



AGENCY POSITION ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

This paper presents the position of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education on the aspiration of all Agency member countries to develop more inclusive education systems. More specifically, the paper presents the essential features of inclusive education systems that will be used to guide the development and direction of Agency activities in the medium to long term.

This paper's goal is to guide on-going as well as future thinking and discussions regarding Agency work and how it can support countries in their efforts to develop more inclusive education systems. As such, it presents the horizon and focal point that Agency activities will be aligned to.

The position presented in the paper is fully in line with European Union and international stated priorities for education.

Background information that places the essential features of inclusive education systems outlined in the paper into the wider European and international policy and practice context, can be found on the Agency website:

www.european-agency.org/about-us/who-we-are/position-on-inclusive-education-systems

Inclusive Education Systems

All European countries are committed to working towards ensuring more inclusive education systems. They do so in different ways, depending on their past and current contexts and histories. Inclusive education systems are seen as a vital component within the wider aspiration of more socially inclusive societies that all countries align themselves with, both ethically and politically.

The ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers.

For this vision to be enacted, the *legislation* directing inclusive education systems must be underpinned by the fundamental commitment to ensuring every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities.

The *policy* governing inclusive education systems must provide a clear vision for and conceptualisation of inclusive education as an approach for improving the educational opportunities of all learners. Policy must also clearly outline that the effective implementation of inclusive education systems is the shared responsibility of all educators, leaders and decision-makers.

The *operational principles* guiding the implementation of structures and procedures within inclusive education systems must be those of equity, effectiveness, efficiency and raising achievements for all stakeholders – learners, their parents and families, educational professionals, community representatives and decision-makers – through high-quality, accessible educational opportunities.

With this vision in mind, in its work with member countries the Agency will endeavour to provide guidance on the development of inclusive education systems that aim to:

- Raise the achievements of learners by recognising and building upon their talents and effectively meeting their individual learning needs and interests. The Agency understanding of raised achievement for learners encompasses all forms of personal, social and academic attainments that will be relevant for the individual learner in the short term, while enhancing their life chances in the long term.
- Ensure that all stakeholders value diversity. This principle should be enacted through actively engaging stakeholders in dialogue and providing support to enable them to make individual and collective contributions to widening access to education and improving equity to enable all learners to realise their full potential.
- Ensure the availability of flexible continua of provision and resources that support the learning of all stakeholders at both individual and organisational levels.



- Ensure that effective continua of support in inclusive education systems encompass personalised approaches to learning that engage all learners and support their active participation in the learning process. This involves the development of learner-centred curriculum and assessment frameworks; flexible training and continuous professional development opportunities for all educators, school leaders and decision-makers; and coherent governance processes at all system levels.
- Raise the achievements, outcomes and outputs of the system overall by effectively enabling all stakeholders to develop their attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviours in line with the goals and principles of an inclusive education system.
- Operate as learning systems that work towards the continuous improvement and alignment of structures and processes by building the capacity of all stakeholders to systematically reflect upon their achievements and then use these reflections to improve and develop their collective work towards their shared goals.