



PROMOTING POSITIVE
ATTITUDES AND EVIDENCE-
BASED POLICY FOR
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY FORWARD

NATIONAL REPORT: BULGARIA



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Please refer to the end of this report for a list of project partners.

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Introduction

This national report has been written within the framework of the ‘Promoting positive attitudes and evidence-based policy for inclusive education’ (IE+) project. Co-funded by Erasmus+, the project aims to provide decision-makers (including policy-makers and education providers) with the information, training and tools that allow for evidence-based policy making, that will support the transition towards inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities aged between 3-18 years old.

This report is the result of a research framework that has been developed by Prof. Dr. Geert Van Hove, Dr. Elisabeth De Schauwer & Ms Evelien De Maesschalck from Ghent University. This framework has combined the methodology of ‘Pacific Indicators for Disability-Inclusive Education’ Project (2016), due to its connection with the creation of indicators that can measure the progress towards disability-inclusive education and the Erasmus+ Project: ‘Evidence Based Education + Job Shadowing,’ due to the co-productive approach take during the development of its stakeholder survey.

Part of a series of five national reports, this report contributes to an overview of the current legal, policy and school practice currently in place in [Belgium](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Greece](#), [Spain](#) and [Portugal](#). A comparative analysis of these national reports can be found in the article: Inclusive Education: Realizing Article 24.





Legal framework

a. International Human Rights Law

Bulgaria has signed “Convention on the Rights of the Child” in 1991 and ratified the “Convention of Persons with Disabilities in 2012”.

b. National legislation

According to Bulgarian national legislation, all children have the equal right to access the education system and to go to school, regardless of their condition.

In 2015 Bulgaria implemented a new legislation on inclusive education. This legislation regulates education for children with special education needs at both school and classroom levels.

Inclusive education is part of Pre-school and School Education Act. In addition to this act there is also a specially elaborated regulation for Inclusive education in November 2017. According to this legislation, in schools and kindergardens there is general and additional personal support for kids with SEN, kids at risk, gifted children and kids with chronic illness.

For each school subject there is a developed curriculum and a state educational standard for the class. Children with special needs that do not meet the standard are trained on individual curricula that is made specially for their individual needs.

The legislation concerning accessibility in Bulgaria is the Ordinance № 4 from 1 July 2009 for the design, implementation and maintenance of buildings in accordance with the requirements of an accessible environment for the population, including for people with disabilities.





Art. 4. (1) The elements of the accessible environment in the urbanized territory are as follows:

1. Pedestrian spaces;
2. Junctions and walkways;
3. Elements to overcome different levels;
4. Accessible parking spaces;
5. Stops of vehicles from regular public passenger transport services;
6. Elements of furnishing the accessible environment.

c. National Education Funds

Pre-school and school education activities are funded from the state budget, municipal budgets, European funds and programs and other sources. The activities that are subject to state policy are fully or partially financed by the state budget funds.

The state budget funds are for:

1. maintenance of the activities of education and training of children and students;
2. supporting equal access and support for personal development;
3. development of kindergartens, schools and centers for support for personal development;
4. implementation of national education development programs.

The funds are distributed between primary budget spenders with budget, financing state and municipal schools and kindergartens, based on the number of children and students and the standard for child and pupil determined by an act of the Council of Ministers. The standard specifies the amount of state budget funds for a specific activity per child or pupil for the relevant year.





The dimensions of the standards are determined depending on:

1. the content of the activities of education and training of children and students;
2. the type and specificity of the school or kindergarten and the form of training;
3. the professional direction of the training;
4. objective geographic and demographic characteristics of the municipality influencing access to education.

Primary budget spenders allocate the funds received for each activity between schools and kindergartens on the basis of formulas for the activity concerned. Formulas include basic and optional components.

The main components of each formula are the standard and the number of children and students in kindergartens and schools for the respective activity. The additional components of the formula may be objective geographic, demographic, infrastructure, and other indicators that determine the cost differences for a child or pupil or indicators reflecting national and municipal education policies.

As part of the additional components of the formulas, funds amounting to up to 0.5 per cent are provided for the financing of logopaedic cabinets.

Inclusive Education

a. How is the access to special education arranged?

Some of the children with special educational needs have medical diagnoses and documents, certifying their condition. However, any child with indications of being with special educational needs, is assessed by a support team for personal development that is in the school or kindergarten. There the professionals are: resource tutor, psychologist, speech therapist, class teacher and another specialist if needed. As next step this assessment should be confirmed by a regional support team for personal development, who is part of





the Regional Center for Support of the Inclusive Education process. If there is no specialist in the school to make the assessment, the specialists from the regional team do this instead. The assessment is functional – its emphasis is on cognitive abilities, emotional behavioral action, educational opportunities, linguistic development and so on. The parent must submit an application for assessment of the individual needs in the particular school or kindergarten as a formal procedure. The assessment is done by the team in the school or by the regional team, and then it is confirmed by the mobile team specialists from the regional team. The duration of the whole procedure is at least 14 days.

b. The relationship between special and regular education

Each parent has the right to decide where to educate his child. Irrespective of the severity of the disability, each child has the right to attend school.

There are two types of special schools in Bulgaria - for children with hearing impairments and for children with impaired vision. All other children are enrolled in general education schools. However, for some of them, whose condition is an obstacle for attending the general educational environment daily, after a special request from their parents- they are redirected to special classes in centers for special educational support. There, special pedagogues and other specialists support the child. The teams in the mainstream school and the staff from the specialized centers work together to develop a support plan for the student.

c. Early intervention programmes/services

In many municipalities, community centers have been established. Their aim is- early intervention for children from 0 to 7 years of age. Many of the children using the early intervention service are also trained in mainstream kindergartens, supported by resource specialists. The new legislation does not allow duplication of service for professionals from the educational and social spheres in the community centers.





d. Parent participation

Parents are actively involved in the process of inclusive education of the child with special needs. In order to make an assessment, the parent must submit an application for assessment of individual needs. Without this specific consent, no further support can be provided. In addition, parents are part of the child's personal development support team and are actively involved in developing the support plan and individual curricula.

e. Quality evaluation and control

Performance control and evaluation related to inclusive education is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Education Directorate (The Ministry of Education and Science is a Bulgarian state institution with the rank of Ministry that manages and exercises supervision over the educational, educational and educational institutions in the country.

The regional management of education is a territorial administration, controlled by the the Minister of Education and Science . It is dealing with the management and control of the system of public education. The Regional Administration of Education creates conditions for the implementation of the state educational policy on the territory of the district.

Framework requirements for quality management in institutions are strictly defined. The minimum mandatory requirements for quality management in kindergarten and school concern the analysis, planning, implementation of activities and improvements in the work of kindergartens and schools, self-assessment areas, participants in the process of self-assessment, conditions and procedures for carrying out self-assessment, etc.

There is a developed 4-year long strategy , which is accepted by the pedagogical council and approved by the public council of the kindergarten or the school. A two-year action plan is being developed that includes activities to achieve the objectives of the institution's development strategy, the responsible persons and deadlines, the necessary resources, the indicators to measure the achievement of the objectives set out in the strategy.





Every two years a self-assessment is carried out by preparing an internal assessment of the quality of the education provided for two consecutive academic years through the activities, procedures and criteria defined by the kindergarten or the school. The self-assessment report is approved by the Director and it is part of the biennial report on the implementation of the action plan about the strategy for the development of kindergarten or school.

Measures to improve the quality of education are published on the institution's website and are available for a period of 4 years from their publication.

Responsible for quality management are the Director and the Pedagogical Council.

d. The concept of reasonable accommodations

In Bulgaria, pupils are trained in curricula for the relevant class, which are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. Pupils with disabilities are trained in individual curricula that are relevant to their individual needs. The School Development Support Team develops a corresponding support plan for each pupil with special needs as well as a corresponding individual curriculum on the subject in which the pupil does not meet the standard. There are cases, when an individual curriculum, in which the presence in the classes is reduced, can be developed .

Availability of support materials, teachers and research centers

a. Availability of support material:

Each school, where a pupil with special needs is trained, receives a certain amount above the fixed standard cost, to provide materials and specialists. The school is obliged to use the means for the specific purpose. In addition, if a child has a certain disability percentage, he or she also has the right to receive additional aid such as shoes, strollers, and so on.





b. Availability of support teachers/workers:

Any child with special needs, who receives additional support in the school or kindergarten, has the right of resource support from a resource teacher or other specialist, who is identified by the Personality Development Team. If a resource specialist is not assigned to the school, the director has the right to request such a specialist from a personal development support center or a regional center to support the inclusive education process.

The regulations also stipulate the use of a teacher's assistant, who can be appointed by the respective educational institution. This is written in the support plan and the director decides whether to appoint such an assistant or not.

c. Resource centers/knowledge centers about inclusive education

In 2006, Resource Centers for Integrated Learning have been established in Bulgaria.

Since 2016, they were renamed to Regional Centers for Support of the Inclusive Education Process. They are unit of the Ministry of Education, which carry out the policy of inclusive education. Regional Center specialists provide methodological support on inclusion issues, conduct information campaigns, make trainings related to inclusive education.





IE+ PARTNERSHIP



The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) is a wide European network which represents around 17,000 services across Europe and across disabilities. The main objective of EASPD is to promote the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities (through effective and high-quality service systems). The work of the organisation is based on the three interconnected pillars of Impact (European Policy), Innovation (Research & Development as well as implementation of international projects) and Information (for the members).



Inclusion Europe has 67 members in 37 European countries. Inclusion Europe represents the voice of people with intellectual disabilities and their families throughout Europe. Started in 1988, Inclusion Europe fight for equal rights and full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in all aspects of life. As a European association they work in the many different areas which their members have identified as important to them: Inclusion Europe provide for the exchange of knowledge across Europe, support their members, and influence European policies.



At Ghent University the Department of Special Needs Education has a focus on Inclusive Education in teaching research and service to the community.



The first University of Salamanca's Institute on Community Integration (INICO) is composed of interdisciplinary professionals that lead activities linked to training, research and counselling in the field of disability and special educational needs with the aim of easing and enhancing the quality of life and self-determination of people living at social disadvantages in different contexts and throughout their life cycle.



The National Association of Resource Teachers in Bulgaria (NART) is a national NGO umbrella for professionals working for full and quality integration, inclusion and education of children with different abilities and needs in mainstream education. Their goal is to promote the continuous improvement of quality education and social services in support of integration and inclusion of all children in Bulgaria. The specialists who are members of NART are working with more than 15 000 children and young people with special needs across the country.



Kentro Koinonikis Frontidas Atomon Me Noitiki Ysterisi (ESTIA) is a recognised Charity overseen by the Ministry of Health & Social Solidarity in Greece. ESTIA was founded in 1982 by parents of children with intellectual children. ESTIA specialises in providing support and care to people with intellectual disabilities from 15 years of age with the aim of improving quality of life and supporting inclusion into the community.



C.E.C.D. Mira Sintra - Centro de Educação para o Cidadão com Deficiência, C.R.L. (Education Centre for Persons with Disability) is a Cooperative for Social Solidarity, a non-profit organisation and was recognized 2.000 people, since toddlers, children, youth and adults who need specialised support, due to problems in their development and/or deficits in academic, work or social performance.

