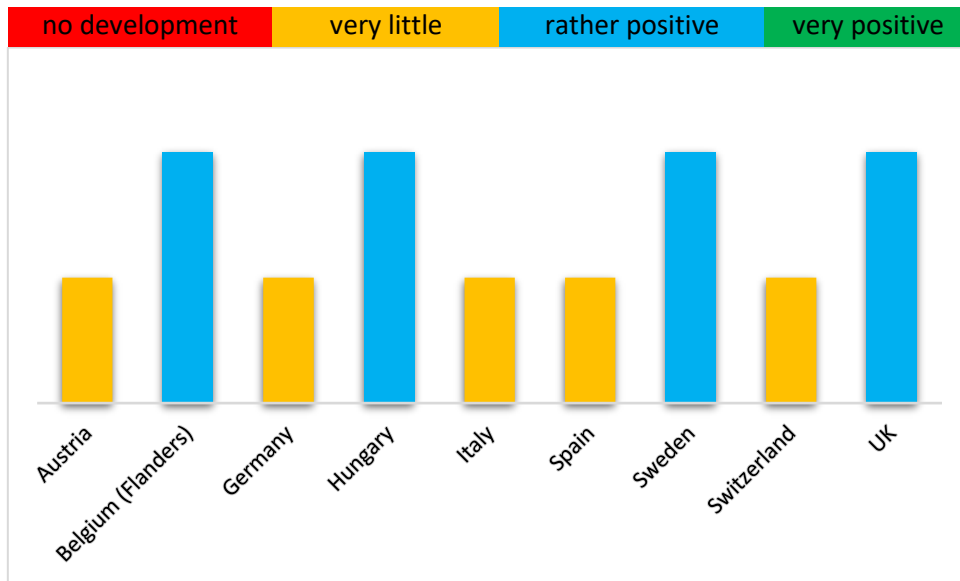


Figure 31: Development of assessment procedures

Appropriate staff

The assessment of the development in the availability of appropriate staff with respect to the individual learning requirements of persons with intellectual disabilities in Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) settings over the past five years yields a mixed picture. Most countries characterised the developments as having progressed "very little". Belgium reported a "rather positive" development, signalling some improvement, and Switzerland experiences a stance of "no development" (Graph 32).

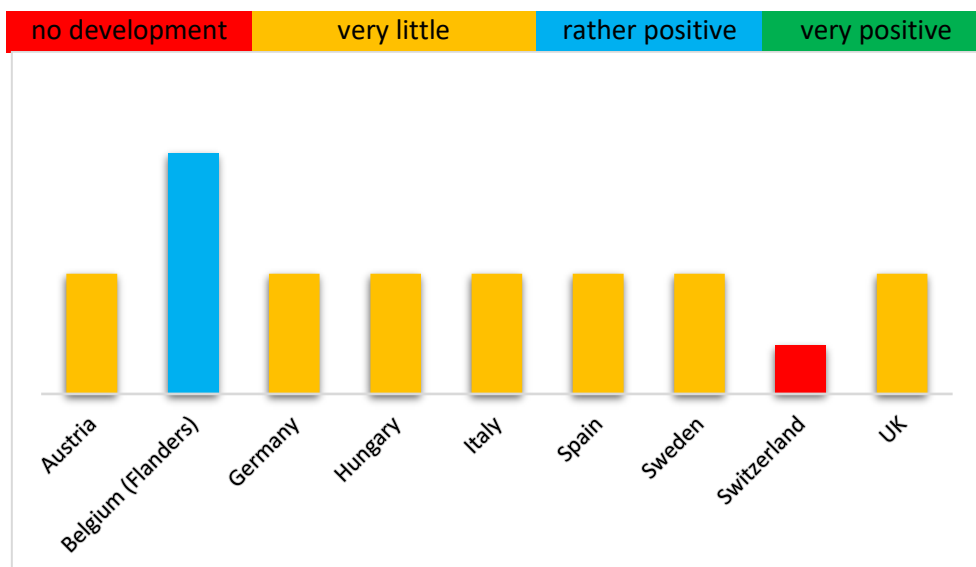


Figure 32: Development of availability of appropriate staff

Monitoring systems

The assessment of the development of monitoring systems on IPSE over the last five years reveals a mixed and somewhat cautious perspective. While three countries reported a "very negative" outlook, suggesting significant challenges or deficiencies in the monitoring systems, two countries expressed a more optimistic stance, characterising the developments as "rather positive." The majority of countries, however, maintained a relatively reserved view, describing the developments as having progressed "rather negative" (Graph 33). This mixed assessment implies that, while some positive strides have been made in a few contexts, there are overarching concerns or limitations in the monitoring systems of IPSE that need attention and improvement.

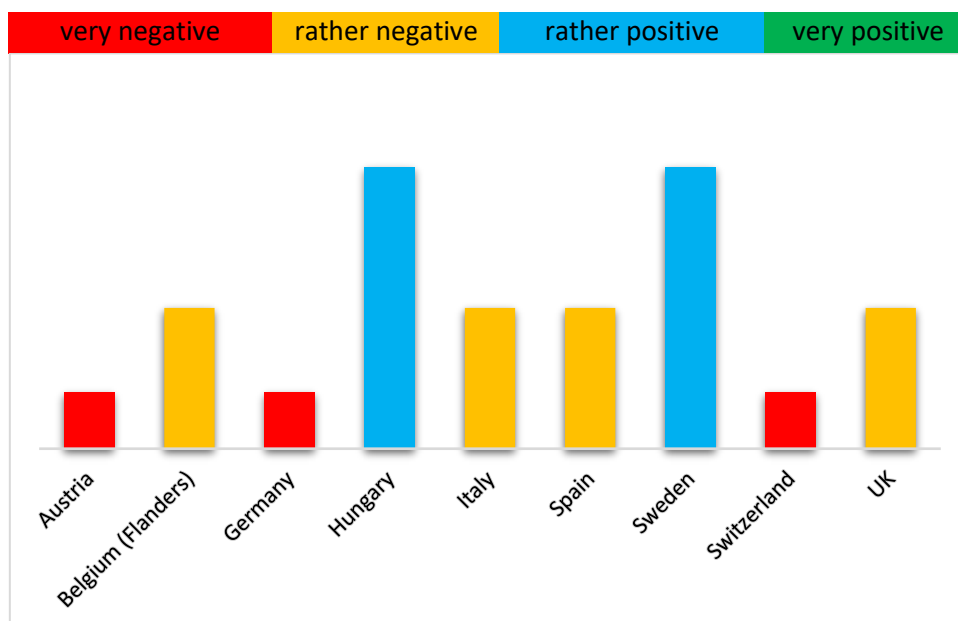


Figure 33: Development of the monitoring systems

Measures for awareness raising of governments to promote IPSE

The assessment of governments' measures for awareness raising to promote IPSE also exhibits a mixed viewpoint among surveyed countries (Graph 34). This mixed assessment implies a nuanced landscape where, despite pockets of success, there are overarching challenges or limitations in the effectiveness of measures for promoting awareness of IPSE among government entities.

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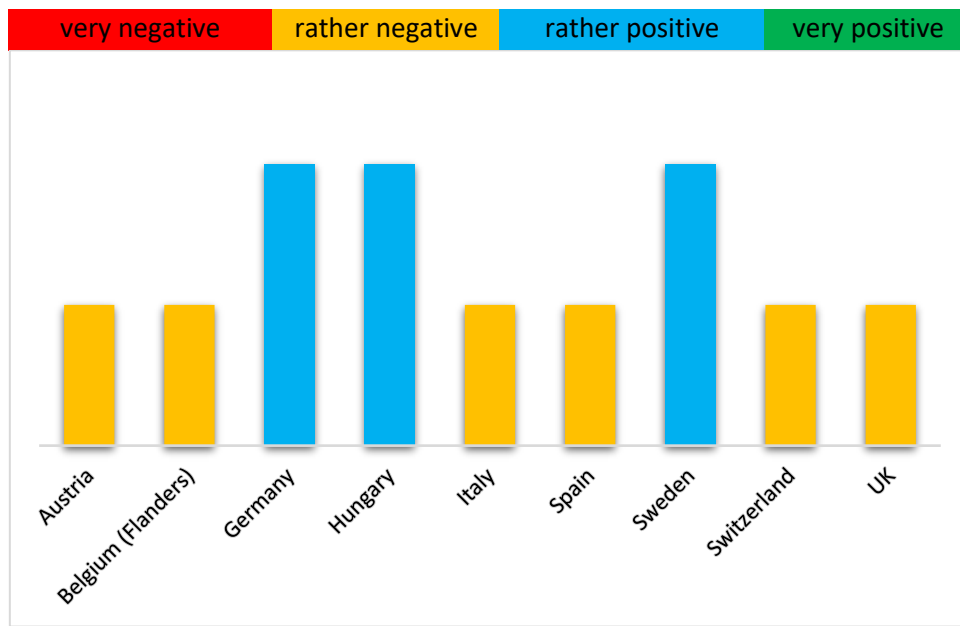


Figure 34: Development of measures for awareness raising of governments to promote IPSE

Commitment and activities of education institutions to organise and promote IPSE programs

The assessment of the development of commitment and activities of education institutions (higher education, VET) to organise and IPSE programs reveals a consistent trend among surveyed countries – three countries reporting a "rather positive" outlook and five countries expressing a viewpoint of "rather negative" – with one exception providing differing assessments for the two questions (Graph 35 and 36).

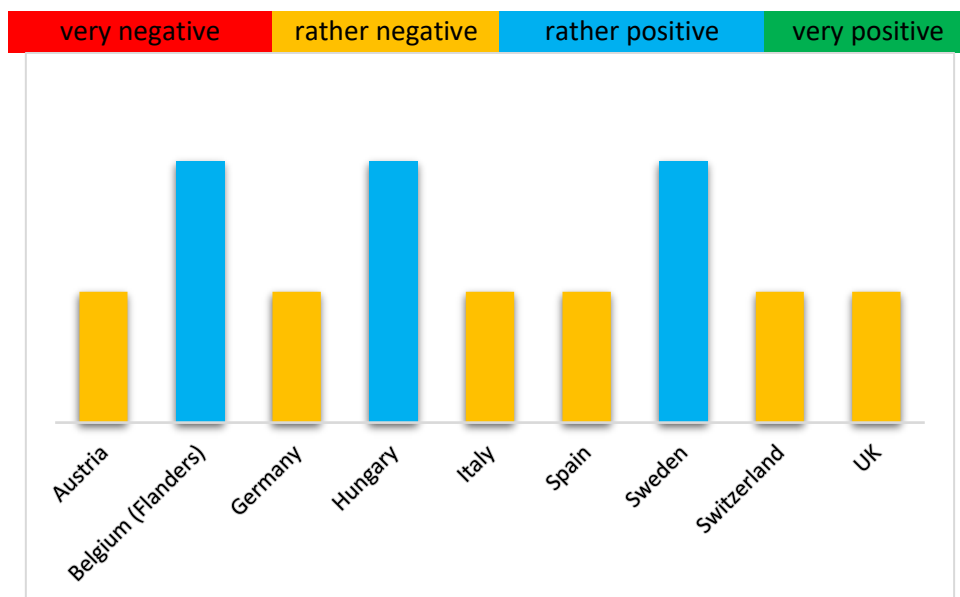


Figure 35: Development of endeavours of education institutions to organise IPSE programs

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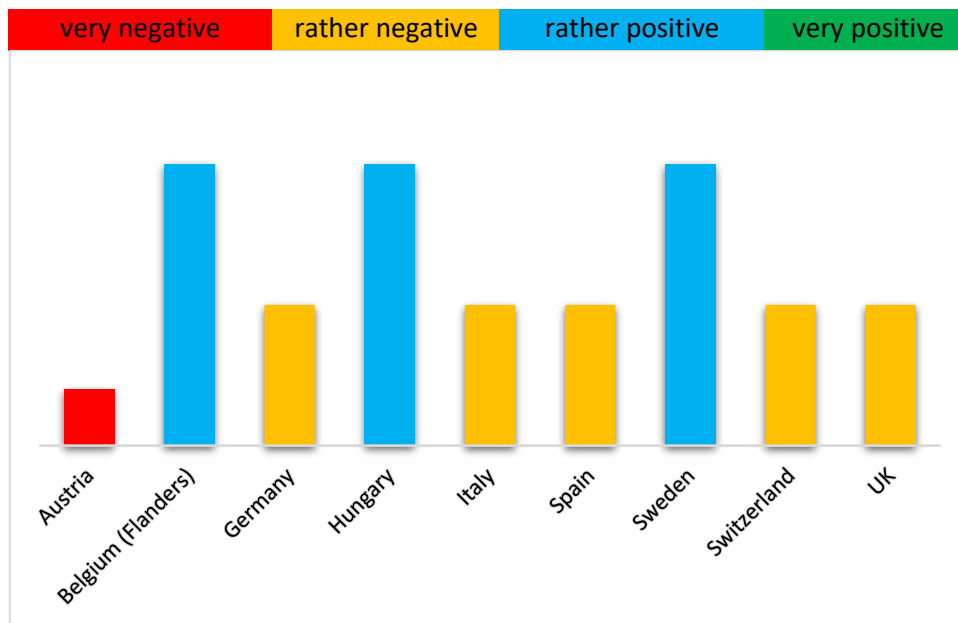


Figure 36: Development of endeavours of education institutions to promote IPSE programs

Overall Assessment

Barriers and Challenges

Expanding upon the data analysis, this section offers a comprehensive overview of the barriers and challenges identified in the realm of IPSE throughout the research process. This analysis aimed to offer a nuanced understanding of the current landscape of IPSE.

- **Gap between secondary and post-secondary education**

While inclusive practices are more prevalent in secondary education, the transition to post-secondary education presents significant challenges. Students with disabilities often encounter difficulties navigating this transition, highlighting a notable gap in support systems.

- **Regional disparities within countries**

Regional variations within countries can significantly impact the accessibility and inclusivity of post-secondary education. Understanding these nuances and contextual factors is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of IPSE across the entire country.

- **Lack of data and research**

There is a recognised need for further research to explore the experiences of students with disabilities in PSE settings. Insufficient data and research hinder efforts to address existing challenges and develop effective solutions.

- **Financial constraints**

Limited financial support poses a significant barrier to the implementation of inclusive practices in PSE institutions. Adequate funding is essential for implementing necessary accommodations and support services for students with disabilities enabling them to fully participate in academic activities and achieve their educational goals. Inadequate funding not only limits the availability of essential resources but also hampers the ability of institutions to meet legal requirements and fulfil their obligations under disability rights legislation. Without sufficient financial support, educational institutions may struggle to comply with accessibility standards, provide reasonable accommodations, and ensure equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

- **Responsive support services**

Responsive support services play a pivotal role in facilitating the academic success and overall well-being of students with disabilities within PSE settings. However, the lack of sufficient support services and assistive provisions represents a significant barrier to their educational attainment. These support services encompass a wide range of resources, including but not limited to specialised academic accommodations, assistive technologies, counselling and mentorship programs, disability advocacy services, and peer support networks. In order to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities, it is imperative to establish responsive support systems that are tailored to individual requirements. Additionally, these support services should be readily accessible, easily navigable, and consistently available to students throughout their academic journey.

- **Staff training and development**

A lack of awareness and training among lecturers and staff further exacerbates challenges faced by students with disabilities. Without adequate training, educators may struggle to understand the diverse needs of students with disabilities and how best to accommodate them. This can result in a lack of appropriate support and accommodations in the classroom, hindering the academic progress and overall experience of students with disabilities. Therefore, comprehensive training programs and ongoing professional development initiatives are essential to ensure that staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity necessary to effectively support students with disabilities in their educational pursuits.

- **Attitudinal barriers**

Without proper awareness and training, faculty and staff may inadvertently perpetuate stigmas or misconceptions surrounding disabilities, further marginalising these students within the academic environment. In spite of entitlement to various provisions, numerous students with disabilities encounter barriers in accessing these provisions due to adverse

social attitudes, negative perceptions, and instances of ill-treatment by faculty and administrative staff. Addressing attitudinal barriers and promoting awareness and acceptance is critical for creating an inclusive campus culture.

Recommendations and Further Steps

The recommendations and further steps section was a crucial component, outlining actionable insights derived from the research. Drawing on the identified challenges and opportunities, this part of the report offered strategic guidance for enhancing inclusive education practices within post-secondary institutions. Recommendations were tailored to address specific areas of improvement, contributing to the overall advancement of inclusive education.

- **Quality assurance system**

Establish comprehensive external and internal evaluation mechanisms to monitor the quality and effectiveness of inclusive education practices within PSE institutions. This includes regular assessments of accessibility, support services, and academic accommodations tailored to VET and HE settings.

- **Cooperation with external stakeholders**

Foster collaboration with local and international external stakeholders including education support services, to provide tailored support and resources for students with diverse needs. These partnerships can enhance the availability and effectiveness of support services.

Moreover, institutions can collaborate with employers and industry partners to foster collaboration with employers and industry partners to create inclusive work environments and job opportunities for students with disabilities. This includes, especially practice-based VET settings, engaging employers in the design of curricula, providing disability awareness training to workplace supervisors, and facilitating job placements and accommodations as needed.

- **Investment in Research**

Allocate resources towards conducting further research to explore the experiences and challenges faced by students with disabilities in PSE contexts. This evidence-informed approach provides valuable insights for developing targeted interventions and improving support mechanisms.

- **Motivating institutions**

Implement incentive schemes to motivate PSE institutions to prioritise inclusive practices. Examples include financial incentives for enrolling students with disabilities, grants for campus

accessibility improvements, and recognition programs for institutions demonstrating exemplary inclusivity. For instance, in Hungary, higher education institutes receive a grant of 150,000 HUF (approximately 500 Euros) for each registered student with a disability annually. Additionally, in some Asian countries, grants are accessible to all higher educational institutions to enhance physical accessibility, thereby creating more disabled-friendly campuses.

- **Provision of financial assistance**

Address the issue of limited financial support requires a concerted effort from stakeholders at both institutional and governmental levels. PSE institutions must advocate for increased funding allocations to support disability services and accommodations, while policymakers need to prioritise investments in PSE accessibility and inclusivity initiatives. By securing adequate financial resources, institutions can effectively implement inclusive practices and create a more equitable learning environment for all students.

- **Promotion of Disability Services**

Increase awareness and accessibility of disability services through targeted promotional campaigns. Ensure that all staff and students are informed about available services to facilitate equitable access and support for students with disabilities. Effectively promoting disability services will not only assist students with disabilities in accessing necessary support but also raise awareness among the community about the varied and distinctive needs of students with disabilities.

- **Training for Lecturers**

Provide training opportunities for lecturers to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to support students with disabilities effectively. This includes specialised training programs and resources to enhance inclusive teaching practices.

- **Technological Accommodations**

Enhance technological accommodations for students with disabilities by expanding the availability of assistive devices and software. This includes provisions such as stylus slates, talking books, Braille computers, closed-circuit television, magnification software, and screen reader software to facilitate learning and accessibility for students with visual impairment.

- **Scholarship Opportunities**

Expand scholarship opportunities and reservation quotas within the PSE system to promote access for students with disabilities. Ensure that financial support is readily accessible for students with diverse needs to alleviate financial barriers to education.

- **Flexible Approaches to Learning**

Promote flexible content delivery and assessment options to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities. This ensures that students with disabilities can demonstrate their learning outcomes equitably in PSE settings. Specifically, in VET context, access to work-based learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing experiences can be increased. These experiences not only provide valuable hands-on training but also help students with disabilities develop essential workplace skills and build connections with potential employers.

These recommendations aim to address the identified challenges and opportunities in fostering inclusive education within PSE institutions, ultimately promoting equitable access and support for students with disabilities.

It is worth highlighting that education, as defined by international law, is intertwined with broader economic, social, and cultural rights. Therefore, a progressive implementation approach, using all available resources to the fullest extent, is favourable. The UN CRPD itself does not mandate an immediate change of institutional practices unless they are directly discriminatory. Instead, it advocates for a progressive dismantling of segregating systems deeply ingrained in a state's educational traditions. However, Article 4 of the UN CRPD underscores the obligation of states to take suitable measures and utilise all feasible resources to uphold the Convention's inclusive provisions. To oversee the progress of signatories, a monitoring mechanism has been established to track the advancements made by state parties. Additionally, states that have ratified the Optional Protocol of the Convention are required to submit reports to the UN every two years, detailing their current status and progress toward full implementation.

Conclusion

Access to post-secondary education not only benefits individuals but also contributes to broader societal goals by promoting economic, political, and social inclusion while reducing social exclusion. Post-secondary education plays a vital role in providing opportunities for young persons with disabilities to enhance their skills, pursue personal interests, and ultimately increase their employment prospects.

While there is a global commitment to inclusive education, the reality is that no country has achieved a truly inclusive education system for all learners. Despite the presence of opportunities of inclusion of students with disabilities in PSE institutions, significant barriers persist, hindering their full participation and inclusion.

It is also noteworthy to mention that the advancement of inclusive post-secondary education is closely tied to the quality of secondary education settings. Given the notably low attendance rates of young people with intellectual disabilities in secondary education and the inadequacy

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of educational provisions tailored to their specific needs, it is imperative to prioritise improvements in secondary education before transitioning the focus to enhancing PSE accessibility.

Therefore, this report has undertaken a thorough examination of existing inclusive education in PSE to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current landscape. This report is of significance to a wide range of stakeholders involved in education, including persons with disabilities, families, educators, policymakers, and service providers. By addressing the challenges outlined in this report and implementing the recommended solutions, we can work towards creating more inclusive PSE environments that empower all students to thrive and succeed.



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Annex 1: Barometer Survey on Post-Secondary Education



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EASPD is the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities. We are a European not-for-profit organisation representing over 20,000 social services and disability organisations across Europe. The main objective of EASPD is to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality service systems.