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## THE EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

### BRIEF

#### **Formation**

The Agency was established in 1996 by agreement between the ministers of education in its member countries. It is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for its member countries.

It is the only European body maintained by its member countries with the specific mission of helping them improve the quality and effectiveness of their inclusive provision for all learners.

The Agency does this by combining the perspectives of policy, practice and research in order to provide member countries and policy makers at the European level with evidence-based information and recommendation on implementing inclusive education.

The Agency has a legal basis at European level (Decision no. 791/2004/EC). It is one of six European institutions recognised as contributing to the European integration process through its activities in the field of education and training.

#### **Funding**

The Agency is co-funded by the ministries of education in its member countries and by the European Commission via an operating grant within the EU Erasmus+ education programme (2014-2020).

This means that each year, the European Commission supports the Agency's activities with funding that is almost equal to the total annual member country contributions. This enables the Agency to conduct even more activities than would be possible with member country funding alone.

#### **Member countries and peer learning**

At present, the Agency has 30 member countries (member states of the EU as well as Iceland, Norway and Switzerland).

Member countries have access to a number of specific benefits that are described in the sections below. In addition, the Agency provides member countries with opportunities for networking, peer-to-peer learning and self-review at the level of policy, practice and research.

The Agency also forms a network for information sharing on a more informal and personal contact basis, which enables country representatives, experts and



researchers to collect inputs from colleagues across Europe on issues that are important on their own countries' national agendas.

### **Country Policy Review and Analysis activities**

The Agency's Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA) is a new form of individualised country information. It provides countries with a reflection on their current policy frameworks for inclusive education. Furthermore, it offers each country specific recommendations regarding priorities to be addressed.

The framework is based on recommendations from Agency projects, the Education and Training (ET 2020) objectives and the Council Country-Specific Recommendations addressed to countries.

### **Data collection**

The European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE) data collection is a biennial exercise with Agency member countries. It provides data on learners officially identified as having special educational needs (SEN), as defined in the country.

The EASIE activities focus on: informing countries' work in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and EU objectives for education and training; considering inclusive education based on whole potential populations; data on the SEN population, but from an inclusive perspective which informs debates on the rights of access to and participation in inclusive education.

### **Projects**

For project work, countries nominate project experts. Their costs are covered for attendance at project meetings, although the time they contribute to the work is not covered.

Up-coming Agency projects are; 'Policy to support inclusive school leadership' (2017–2019) and 'The changing role of special schools/provision in supporting inclusive education' (2017–2019).

Current projects include 'Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems' (2016–2018), 'Evidence of the effects of inclusive education in supporting long-term social inclusion (2016–2017)', 'Inclusive Early Childhood Education' (2015–2017), and 'Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education' (2014–2017).



## **Information provision**

The results and findings of the Agency's work are available on the Agency website, where project outcomes such as reports, literature reviews, informative flyers and policy briefs can be downloaded.

All main outcomes are available in the languages of the member countries.

Member countries are entitled to printed copies of all materials for dissemination. Allocations of printed materials are based on the country bands model and depend on the allocated budget.

The Agency website contains a wealth of information about the Agency's work and each member country. This includes specific country information with key contacts, links to national sources of information and descriptions of national policy and provision.

## **European and international co-operation**

The Agency's involvement with the key EU bodies reflects its position as a recognised European organisation. Relationships with the European Commission are practical, administrative and content-oriented. The European Parliament mainly provides support to Agency work, while relations with the Council of Ministers are more formal and take place through the member countries.

The Agency also maintains active, mutually beneficial relationships with key international bodies and organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its institutes (International Bureau of Education and Institute for Information Technologies in Education), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. Co-operation is sought and maintained when there are clear benefits for the Agency collectively as well as for its member countries, via the increased quality of Agency work.