European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Schools, Sub-group on Pathways to School Success

Roadmap for ensuring school success for all: a practical 'living' guide for the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Roadmap for ensuring school success for all: A practical 'living' guide for the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success

Thematic report

Europe Direct is a service that answers
your questions about the European Union.

- by freephone: **00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**
(certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en.

Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use that might be made of the following information.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

Table of Contents

Executive summary

Context and objectives

The "Roadmap for ensuring school success for all" serves as a dynamic, evolving guide designed to support the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success. The primary aim of the initiative is to reduce underachievement in basic skills and early leaving from education and training, while promoting inclusion and well-being of all students across the European Education Area.

General approach and core pillars

The roadmap is based on a holistic approach to education, combining universal educational strategies with targeted interventions for learners with additional needs. Only through this dynamic and adaptable combination it is possible to ensure that educational systems are inclusive, flexible, and responsive. Through comprehensive research, numerous consultations and initiatives promoted by DG EAC, and especially the work conducted by the WG Schools, sub-group Pathways to School Success, the roadmap outlines six strategic pillars that are deemed critical for the effective implementation of the Pathways to School Success framework. The core pillars for implementation are:

1   **Whole-school and whole-system approach**: emphasises a holistic framework for educational reform, integrating all components of the educational ecosystem. It involves collective responsibility for school leaders, policymakers, teachers, and the wider educational community, as well as students themselves, to create a supportive environment promoting the academic success and well-being of all learners. The goal is to foster an education system that aligns policies, practices, and resources across various levels and stakeholders to ensure every student benefits from high-quality education.

| Key questions for reflection from policy perspective:	
How can we ensure coherence and alignment across all levels of governance to promote inclusion and success for all students?	*Assumption: The whole-system approach requires collaboration among various levels (national, regional, and local) and sectors (education, health, social services, etc.). Policymakers should reflect on how well policies, resources, and governance frameworks are aligned to support schools in creating inclusive environments*
How are we empowering school leaders and educators to collaborate and take ownership of inclusive practices across the school community?	*Assumption: Distributed leadership and collaboration among stakeholders within schools are essential. Reflecting on how leadership roles are defined, supported, and shared within schools can help ensure collective responsibility for inclusive practices.*
What mechanisms are in place to foster sustainable partnerships between schools,	*Assumption: A whole-system approach involves partnerships with community organizations, non-formal education providers, and other relevant stakeholders. Policy-makers should consider how these partnerships are institutionalized*

communities, and other stakeholders to support a holistic approach to education?

and whether they adequately support schools in promoting inclusion and student well-being.

2
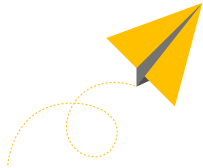
Effective needs identification: focuses on early and accurate recognition of students at risk and students who may have additional needs in terms of well-being and academic achievement. This pillar describes mechanisms to assess and address diverse educational needs timely and sensitively, avoiding stigmatisation and labelling. By identifying specific learning or emotional challenges early, education policies and institutions can implement appropriate interventions that support all students, and particularly those at risk.

Key questions for reflection from policy perspective:

How can we balance the need for effective data collection and needs identification while avoiding harmful labelling and stigmatization of students?	*Assumption: The process of identifying educational needs is crucial, but it must avoid reinforcing negative labels or oversimplifications that could limit students' potential. Policymakers should reflect on how data collection and needs assessment can be structured to ensure inclusivity while preventing the risk of stigmatization.*
How are students, families, and educators meaningfully involved in the needs identification process, and how is their feedback used to improve support systems?	*Assumption: A participatory approach to needs identification helps ensure that the process reflects students' real needs and experiences. Policymakers should reflect on whether there are opportunities for meaningful input from all stakeholders and how this feedback is used to shape the support and resources provided.*
What mechanisms are in place to ensure that needs identification considers a holistic view of the student, including emotional, neurological, and external factors?	*Assumption: Effective needs identification should be comprehensive, addressing not just academic needs but also emotional, psychological, and social factors. Policymakers should consider how current systems account for the full spectrum of student needs and whether there is sufficient support from multidisciplinary teams to address these factors.*

3

Professional Capacity Building: this pillar aims to enhance the abilities of educators and school leaders to support an inclusive learning environment. It involves targeted professional development that equips all school staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to address a diverse student body. The focus is on fostering an educational culture that values continuous learning, inclusivity, and adaptability. Training programs and support systems should be designed to empower educators to implement effective teaching strategies and actively promote inclusion.

Key questions for reflection from policy perspective:

How are professional development systems designed to ensure that all educators receive comprehensive, high-quality training in	*Assumption: Research shows that initial teacher education (ITE) and continuous professional development (CPD) programs should emphasize inclusive pedagogies, differentiation strategies, and cultural responsiveness.*

inclusive education, including strategies for supporting diverse learning needs?

Effective programs not only offer theoretical knowledge but also provide practical, classroom-ready tools to support diverse learners, including those with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds. Policymakers should ensure that these training opportunities are widely accessible and tailored to the specific needs of educators at different career stages.

How are school leadership development programs designed to equip school leaders with the skills to promote and sustain vision of inclusion and success for all across their schools?

Assumption: Research highlights the critical role of school leaders in fostering a school-wide culture of inclusion. Effective leadership is essential for creating a supportive, collaborative environment that prioritizes diversity and inclusion. Policymakers should reflect on whether professional development systems offer specialized training for school leaders, helping them to lead by example, manage diverse student populations, and implement systemic changes that support inclusion. Additionally, are leaders provided with the resources and autonomy to support their staff in these efforts?

What policies are in place to ensure flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods, enabling teachers to modify their practices to meet the evolving needs of all students?

Assumption: Research shows that flexibility in teaching is key to fostering inclusion. Teachers need professional autonomy and support to adapt their methods to address the diverse learning profiles of their students. This includes providing tailored instruction, adjusting curriculum content, and working collaboratively with multidisciplinary teams. Policymakers should consider whether professional development programs equip teachers with the skills to personalize their teaching and whether they foster an environment that encourages experimentation with new strategies without penalizing risk-taking.

4

Resource Allocation: ensures that educational resources—including human and material—are distributed equitably and effectively to meet the needs of all students. Resource allocation for inclusion draws on a proactive approach to funding and resource distribution that adapts to changing educational demands. This pillar supports the development of funding models that prioritise flexibility, ensuring schools have the necessary tools and personnel to provide high-quality and inclusive education.

Key questions for reflection from policy perspective:

How can funding mechanisms be made flexible enough to adapt to the evolving needs of students while ensuring equitable distribution?

Assumption: Research suggests that traditional reactive funding based on class size or historical costs may be inadequate for meeting the diverse needs of all learners. Proactive, flexible funding models are essential for creating responsive and inclusive education systems (OECD, 2023). These models must be adaptable to emerging crises and provide continuous support for evolving educational practices (Ireland's FET model).

Are the current resource allocation strategies designed to address inequities, particularly in

Assumption: Effective resource allocation must account for disparities in access to education. Municipalities or regions

disadvantaged areas or among vulnerable student groups?	*with higher proportions of vulnerable students should receive targeted funding and fiscal incentives to address these inequalities.*
How can collaboration and resource sharing between schools and local actors be promoted to ensure more efficient use of resources and expertise?	*Assumption: Resource sharing across schools and regions fosters a collective responsibility for inclusive education, as seen in school cluster systems (e.g., Malta and Portugal). By pooling resources and expertise, schools can more effectively support diverse student needs and create a more inclusive environment in cases when increasing overall funding is not possible.*

5

Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches: this pillar focuses on designing curricula and teaching methods that accommodate diverse learning styles and needs. It promotes the development of pedagogical strategies that are inclusive and adaptable. This encourages the integration of innovative teaching methods that cater to a wide range of abilities and backgrounds, ensuring that every student can access and benefit from education.

Key questions for reflection from policy perspective:

Does the curriculum integrate diverse content, materials, and assessment methods to meet the varied needs of all learners?	*Assumption: Research suggests that an inclusive curriculum should reflect diversity and be adaptable from the start, considering the needs of all students. This includes using diverse teaching materials and assessment methods, such as formative and ipsative assessments, which allow students to demonstrate learning in different ways, supporting their full potential.*
Are flexible and personalised teaching methods widely used to accommodate the evolving needs of students?	*Assumption: Research highlights the success of personalised teaching methods, like blended learning and co-teaching, in fostering engagement and better academic outcomes.*
Are assessment methods designed to be inclusive, allowing all students to demonstrate their learning through diverse formats and ongoing feedback?	*Assumption: Inclusive assessment practices must go beyond traditional summative assessments to include formative and ipsative methods. Regular data collection through formative assessments enables teachers to adjust instruction to meet individual needs.*

6

Data Collection and Monitoring: data collection and monitoring are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of educational strategies and outcomes. This pillar describes robust mechanisms for ongoing evaluation, ensuring that educational reforms and interventions are data-driven and aligned with the general goals of inclusion and success for all. It supports the use of thorough data collection and analysis to inform policy decisions and improve institutional practices.

Key questions for reflection from policy perspective:

Do current data collection systems cover all relevant indicators to effectively monitor progress towards inclusion and success for all?	*Assumption: Effective monitoring systems require the identification of both quantitative and qualitative indicators that capture all key aspects of inclusion, such as inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes.*
Are the data collected being used effectively to inform and improve decision-making at both the school and system levels?	*Assumption: Reliable data should directly inform policy decisions and drive continuous improvement at all levels of the education system. Self-assessment tools and regular data reviews, such as those in Portugal's monitoring of inclusive education laws, help schools reflect on and adjust practices. However, many schools and municipalities lack the data literacy and resources to effectively use the available data for strategic planning.*

Challenges and Opportunities

The roadmap acknowledges the complexities involved in translating inclusive education policies aimed at insuring school success for all into effective practices at system and school levels. A significant challenge is the inconsistency in policy interpretation and application, which creates a complex educational landscape. Institutional and pedagogical practices often do not reflect the inclusivity aspired to in national laws, leading to disparities in the support systems. This results in gaps in the education system, where students with intersecting vulnerabilities are particularly at risk of falling through.

However, these challenges also present unique **opportunities for innovation and systemic change**. By acknowledging the multi-dimensional challenges students face, policymakers and educators can move away from compartmentalised support structures towards a **more integrated and intersectional approach**. This shift can promote the attainment of basic skills, school engagement, and well-being for all students, ensuring equity, inclusion, and diversity in education. Leveraging research and collaborative discussions, the roadmap proposes actionable steps for implementing inclusive education policies effectively.

Call for action

To operationalise the roadmap, within each pillar a series of **Key Self-Assessment Questions** to support policymakers to reflect upon their system are provided, together with a set of **Policy Recommendations**. Stakeholders at all levels are called to participate actively in its implementation. This involves adapting strategies to local contexts, ensuring ongoing dialogue among all stakeholders, and continuously evaluating the impact of the adopted measures.

The "Roadmap for ensuring School Success for All" serves as a comprehensive guide to redefining educational success across Europe. It emphasises inclusivity, equity, and the holistic development of all students as cornerstones for a thriving educational system. By adhering to this roadmap, Member States will be better equipped to transform educational landscapes, making school success a reality for every student.

Actionable steps

Pillar 1: Whole-school and whole-system approach

➜ Promote distributed leadership and collaborative culture.

➜ Develop clear, inclusive education policies with long-term vision.

➜ Foster collaborative culture and students' agency.

➜ Foster stakeholder engagement and multi-level governance, ensuring systematic policy coordination across different levels.

Pillar 2: Needs Identification

➜ Develop standardized yet holistic assessment frameworks.

➜ Ensure flexible, responsive participatory needs identification processes.

➜ Develop multidisciplinary teams for comprehensive support and enhance resource availability.

➜ Implement early identification and support systems.

➜ Enhance data collection systems to capture diverse needs.

Pillar 3: Building Professional Capacity for Inclusion

➜ Enhance initial teacher education and continuous professional development.

➜ Establish professional learning communities and promote collaboration and knowledge sharing.

➜ Promote mentoring and support among educators.

➜ Develop inclusive leadership programs.

Pillar 4: Resource Allocation

➜ Advocate for flexible, sustainable funding models.

➜ Promote resource sharing and collaborative initiatives, discontinuing models in which education and training institutions compete for resources.

➜ Invest in technology and infrastructure for inclusivity.

➜ Invest in capacity building and mindset shift and engage key stakeholders in resource allocation decisions.

Pillar 5: Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches

➜ Develop inclusive curricula and adaptable teaching methods.

➜ Integrate SEL and life skills into educational frameworks.

➜ Promote innovative pedagogical approaches (incl. for teaching basic skills).

➜ Provide ongoing training and support for teachers and support staff.

Pillar 6: Data Collection and Monitoring

➜ Develop comprehensive data collection frameworks.

➜ Ensure data reliability and comprehensiveness.

➜ Engage stakeholders in the monitoring process.

➜ Use data to inform continuous improvement and policy adjustments.

Chapter 1. Context

Under its 2021 – 2025 mandate, the Working Group Schools, Pathways to School Success sub-group[1], supports the implementation and follow-up of the [Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success](#)[2], the ultimate aim of which is reducing underachievement in basic skills and early leaving from education and training and promoting well-being at school.

In this context, the Working Group has been exploring the topic of **targeted support for learners at risk of exclusion**, looking into how specific targeted interventions for more vulnerable learners can be combined with holistic education approach, catering for the needs of all learners.

Through meetings (26 September, 26-27 October 2023 and 19-20 January 2024), an online seminar (24 April 2024), and a PLA in Malta (15-17 May 2024) the working group (WG) has uncovered the topic from different perspectives: from needs identification and resource allocation to help schools respond effectively to the different students' needs to building professional capacity and strengthening multi-level coordination on the issues of inclusion. Acknowledging the need for combining universal approaches with more targeted ones, the WG has highlighted that **targeted policy measures will only work effectively in an inclusive and comprehensive education system that is centred around the core aim of ensuring students' academic success and well-being**; a system which is flexible enough and has necessary capacity to adjust quickly and respond to the increasing diversity of students in classrooms across Europe. This means that **there needs to be an enabling system complemented with targeted support tailored to individual student needs** (e.g., linguistic, emotional, academic, etc.) and available when needed. This approach lies at the heart of the 2022 Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success.

While this approach and overall importance of valuing diversity and inclusion of all learners in education and training is widely recognised in key EU MS policy documents (Eurydice, 2023); some groups of learners are usually prioritised more than others. **Educational policies and support services are often siloed based on single aspects of identity**. As a result, students with intersecting vulnerabilities risk falling through the cracks, particularly when the education system has a monolithic view of their needs (Dunajeva, 2022).

Therefore, current models must evolve to capture the multi-dimensional challenges students face, **moving away from compartmentalised support to a more integrated, intersectional approach** to truly promote attainment of basic skills, engagement and well-being, ensuring equity, inclusion and diversity. With increased complexity in education policy making, authorities need to take into account a large number of factors and take appropriate action to shape them into a coherent implementation strategy (Viennet and Pont, 2017). This strategy should consider adequate resource allocation, sufficient system capacity and the consistent monitoring and evaluation of results among others for the policy vision to be translated into practice (Eurydice, 2023).

The proposed Roadmap aims to collect existing evidence on effective implementation of policies aiming to promote school success and well-being, as well as practical experiential knowledge of the WG members

---

[1] The Working Group comprises representatives from all Member States, EFTA and Candidate countries, international organisations, and stakeholder organisations. It is one of the seven Working Groups of the strategic framework for the European Education Area, whose main objective is to promote mutual learning on policy reform of national education systems with a view to effectively contributing to the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025,

[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32022H1209(01)

to **offer actionable steps to translating education policies into concrete actions and changes on the ground,** in an attempt to bridge the mentioned implementation gap. It builds on all the work done by the WG under its mandate, including insights generated through previous thematic periods (e.g., educational assessment and blended learning approaches), joint discussions with the WG on Equality and Values, as well as continuous desk research.

How to read this document

The primary purpose of this document is to support national, regional, and local policy-makers, as well as other education stakeholders, in putting the Pathways to School Success Policy Framework into practice. The principles of inclusion and learners' success are at the heart of this document. The document elaborates on key conditions for the implementation of the vision of inclsion and school success (*pillars*), guidance on what to do or not to do, and helpful references and self-reflection questions.

The Roadmap is evolving

This document represents the collective efforts of the WGs members, European Commission and researchers at a specific moment in time. However, it is not meant to be a static document, rather it is a continuous conversation, as the new insights on the effectiveness of specific policies and interventions are uncovered in the future discussions of the EEA WGs and wide education communities.

The Roadmap is practical, but grounded in the research evidence

The examples, self-reflection questions and suggested actional points aim to provide guidance to policy-makers and education stakeholders for designing and putting in practice measures and interventions aimed at promoting inclusion, well-being and school sucess for all learners. However, these should not be treated as the only recipe or a comprehensive methdological note. They rather aim to highlight ongoing debates and flag some examples that can complement and enrich practice, or encourage further reflection and reform.

Chapter 2. Operationalising Pathways to School Success policy framework

It has already been demonstrated by numerous studies that the highest-performing education systems are those that **combine equity with quality**. Students who have enriching school experiences will be more likely to stay in education and become active participants in society, including by successfully transferring to the labour market. Those who struggle at early stages but receive adequate, timely support and guidance have higher probabilities of successfully completing education, despite any difficulties in their family or social background (see e.g., OECD, 2012; 2019).

Box 1. Understanding of equity and equality

Equity is a distinct concept from **equality** in education. Equality can be interpreted in multiple ways. Most importantly, as a core value of the European Union, the concept of equality refers to a 'shared concern for human dignity; the participation by all in economic, social and cultural life; a voice for all groups in decisions that impact on them; and a celebration of diversity.' European equal treatment legislation was created to reflect this core value by ensuring the basic principle of equal treatment and supporting and protecting people who face discrimination. However, equality in education, more narrowly defined, is sometimes built on an assumption that students should be treated the same, to ensure that 'one size fits all', so as not to discriminate. Such a narrow approach is blind to differences and to different needs and ignores that apparently neutral selection mechanisms can have a segregationist and discriminatory impact. The OECD has pointed to the fact that, for instance early tracking, though perhaps seen as value neutral, has discriminatory consequences.

Equity in education recognises that students have different needs and starting points, sometimes relating to (socio-) psychological, historical, and structural barriers. Equity in education therefore relates to the extent to which learners can fully enjoy the right to education and training, in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes. Equitable systems ensure that the outcomes of education and training are independent of socio-economic background and other factors that lead to educational disadvantage and that treatment reflects individuals' specific learning needs.

Several studies indicate that the **cost of exclusion is high** (see European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2012; Brunello and De Paola, 2013; Hanushek and Woessmann, 2019; Brunello and Rocco, 2024, UNESCO, OECD and Commonwealth secretariat, 2024). The latter finds that **the private, fiscal and social costs** of children leaving school early and not gaining basic skills are enormous, adding up to **trillions of US dollars lost to economies** around the world.

Figure 1. The interaction between the share of children leaving school early, failing to attain basic skills or with low socio-emotional skills and private, fiscal, social and non-monetary costs
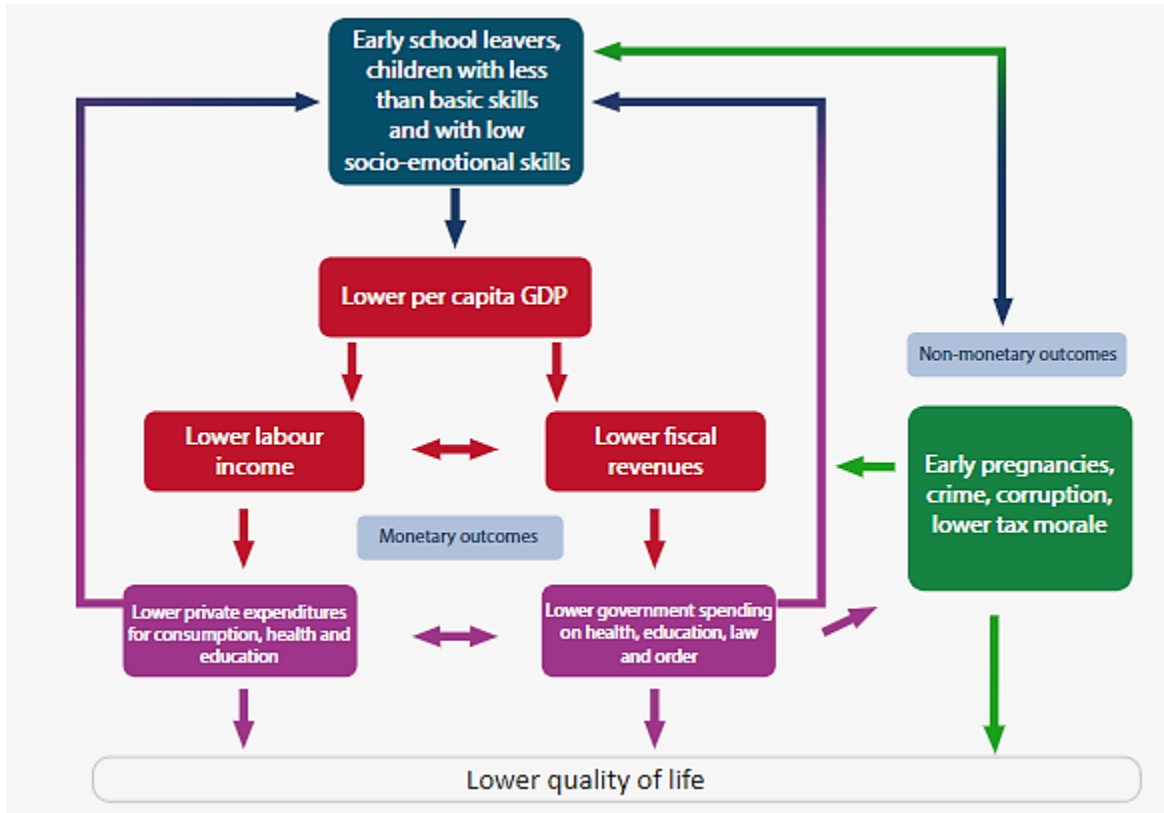
Source: UNESCO, OECD and the Commonwealth Secretariat (2024), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389852

To ensure equity and quality of education and make sure that all learners reach their full potential and succeed at school, it is crucial that education systems cater for the needs of all learners, and are understood as broader than just school systems, to avoid putting untenable pressure on formal education institutions and use the potential of non-formal education. In line with a **rights-based approach to education**, every learner, irrespective of gender, racial or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation or religion or belief, or migrant background or their personal, family or socioeconomic situation, has the right to access quality education. Inclusion in education is about allowing:

> *all learners to achieve their full potential by providing good quality education to all in mainstream settings with special attention to learners at risk of exclusion and underachievement by actively seeking out to support them and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners, including through individualised approaches, targeted support and cooperation with the families and local communities" (ET 2020 WG, 2018).*

Pathways to School Success proposes a framework for action to inspire a systemic policy response to ensure better educational outcomes for all learners. It is based on a broad and inclusive approach to school success, which is not only about academic results but also takes into account elements such as personal, social and emotional development and learners' well-being at school.

It also emphasizes the importance of the multi-level approach to diversity and inclusion: learners; teachers and support staff; school leaders; schools; sub-systems and systems (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. High-level policy framework
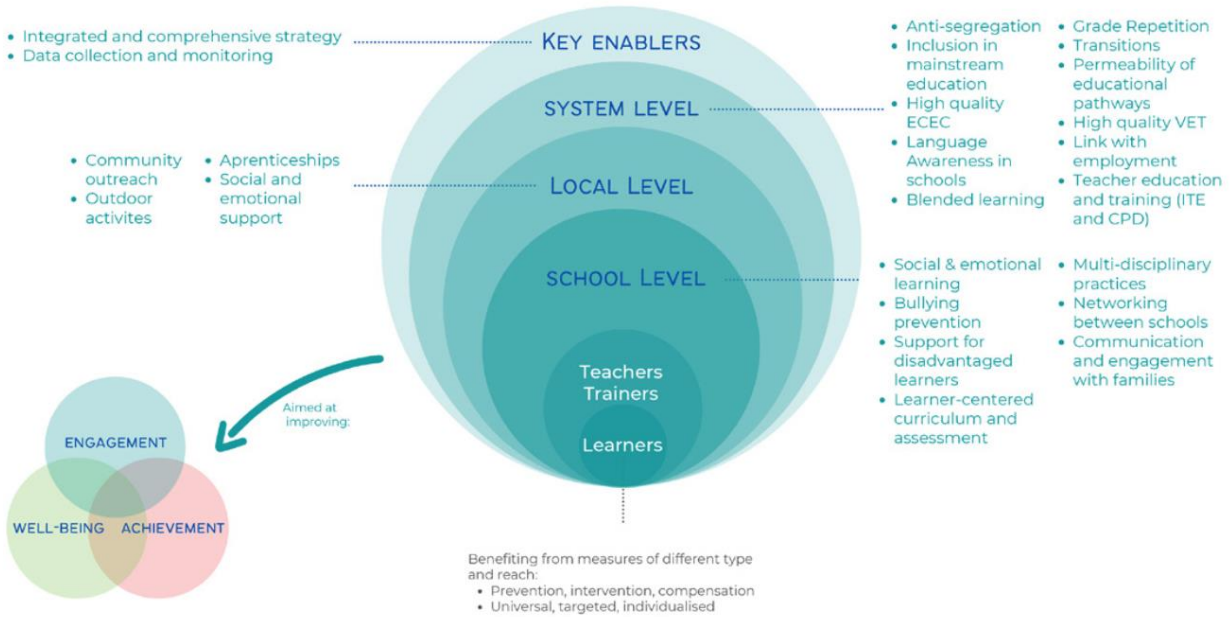
Source: European Commission (2022).

The present Roadmap aims to offer first steps for operationalising the Pathways policy framework into specific actions, capitalising on the state-of-the-art research and practical knowledge of the WG Schools/ Pathways. It builds on the shared understanding and recognition of the need of an integrated and comprehensive system which **effectively combines specific targeted support instruments** *designed in an inclusive way* (see Chapter 3) and **core 'implementation' pillars** which need to be put in place to ensure the effective implementation of an inclusive policy vision (see Chapter 4).

Chapter 3. The crucial role of targeted support in ensuring better educational outcomes for all

What is targeted support?

The CR on Pathways to School Success (2022) outlines the need for an integrated and comprehensive strategy towards school success that combines universal measures with targeted and/or individualised provisions for learners requiring additional attention and support. Specifically, **targeted support refers to tailored educational strategies and interventions designed to address specific needs of certain groups of students**. These groups may be identified based on factors such as socio-economic status, learning difficulties or exceptional abilities, language barriers, or other individual characteristics that may hinder their academic success and well-being. This diversity of needs manifests in multiple forms. On the one hand, it is seen as variations in cognitive abilities, where individuals possess different levels of skills and talents. On the other hand, diversity can also emerge as differences across social identities. **Recognising these distinctions is crucial in understanding the broad range of children with various learning needs and the challenges they might face within a rigid/non-flexible educational provision**.

According to the latest mapping on the availability of targeted support measures (for learning and socio-emotional development) across EU MS done by Eurydice (European Education and Culture Executive Agency., 2023), most policies and measures aim to ensure targeted learning support for students with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities, followed by support for refugee, migrant and ethnic minority students and then those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Targeted policies and measures promoting learning or social-emotional support for girls/boys, LGBTIQ+ or religious minority students are reported by a small minority of education systems (see examples in the table below).

Figure 3. Student groups addressed by targeted top-level policies and measures on learning
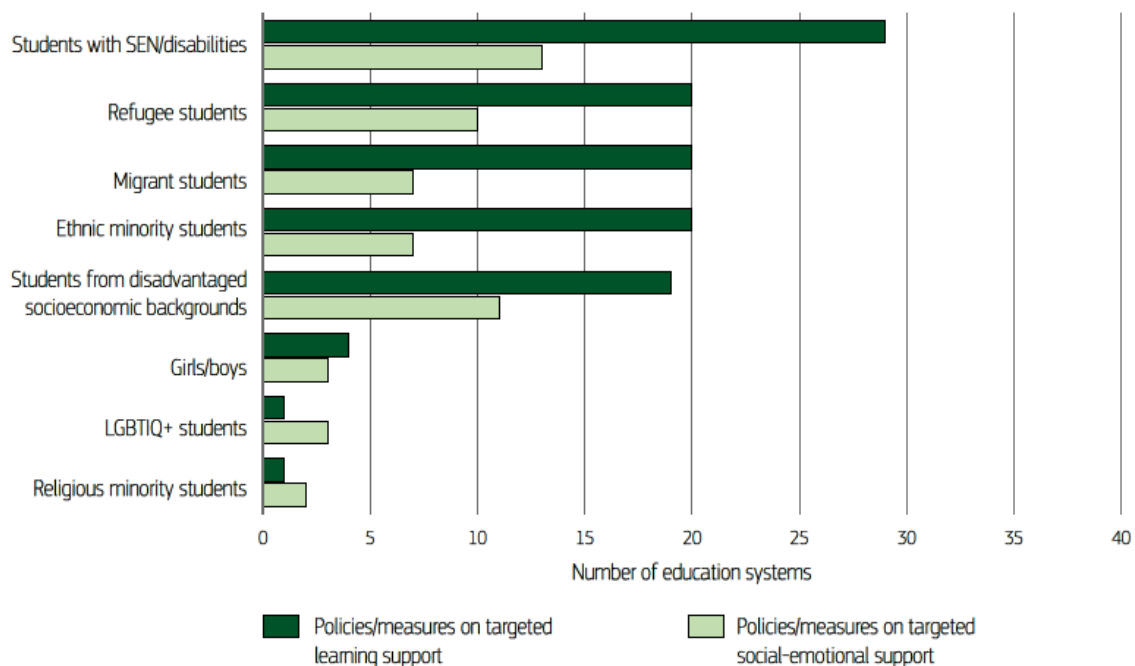
Source: Eurydice (2023).

Furthermore, a number of student individual needs and vulnerabilities **remain 'invisible' in schools and in policies**, which further hinders the provision of necessary support, as well as any efforts on sensitising school communities towards these needs (see for further mapping of the diversity of needs in (see WG Pathways reflection paper, September 2023).

*Table 1. Examples of specific targeted support measures across Europe*

Target group	**Specific goals/Objectives**	**Examples of countries/Programs**
Roma students	- Promote participation and inclusion - Ensure educational integration - Reduce disparities and promote equality	Bulgaria: National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of the Roma (2021–2030) Italy: National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma and Sinti (2021–2023) Lithuania: Plan of Measures for the Integration of Roma into Society (2022–2023)
Students with special educational needs or disabilities	- Ensure inclusive education in mainstream settings - Improve physical and digital accessibility - Enhance vocational training opportunities - Ensure assistance, integration and rights of disabled people and their participation in social life, mainly at school and work	Austria: National Disability Action Plan (2022–2030) Greece: National Action Plan for the Rights of People with Disabilities (2020) Montenegro: Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination and Promotion of Equality (2022–2027) Italy: LAW No. 104 of 5 February 1992 Framework law for assistance, social integration and rights of disabled people
Migrant and refugee students	- Guide integration and schooling - Support linguistic adaptation and inclusion - Offer proposals for integration and introduce intercultural education	Spain: Contingency Plan for Educational Attention to Ukrainian Learners (2022) Germany: Declaration on the Integration of Young Refugees through Education (2016) Italy: Intercultural Orientations. Ideas and proposals for the integration of pupils with a migrant background (2022)
Gender equality in education	- Promote equality between women and men - Integrate gender equality into school curricula	France: Gender Equality Label for Secondary Schools (2022) Portugal: National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (2018–2030) Spain: Organic Law on Gender Equality in Education (2022)
LGBTIQ+ students	- Combat discrimination and violence - Promote respect for differences - Provide awareness and training	Italy: National LGBT+ Strategy (2022–2025) Malta: Policy for Trans, Gender Variant, and Intersex Students in Schools (2015)
Religious or belief-based discrimination	- Combat religious discrimination - Promote values of human dignity	Germany: Joint Recommendation on Dealing with Antisemitism in Schools (2021)

		Romania: National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalisation, and Hate Speech (2021–2023)
Talented/gifted students	- Effectively identify and nurture exceptional abilities and potential - Ensure equitable access to specialised programs and resources	Austria: Dedicated ITE classes on the subject Portugal: National Association for the Study and Intervention in Giftedness (ANEIS) which supports schools in identifying students and training teachers

Source: *Eurydice (2023), OECD* (2021) *and WG discussions*

Key principles of inclusion underpinning targeted support provision

Based on the discussions within the WG Schools/Pathways and available research evidence, promising targeted support interventions should be built around the following principles, both at their design and implementation stages:
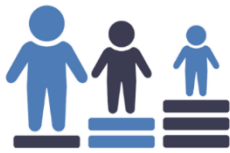
Equity as a precondition: The concept of equity is integral to inclusion. The aim here is to ensure that the achievement of educational potential is not determined by personal or social circumstances. This involves creating conditions where every student has equitable opportunities to succeed. According to the OECD's perspective, equity should be viewed not only as a precursor to inclusion but also as a multifaceted concept that goes beyond the allocation of resources (OECD, 2023). It involves the validation of individual identities and self-worth, which are crucial for a just and inclusive society.

Box 2. Equity in education policy vision

The Swedish Education Act reflects the importance of equity in education, which highlights three aspects of equity: equal access to education, equal quality of education, and compensatory education (meaning that education should take into account students' different needs and strive to offset differences in students' conditions).

In France, to promote equal opportunities, aid is allocated to pupils and students according to their resources and merits. The distribution of the means of the public education service considers differences in situation, notably in economic, territorial and social matters (Education Code, Article L 111.1, paragraph 5). (OECD, 2023).

Inclusive education as a human right: As Amstrong (2011) emphasises, the focus of inclusive education is not merely on **accessibility** but also on **quality, human rights, equal opportunities, and social justice**. By these standards, the success of inclusive education is measured not only by the removal of barriers for those traditionally marginalised but also by the reform and adaptation of the education system as a whole to be responsive to varying needs.

Inclusion as a process: Inclusion is a dynamic process aimed at eliminating barriers that hinder the presence, participation, and achievement of all learners. It necessitates a systematic change to accommodate students, rather than expecting students to adapt to the system. This reorientation is crucial as it places the necessity of addressing exclusion within the system itself and not on the individual learners. Policies for inclusive education, therefore, build upon anti-discrimination measures and identify mechanisms in education that ensure accessibility, affordability, acceptability, and adaptability to meet diverse learners' needs (Cerna et al., 2021).

Recognising intersectionality: is vital in understanding how various dimensions of diversity intersect in an individual. A person embodies multiple characteristics and, as a result, may experience different types of discrimination and disadvantages. This principle also acknowledges that certain aspects of one's identity may be more salient at different times and in different contexts. The recognition of intersectionality is crucial in tailoring educational approaches that respond to the complex and varied needs of students (Cerna et al., 2021). Inclusive policies and measures 'need to consider the specific, multifaceted needs of each learner' (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2023).

Box 3. Intersectionality in legislation

Despite the growing recognition of intersectionality as a critical factor in creating inclusive education environments, only a few EU countries have explicitly incorporated this concept into their national legislation. Finland, Germany, Greece, and Hungary have included intersectionality in their legal frameworks. This illustrates the ongoing challenge of translating complex, multifaceted understandings of identity and discrimination into concrete legal frameworks (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2022).

Non-Categorisation: advocates against grouping students based on certain characteristics or needs. It encourages an approach that views each student as unique, with individual potentials and challenges. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that, within targeted support, it is important to identify and understand the specific educational needs of students. While acknowledging the drawbacks of labels, such as stigmatisation and overgeneralisation, it is important to recognise that additional needs have to be identified and considered in the framework of a student's unique learning profile. The challenge lies in using such information constructively to facilitate targeted interventions, without allowing them to become stereotyped labels that may define or limit the student's potential. In practice, this involves a careful balance between identifying needs and avoiding negative connotations[3]. It's about **moving beyond labels to focus on individual learning profiles**, as suggested by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) (2023). This approach values the detailed information from reports and assessments, using them to tailor educational strategies effectively.

---

[3] An important aspect is addressing the stigma and political considerations associated with labelling, as seen in the reluctance of certain local authorities in France to have schools included in REP networks (Réseaux d'éducation prioritaire). This highlights the need for a sensitive and informed approach to labelling, ensuring that it aids in understanding and meeting student needs, rather than creating barriers.

Students are active agents of inclusion: Recognising student voice in targeted support emphasises the importance of involving learners, along with teachers and other school staff, in the decision-making processes that affect their education. This principle asserts that **students should have functioning platforms to express their perspectives, needs and suggestions, as well as shape decisions.** This means moving beyond decisions made solely by others to decisions that are shaped also by students' own perspectives and insights. Cultivating processes that help schools in empowering and providing the necessary means for students to engage – to make them feel acknowledged, their needs heard, backgrounds acknowledged and who's agency is recognised – is key. Together with the rest of the stakeholders, students should be seen as agents that help bring success for all, thus the success of whole communities and their future.

This remains a challenge since learners' voices are often unheard and students tend to be underrepresented in decision-making structures and are not given sufficient space to brainstorm and offer solutions for inclusion (EASNIE, 2023)[4].

Cooperation and meaningful stakeholder involvement: A comprehensive system of support should actively involve all relevant stakeholders from the outset, particularly in the design phase, to ensure alignment and commitment to the changes. It is important to **include the perspectives of learners, teachers, school management, and the community, and to offer support from municipalities and regional actors to schools**.

In line with the Council Recommendations and for their effective implementation, stakeholders hold the vital role of ensuring that schools act as learning environments which can safeguard and further reinforce democratic school culture which is based on mutual respect, dialogue, and cooperation.

Ensure smooth transitions between levels and forms of education: To ensure smooth transitions between different levels of education, it is crucial to maintain coherence and coordination across the system. While diversity—such as various educational tracks, types of schools, teaching styles, and pedagogical approaches—offers flexibility and opportunities for all students, it can lead to fragmentation if different parts of the system become disconnected and lose sight of the overall educational goals. To avoid this, adopting a life-course perspective is essential. This involves examining how different stages of schooling are aligned and how formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities interact to provide continuous and cohesive support to students. By focusing on these aspects, targeted support interventions can be more effectively designed to help students navigate their educational pathways seamlessly. (PPMI, 2014; Cerna et al, 2021).

---

[4] European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2023. Voices into Action: Including the Voices of Learners and their Families in Educational Decision-Making – Final Summary Report. (A. Kefallinou and D. Murdoch, eds.). Odense, Denmark

Chapter 4. Core pillars for achieving inclusion, success for all and ensuring effective targeted support

Following the exchanges within the WG and persisting challenges flagged by Member States and research, the core implementation pillars for enhancing students' well-being and academic success, as well as meaningful 'translation' of the targeted support measures into practice are:

	Pillar 1	Ensuring a **whole-school and whole-system approach** to education policy planning and implementation, which is also a pre-condition for other pillars to be put in place effectively
	Pillar 2	Developing **system of effective needs identification** allowing early detection of learners at risk of disengagement, underachievement and early school leaving, in order to provide timely and appropriate support, avoiding labelling or stigmatising of such learners
	Pillar 3	**Building professional capacity** (including teachers, support staff and school leaders) for inclusion, well-being and academic success
	Pillar 4	Ensuring adequate flexible and smart **resource allocation** in financial, organisational, political terms being key to drive system change
	Pillar 5	Designing **curriculum and pedagogical approaches** (teaching, learning and assessment practices)
	Pillar 6	Developing robust **data collection and monitoring** to inform policy design and steer its implementation

The underlying assumption is that by developing these pillars with a strong vision of inclusion and wellbeing at their core, a strong foundation can be established to support the **effective 'implementation' of policies in practice** (see *Conceptual framework below*). While this framework offers guidance, it recognises the need for both flexibility and adaptation to diverse contexts and specific challenges.

Figure 4. Conceptual framework for the Roadmap

Source: authors.

This chapter offers a more detailed look into each core implementation pillar by reflecting on what it means to have the pillar in place (defining its key building blocks), what are the key challenges that Member States face in putting this pillar in practice and what we can learn from countries that have successfully done so. For each pillar, a series of Key Self-Assessment Questions to support policy-makers to reflect upon their system are provided, together with a set of Policy Recommendations.

Pillar 1. Whole-school and whole-system approach

Defining the pillar and its key elements

A whole-school and whole-system approach represents an important pre-condition for educational reform and practice that emphasises the interconnectedness of all components—"interacting subsystems"—within the educational ecosystem (Cefai et al., 2021, p. 10). At the school level, it involves the **collective responsibility** of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and the entire educational community (including non-formal and informal education providers) but also the alignment and coherence of governance, planning, teaching and learning, and assessment practices. This ensures that all parts of the school operate synergistically to create a cohesive and supportive learning environment promoting academic success of all learners.

At system level, this implies a collaborative effort between policymakers, educational agencies, businesses, and relevant stakeholders (e.g. active civil society organisations, universities, social services) at **all levels of governance**. However, it also involves fostering internal coherence within and across policies, practices, and resources to ensure that reforms are systemic and sustainable (Hopkins et al., 2014)It acknowledges that improving education outcomes requires collaboration and coherence across the entire system, not just within schools but in the broader socio-political context that surrounds education.

At the EU level, this approach is at the heart of the Pathways for school Success policy framework, as well as other EU-level initiatives. Table 2. Key elements

Whole-school approach	Whole-system approach
School environment, focusing on creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for learning	*Policies and governance frameworks* prioritising inclusion, success for all and well-being are aligned at all levels
Collaborative leadership, with school leaders promoting inclusion and facilitating collaborative decision-making processes that involve all stakeholders	*National or regional policies* on education funding, curricula, teacher training, and assessments *are consistent and co-ordinated*[5]
Community engagement, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and actively engaging with parents, and families and other education and training stakeholders supporting learners inside and outside schools	*Inter-agency collaboration* enhances support for schools and students, bringing together various governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as different types of education providers (beyond schools) to ensure a

---

[5] The multi-level governance of education systems makes coordination of reforms particularly important. As shown by the literature, **co-ordinated reforms in different parts of a system have proven to be mutually reinforcing**. However, as education systems involve multiple levels of government, implementation of a 'comprehensive reform' may be **difficult to co-ordinate across different levels** of the administration, and **across multiple regional and local jurisdictions (**European Commission, 2022).

	holistic approach to inclusion and learning success
	Key role of municipalities, ensuring horizontal and vertical cooperation, and promoting autonomy, trust, and flexibility within the educational framework

Since both the whole-school and whole-system approaches assume a comprehensive, **collaborative effort** to create an inclusive environment, these approaches bring together **various stakeholders**, including teachers, school leaders, policymakers, students, families, municipalities, community organisations and other relevant actors, who collectively work towards common goals of school inclusion and well-being of students (Rooney et al., 2015; Jamstho, 2015; Vlcek and Somerton, 2023). For that, what is needed is **ownership and leadership** - bringing various stakeholders together and establishing **shared frameworks** (priorities, assessment strategies and alike) (Donnelly and Kyriazopoulou, 2014).

Persisting challenges

Despite the increased recognition of the importance of a whole-school and whole-system approach, there are persistent **challenges in implementing** them across diverse education systems within the EU.

➜ **Inconsistencies in policy interpretation and application**, leading to a "variegated policy environment" (Hardy and Woodcock, 2023, p.1). UNESCO 2020 GEM Report highlights that while international conventions advocate for inclusion, national laws often fall short, particularly in addressing the needs of various marginalised groups (footnote with the information from the bullet points). This disparity creates gaps in support systems. Moreover, a review from the PIONEERED research project indicates that formal policies inadequately address intersectional inequalities (Dunajeva and Siarova, 2024) and overlook the barriers students face throughout their educational journey and transitions between education levels (Dunajeva, 2022).

➜ **Insufficient capacity at the school and system levels to innovate and ensure collaborative culture:** this is often linked to lack of adequate professional development at all levels (accessible, funded and prioritised), inflexible school organisational practices and room for adaptation (especially in highly-centralized systems), high teacher-student ratios, curriculum overload and lack of prioritisation of the issues such as collaboration, well-being, inclusion and engagement (which can also be penalised through existing systems of professional appraisal rewarding academic achievement only).

➜ A successful implementation of a whole-school and whole-system approach **requires attitudinal shifts**, which are often hard to achieve (Schuelka, 2018). This challenge in particular was highlighted by participants during the Joint Session WG Schools, Pathways, and WG Equality and Values in Education and Training (2023-10-26). Such resistance to change may, for example, stem from deep-rooted biases towards certain groups of students, such as those with disabilities or from marginalised backgrounds, as a result impeding progress towards inclusive education and implementation of these approaches that are fundamentally built on inclusion (Pak and Parsons, 2020; Mac Ruairc, Ottesen, and Precey, 2013). This is also reinforced by the lack of representation of diversity among the school and education policy staff, with the system not being sufficiently adapted to allow more educators with a disability or with a migrant

background. Another source of resistance to change may be **stigmatisation of targeted support**, **or the perceived burden of adapting teaching practices** to SEN students (EU Working Group on Pathways to School Success, 2023-10-26). While these values and biases are strongly embedded in the culture and hence require a more bottom-up approach and grassroot initiatives, the meeting concluded with the crucial importance of **developing leadership for inclusion**. Leadership for inclusion combines distributed and transformative leadership models and it requires a fundamental shift in how schools operate. The school management is focused and dedicated to creating equitable opportunities and fostering an inclusive environment for all learners (Mac Ruairc, Ottesen, and Precey, 2013; Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020; EASNIE, 2018).

➔ **Lack of adequate resource allocation and lack of investment in transformative change**. Schools may struggle to provide necessary support, training, and infrastructure, limiting their ability to create inclusive learning environments. At the system level, a lack of investment prevents cohesive coordination and transformative reforms, perpetuating educational inequalities.

Promising approaches

Inclusion-oriented whole-school approach (Sweden): The power of positive attitudes towards inclusive education, implemented with the whole-school approach is aptly presented through the well-documented case of Essunga, a small rural municipality in western Sweden (Persson, 2013; Allan and Persson, 2016). Here, due to poor rankings, a school decided to holistically reform its pedagogical practices and approach to inclusion. As a result, classes were reorganised, teachers collaborated closely through study circles, teaching structures were reevaluated, and new practices of cooperation were laid down towards parents and students. In turn, the school's ranking dramatically improved, and this case was highlighted as an example of inclusion-oriented whole-school approach that promoted students' well-being and academic achievement (Barow and Berhanu, 2021). Important to highlight is that these changes did not require additional financial resources but were made possible by an attitudinal shift and the commitment of the school leadership.

Action Plan on Educational inclusion (Croatia): Zagreb has implemented a comprehensive Action Plan on Educational Inclusion, which included the expansion of early childhood education and care access, among other goals. This comprehensive approach necessitated Zagreb's proactive role as both city and regional authority in education, overseeing the administration, staffing, and infrastructure of kindergartens and schools. Notably, the city has spearheaded numerous initiatives to enhance inclusive education, such as salary increases for ECEC staff and the introduction of extended-stay programs in primary schools. Zagreb's commitment to SEN inclusion is exemplified through expanded roles for teaching assistants and strategic partnerships with health and social sectors, aimed at improving accessibility and support services within educational facilities (EU Working Group on Pathways to School Success, 2024-04-24).

From the 1st of September 2024, **France** has launched an experimentation to further improve the quality and relevance of accessibility and compensation measures proposed to pupils. By creating **schooling support centres (Pôles d'appui à la scolarité – PAS)**, the aim is to bring first level answers – on pedagogical adjustments, on adapted material, on human support, on family guidance – closer to the schools. Schooling support centres are a new service for parents and legal guardians of children with special educational needs, as well as an organisation that supports teachers, either in the classroom or in dedicated areas in schools and establishments. A coordinator and a specialised educator staff a PAS. Their role is to analyse requests, recommend solutions, provide impetus or intervene in situ whenever necessary. In order to respond rapidly to all the educational and pedagogical needs of pupils, they rely on the whole-school community, in particular on all the staff involved in assistance, support and care, whether from the school, education, health, paramedical or medico-social sectors.

Actionable steps for policy change

A whole-school and whole-system approach highlights that isolated interventions are insufficient for substantial progress, advocating instead for integrated strategies that address the multifaceted challenges faced by educational institutions. By promoting consistency and coherence across the entire system, the whole-school and whole-system approach enhances the capacity for continuous improvement, innovation, and adaptation, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and the well-being of all students. To promote this approach, below are key self-assessment questions and policy recommendations. These questions and recommendations may serve as guiding frameworks for educational stakeholders to assess their current practices, identify areas for improvement, and implement effective policies.

Key Self-Assessment Questions for policy-makers for putting WSA (whole-school approach and whole-system) in place

Distributed leadership and Governance	• Are school leaders encouraged to and active in promoting and modelling inclusive practices throughout the school community? • Are decision-making processes inclusive and transparent, involving diverse stakeholders? • Are students, including those from marginalised groups, involved in decision-making processes related to school policies and practices? • Are educators involved in a shared leadership model of decision-making?
Collaborative Culture	• Is the education system designed in a way to promote collaborations between different levels of governance (national, regional, local, institutional) and between different education stakeholders in and around schools? • Do teachers and staff collaborate with each other to support inclusive practices? • Do teachers and staff collaborate with the wider community to support inclusive practices? • Do different school actors (teachers, administrators, students, and the entire educational community) feel collectively responsible for promoting inclusion? • How do schools collaborate with informal and non-formal learning providers which support learners extracurricularly?
Vision for Inclusion	• Is there a clearly articulated vision/statement for inclusion, that emphasises diversity and equity as core values of the education system? • Are there clear objectives for achieving this vision for inclusion? • Is this vision communicated and reinforced among all stakeholders, including schools, school leaders, students, parents, and community members? • Is this vision accepted in schools? If there is low acceptance, have challenges and potential solutions been identified? Are the latter being implemented? • Do education policies actively promote a culture of respect, equity, and belonging for all students, staff, and community members? • Are there measures in place to prevent all forms of discrimination based on differences in background, ability, or identity? Are there any indicators to monitor based on which the actions to achieve the vision are being monitored?

Student engagement	• Are students involved in the process of defining a vision for inclusion at school/education system level? • Are there mechanisms for students to provide feedback on how included they feel in the school?
Parental and Community Engagement	• Are parents and the wider community involved in the development and implementation of inclusive education policies and practices? • Are there regular opportunities adjusted to parents' profiles and schedules for them to provide input and feedback on their student's education? • Education policies do foster partnerships with community organizations to support inclusion?

Source: OECD (2020) and authors' elaboration

Practical recommendations for national and regional policy actors

Define clear vision for inclusion, well-being and school success:

a. *Formulate and enforce inclusive education policies that mandate and support inclusive practices across all schools.*

b. *Ensure these policies are adaptable to the specific context and needs of the national or regional particularities. Develop a guideline framework that allows for local adaptation while maintaining consistency with national standards (in line with the centralised or de-centralised nature of your system).*

c. *Ensure all relevant actors, and especially students, are involved in defining inclusion policies. This can be done through structured consultations and the establishment of advisory groups for inclusion.*

d. *Emphasise in all relevant policy the rights of all students to receive a quality education in an inclusive environment.*

Ensure systematic policy coordination across different levels:

a. *Establish an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism to oversee school support structures, as for instance a national task force on inclusive education, that brings together relevant ministries such as education, health, social services, and labour.*

b. *Empower coordination at regional and local levels (e.g. through local coordinators or clusters) and encourage them to actively engage in the promotion of inclusive education and provide necessary support to schools.*

> **Foster multi-stakeholder collaboration:**

    a. *Institutionalize collaboration by creating formal partnerships between government agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, and parents to create a unified approach to inclusive education.*

    b. *Enforce and support social dialogue6 and multi-stakeholder collaboration in policy implementation processes, as well as spaces for civil dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders.*

Pillar 2. System of effective needs identification
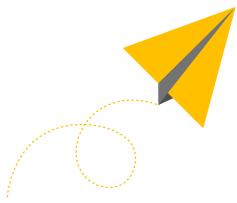
Defining the pillar and its key elements

As noted in Pathways to School Success, **early identification of both special education needs and learners at risk of underachievement and dropout is essential** (European Commission, 2022, p. 85). This aligns with UNESCO's background paper, which highlights that "[t]he identification of individual-level characteristics or conditions that may be associated with education has important planning and monitoring implications for inclusive education" (Braun and Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2020). Indeed, despite the risks linked to labelling, identifying additional needs is important to **shed light on specific groups and help make them visible to policymakers** and practitioners (Simon & Piché, 2012). Certain groups of children may be excluded not only by omitting them from textbooks or placing them at the back of the class but also by lack of explicit recognition in data collected on learners. Lack of data both results from and contributes to their invisibility. At the same time, data collection must be carefully designed to avoid harm.

Needs identification is, therefore, a **delicate balance between the necessity of understanding specific educational requirements and the risk of oversimplification and labelling**. While it is crucial to identify students' needs and to ensure they receive the appropriate support and resources, it is equally important to approach this process with nuance to avoid reducing students to labels that might limit their potential and stigmatise them.

An effective needs identification process in inclusive education relies on both **uniform ways to assess** and understand students' needs and **adaptable and flexible approaches** at the same time. Standardised needs identification processes, such as those proposed by the International Classification of Functioning Module, Disability and Health (ICF), the UNICEF/Washington Group on Disability Statistics Child Functioning Module, and the OECD classification system can offer some inspiration and can facilitate comparability. In decentralised systems, the need for standardised tools becomes even more critical. Indeed, these tools ensure consistency across regions and facilitate better communication between entities, such as schools, local education authorities and support services.

---

6 Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

Furthermore, it is also important to broaden the scope of needs identification to include emotional, neurological, and external factors, such as language barriers for migrant students, in order to ensure a **holistic understanding of each student's needs**. This can only be done through the **systematic inclusion of both learners and their families** in the process, this ensures that a diverse range of experiences and needs are included in the decision-making process that should follow the identification of needs (EASNIE, 2022). Such needs identification process should also be followed by timely and tailored support provision required for learners' development and success at a particular moment in time.

The use of **formative assessment** of strengths and needs can be instrumental in this regard, as well as the implementation of **multidisciplinary teams** (see also Pillar 3). The latter can, indeed, ensure that all aspects of the student's needs are considered, from medical to educational and social, allowing for a more tailored and effective support system (European Commission, 2022, p.44). Indeed, working in pairs or teams has been highlighted as an effective way to bring as much expertise as possible quickly (EASNIE, 2017). Moreover, the transformation of special schools into resource centres (EASNIE, 2023) can address both the need for specialised staff and adequate resources.

In this context, **teacher training** is essential (see Pillar 3). Indeed, teachers need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to identify and address diverse educational needs. It is, therefore, essential to develop trainings and define clear responsibilities for teachers, given their central role in the identification of additional needs (Smeets and Roeleveld, 2016; Aktan, 2020).

Persisting challenges

As noted, school success relies heavily on education systems' ability to effectively identify and address the diverse needs of all students. However, this process is fraught with challenges that can impede the accurate recognition and support of students' vulnerabilities.

➜ **Identifying (invisible) vulnerabilities:** One of the fundamental challenges of inclusive education is the impossibility of neatly distinguishing between students with and without special needs. Many forms of vulnerability do not present obvious signs and are often invisible (Moyse & Porter, 2015). Education systems need to understand that vulnerabilities can manifest in diverse and subtle ways.

➜ **Risk of labelling:** Targeting specific groups in education can reduce children to labels, which can, in turn, lead to stigmatisation and reinforce segregation (Silver, 2015). Labels, such as learning difficulties, can trigger low expectations and become self-fulfilling prophecies. By focusing on the exclusion of specific groups, educational practices highlight "markers of difference", creating distinctions by comparison to an implicit norm (Armstrong et al., 2010; Kauffman & Badar, 2014).

➜ **Risks with grouping:** Many educational practices still rely on grouping learners based on predefined categories to determine eligibility for services. This approach, which often requires students to fit into rigid classifications during the identification phase, risks overlooking additional or overlapping needs. This approach, derived from labelling, fragments the concept of inclusion, as true inclusion cannot be achieved one group at a time. Indeed, by focusing on specific groups, systems may reinforce segregation and miss the broader goal of creating an inclusive environment for all students.

➜ **Risk of excessive bureaucracy:** Developing standardised tools can involve complex administrative processes and bureaucracy. In some countries, identifying SEN is a very formal, highly bureaucratic act. ,

While this structure aims to prevent over-identification, it can also create administrative burdens that hinder efficiency and responsiveness.

➔ **Diagnostic inflation:** The increasing number of students placed in special classes, as seen in countries like Ireland[7], often stems from parental advocacy for additional support, driven by the perception that diagnoses lead to better resources. This trend can lead to pressure on the system. However, it is important to also consider the challenges in defining and measuring vulnerabilities. Inconsistent diagnostic criteria and varying incentives for classification create inflated numbers and unreliable data[8].

Promising approaches

Preventive Counselling Assistance Programme[9] (Slovenia): This programme provides specialised counselling to children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems with the aim of addressing these issues early to avoid institutional placement. It offers immediate, flexible support through a multi-specialist approach involving home visits and collaboration with schools and social work centres. Positive aspects of this approach include family engagement in problem-solving[10], a less stressful transition to institutional assistance when necessary, and a more effective, case-specific approach. This approach highlights the benefits of teamwork in enhancing expertise and efficiency, quick response times and the importance of multidisciplinary cooperation.

Children's voice project[11] (Denmark): This project emphasises making sure that children's voices are heard in decision-making through engaging children, parents, teachers, health professionals and social workers in developing a joint individual learning plan. Implemented through a series of structured activities, the project includes employing joint assessment, creating single planning frameworks, and conducting continuous follow-up on children's progress. This framework helps shift the focus from diagnoses to underlining children's strengths and resources, and hence use diversity and differences as resources for change. The positive outcomes of this programme include increased consideration of children's perspectives in educational settings and a more supportive, inclusive environment.

Care Team (European Schools): The Karlsruhe European School has developed an effective needs identification practice through the establishment of a Care Team. This team comprises teachers, psychologists, management representatives, specialised teachers, and students, working together to create a supportive and accommodating environment for all students. The Care Team operates through a confidential physical mailbox system, enabling students to report issues anonymously, which is a crucial step in identifying personal and educational needs without fear of stigma. Once an issue is reported, the Care Team meets to discuss and determine the best approach to address it. This multi-stakeholder approach is combined with regular monthly meetings where the team reflects on the school's needs and develops strategies to address them comprehensively. The Care Team concept is a key component of the school's broader social climate policy, which includes an anti-bullying task force. This integration allows for a holistic approach to needs identification, ensuring that both social and educational needs are addressed. The involvement of diverse stakeholders ensures that the Care Team can respond effectively to various issues. For example, when a bullying incident is reported, school psychologists provide consultation to the affected student, while class representatives or teachers offer additional support for students with specific learning needs.

---

[7] PLA report, WG Equality and Values, Brussels 2024 (forthcoming).

[8] Issue paper *'Students with special educational needs: the case of non-physical impairments'*, WG Equality and Values (forthcoming, 2024).

[9] https://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/case-study/preventive-counselling-assistance-slovenia

[10] This involves structured counselling sessions that aim to address the underlying causes of behavioural and emotional issues by changing the thinking and behaviour patterns of both parents and children. Families are involved from the early stage, participating in defining challenges, setting treatment objectives, and developing intervention plans.

[11] https://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/case-study/childrens-voice-placing-child-centre-copenhagen

This collaborative and systematic approach to needs identification ensures that the school can address issues in a confidential, practical, and targeted manner, fostering a safe and inclusive educational environment. (Gausas et al., 2022)

Early identification and support measures for learners with identified needs (Cyprus): In Cyprus, the District Committee of Special Education (DCSE) is responsible for evaluating children who may have special needs where all stakeholders, including parents and staff, are encouraged to provide information. After the assessment, the results are sent to the DCSE, which decides the placement of the students in question and the necessary measures to be implemented. It's worth mentioning that there's an early intervention programme for children with hearing impairment (ages 0-3), which is a collaborative effort among the health, education, and social welfare ministries. This program is considered a best practice (WG Equality and Values PLA in Brussels).

Non-categorical approach to determining special needs (Portugal): Portugal has adopted a progressive approach to inclusive education that covers all students, regardless of whether they have special needs, and that emphasises the non-categorisation of students, as articulated in Decree-Law No. 54/2018. This law ensures that all students can access the curriculum and receive necessary support without being labelled based on their personal characteristics. Instead of categorising students as having "special education needs," the law identifies them as needing "support measures" which prevents segregation and discrimination based on diagnoses or clinical labels. The identification and support processes occur at the school level through collaboration among parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and social services facilitated by multidisciplinary teams (OECD, 2022).

Resource centres as a mechanism for additional support (Serbia): In Serbia, resource centres have become a crucial mechanism for supporting inclusive education by assisting schools, teachers, parents, and students, particularly through the use of assistive technologies (AT)> As part of the "Let's learn together" project, initiated in 2021 by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with UNICEF, these centres were established to assess students' needs and provide tailored support. The centres follow a structured process: they identify a child's specific needs, decide on the appropriate support measures, and implement AT such as communicators, touch screens, and specialised software in regular school settings. The impact of the support is closely monitored to ensure it meets the student's needs. Additionally, the project introduced and online "Catalogue of assistive technology" to help educators and parents select the most suitable tools. By 2023, these resource centres had provided support to 1298 students across 188 educational institutions in Serbia.

In **France**, **the 'mental health' protocol** aims to offer a pathway to help identify and deal with pupils suffering from mental health problems. Each school must adopt a protocol that brings together the entire educational community and makes the issue of mental health a focus for joint work. It formalises the role of each person according to their area of expertise. It is accompanied by an inventory of mental health needs in the school and the programming of the resulting individual and collective actions. It also specifies the communication circuit, particularly with families, and the rules of confidentiality. The protocol relies on the expertise of health and social services staff (doctors, nurses, social services assistants and psychologists from the national education system) to ensure that pupils have a coherent health pathway and that appropriate measures are implemented.

Actionable steps for policy change:

Key Self-Assessment Questions for policymakers for putting a system of needs identification in place

Availability of clear guidance	- Are there national, regional or local guidances in place to ensure that data collection practices avoid labelling while making diverse student needs visible to educational practitioners? - Are there clear national or regional goals and action plans for improving needs identification and inclusion across the education system? - Are there regular national or regional reviews and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement in needs identification and inclusive education practices?

Participatory needs identification process

- Is there an agreed and clear needs identification process to measure students' needs effectively, while considering, at the same time, individual and contextual needs?
- Is there support and professional advice available to schools to guide them in the process of needs identification?
- Are there opportunities for all students to share their views about their experiences of going through needs identification processes and raise issues through mechanisms like focus groups or student councils?
- Are follow-up actions taken based on the feedback collected from students?

Availability of support

- Are teachers and other education staff supported in implementing holistic assessment strategies that include emotional, neurological, and external factors?
- Are teachers and other education staff supported in collaborating with specialists, such as neurologists, psychiatrists, and psychologists, to implement holistic assessment strategies that include emotional, neurological, and external factors?
- Do teachers and other education staff have the appropriate knowledge and training to perform early identification of potential issues in students, allowing them to effectively refer students to the necessary specialists for further assessment?
- Are resource centres available to support teachers and education staff with advice, training, materials, and best practices?
- Does your country ensure that schools have multidisciplinary teams working on early identification/intervention systems?
- Are there sufficient support services (e.g., specialised staff, counselling, assistive technologies) mandated and available to students that were identified as having diverse needs?

Practical recommendations for national and regional policy actors

Establish standardised yet holistic needs identification frameworks:

a. *Set up uniform needs identification processes (such as ICF or the OECD classification system).*
b. *Mainstream formative assessment to identify special education needs and students at risk of underachievement or dropout.*
c. *Expand needs identification to include emotional, neurological, and external factors, ensuring a holistic understanding of each student's needs.*
d. *Promote the engagement of learners and their families in the needs identification process to capture a wide range of experiences and needs.*

Enhance resource availability:

a. *Ensure schools have access to a robust bank of resources to support teachers and educational staff.*
b. *Transition from special schools to resource centres that provide knowledge and support on how to identify and address diverse student needs.*

Support teacher training and professional development:

a. *Provide professional development opportunities to enhance teachers' skills in need identification and inclusive education.*
b. *Support teachers and educational staff in implementing holistic assessment processes and offer access to resource centres for training and best practices.*
c. *Launch professional development initiatives focused on inclusive education to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge in identifying and addressing diversity.*

Implement early identification and support systems:

a. *Promote the creation of multidisciplinary teams at local and school level to provide comprehensive support, early warning, needs identification and intervention systems.*
b. *Ensure identification and support processes are collaborative, involving students, parents, teachers, and social services.*
c. *Promote initiatives and programs for parental involvement in the education system.*

Conduct regular reviews and monitoring:

a. *Perform regular reviews and evaluation of policies and practices to ensure continuous improvement in needs identification mechanisms.*
b. *Use feedback from students and other stakeholders to guide policy adjustments and improvements.*
c. *Establish measures to ensure data collection practices avoid labelling while making diverse student needs visible to educational practitioners.*

Pillar 3. Building professional capacity for inclusion

Defining the pillar and its key elements

Building professional capacity for inclusion involves creating and enabling conditions and opportunities to equip school leaders, teachers, and all school support staff with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to support diverse learners effectively. The ultimate objective is to enable educational practitioners to foster a nurturing, inclusive, learner-centred, and effective learning environments for all learners, enhancing educational outcomes.

Key elements of this pillar include:

Inclusive School Leadership: school leaders play a crucial role in creating and sustaining a school culture which promotes school success for all learners. They are responsible for setting the vision for inclusion, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment, and ensuring that inclusive practices are integrated into the school's policies and daily life. In other words, the school leadership can build an environment of proactive inclusion, where diversity and the necessary adjustments that need to be made to cater for the needs of all students are not seen as a problem but as an integral feature of all education settings. - Research indicates that for school leadership to be able to foster proactive inclusion, professional development and support needs to be in place (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020). Leaders equipped with the necessary competences in inclusive education can inspire and guide teachers and support staff, fostering collaboration and shared responsibility for the success of all students. Professional development for school leaders enhances their capacity to manage complex and diverse issues and settings and respond flexibly to emerging challenges. It enables them to lead by example, promoting continuous learning and innovation within their schools.

Teacher and staff training and continuous professional development: similar to school leaders, teachers must be also equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to address the diverse needs of students. This includes both initial teacher education (ITE) on inclusive teaching and continuous professional development (CPD) adapted to the concrete needs of teachers. School support staff (including teaching assistants and administrative staff) require training as well, since they play an important role in providing targeted support and fostering a holistic approach to student well-being. Research confirms that targeted teacher training is fundamental to the promotion of inclusive environments (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021; Hymel & Katz, 2019), as well as the establishment of professional learning communities (Nairz-Wirth & Feldmann, 2017).

Collaboration and multidisciplinary teams: Effective inclusion in schools lies on robust collaboration and resource sharing among teachers, support staff, parents, and external stakeholders. Multidisciplinary teams, both within and outside schools, play a crucial role in this collaborative framework. These teams, formed by teachers, psychologists, social workers, and other specialists, can provide comprehensive support to the diverse needs of students. They facilitate a holistic approach to education, ensuring that all aspects of a student's development are supported. Specialist roles within these teams offer more targeted support that schools cannot offer alone. By working together, these professionals create a network of support that is particularly relevant in promoting mental health and well-being (Bohnenkamp et al., 2023).

Persisting challenges

Several challenges persist that hinder the effective implementation of inclusive practices. While some challenges are more recent (e.g., teacher shortages), others are connected to issues that have marked educational landscapes for many years.

Teacher shortages present a significant barrier to achieving equitable, effective and inclusive education. The shortage is exacerbated by an ageing workforce and lack of interest (due to worsening working conditions, insufficient recognition and respect for the profession, limited professional progression, etc.) to enter the teaching profession on behalf of young graduates. As a result, some Member States are fighting this shortage by decreasing the requirements to teacher training, which can have a negative impact on building professional capacity for inclusion. With scarce numbers of trained teachers, schools struggle to implement inclusive practices effectively, leading to gaps in support, especially for the most vulnerable learners. Insufficient diversity within the teaching profession is another concern, since it can hinder the development of culturally responsive teaching strategies, which are crucial for engaging students from varied backgrounds.

Limited professional development in inclusive education and well-being remains a challenge, despite increase diversification of the teacher training offers. In many countries gaps can still be identified when it comes to diversity and inclusion topics being integrated in ITE. Participation in CPD focused on these topics is also a challenge, which leads to teachers being unprepared to address the complex needs of their students. This can also be linked with the teacher shortages, making it difficult to find substitute teachers during professional development moments. Without ongoing training in inclusive practices, teachers may struggle to implement effective strategies for differentiation and support, resulting in inadequate responses especially for the most vulnerable learners.

Insufficient integration of inclusion topics and strategies in teacher training. Inclusive practices should not be an add-on, but rather embedded across various types of training for teachers, considering that inclusion is something that should permeate their every action at the workplace[12].

Insufficient collaboration (due to curriculum overload, lack of enabling environment and limited capacity among others) between teachers, schools, with parents, and external stakeholders remains a significant barrier to inclusion and well-being promotion. With the exception of some MS where multidisciplinary teams are in place, gaps in communication and cooperation continue to undermine efforts to address the diverse needs of students. Teachers are often pushed to work in isolation, without robust partnerships between each other and with local communities and social/health services.

Promising approaches

A teacher training system relying on flexibility and comprehensive training offers (Malta): The example provided by Malta during the peer learning activity in May 2024 is a particularly relevant illustration of a flexible and comprehensive teacher training system. The Institute for Education (IFE) operates independently from and complementarily to other higher education providers of teacher training. The training offer of IFE is designed based

---

[12] Furthermore, research on the topic shows that teachers prefer learning interventions tailored on specific challenges at work, or implemented along their daily pedagogical workload. By having 'inclusion courses' that come as an add-on, while being generic and not tailored on daily needs, educators are put off from pursuing and internalising such training.

on the concrete needs of teachers. Indeed, the IFE in Malta, established nine years ago, was created to develop different pathways for becoming a teacher, as an alternative to the standard university training. The IFE offers courses to teachers who are still to meet the teacher requirements but also to others who are already fully qualified and would like to develop further. The IFE offers bachelor's degrees, master's degrees (including for leaders and STEM education), and courses on addressing students with special needs. They also offer micro-credentials, standalone modules, non-accredited teacher sessions, and parental guardian sessions.

Regional Teacher Support Centres and Knowledge Hubs (Slovakia): Slovakia supports its schools through regional teacher support centres that provide mentorship and promote professional development. These centres serve as knowledge hubs for sharing best practices and resources. The support centres enhance teacher capacity and promote the exchange of innovative educational strategies. The focus on building a community of practice among teachers fosters a collaborative approach to inclusive education. Establishing such regional support networks and knowledge hubs facilitates the dissemination of effective inclusive practices and strengthens professional capacity.

Training for all (France): Since 2020, the French trainee teachers and trainee school leaders all follow a course on inclusive schooling during their training year. It lasts at least 25 hours, i.e. 5 days out of the total training period. The training is backed up by observation placements organised in ordinary classes or in inclusive schooling arrangements. Specific optional in-depth modules may also be offered. Lifelong learning also offers training opportunities. In 2022, about 8% of the offer of the "academic training plans" were dedicated to inclusive education. The teachers (at primary and secondary level) can also get a national certification to become expert teachers on inclusive education practices (CAPPEI). They can then favourably contribute to the development of a school culture and disseminate the required knowledge to their peer teachers and educators.

MAIA project (Portugal): The MAIA project serves as an exemplary case of extensive CPD implemented to support the two laws of 2018 on curricula reform and inclusion. Launched in 2019, this national initiative combines training, supervision, and research to enhance pedagogical practices in assessment, teaching, and learning. The project has established a comprehensive framework for CPD, involving short-term courses, formative workshops, and study circles that integrate theoretical concepts with classroom practices. It emphasises creating learning communities within schools, fostering collaboration among teachers, and aligning assessment practices with inclusive educational values.

Learning support for disabled students (Italy): Support teachers are qualified teachers with a further university specialization obtained through a 60-credit course. They hold the educational responsibility for disabled students with the whole class council.
Ministerial Decree 188/21 provided for the activation of training courses aimed at teaching staff not qualified for learning support working in classes with students with disabilities with the purpose of ensuring school inclusion as well as the principle of co-ownership in taking charge of pupils' individualized learning plans.

Actionable steps for policy change:

Key Self-Assessment Questions for putting professional development systems for inclusion and success for all in place

Teacher training and professional development	• Are comprehensive professional development (ITE and CPD) programmes in place to equip teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to handle diverse learning needs? • Do training programmes effectively address inclusive teaching practices and the broader spectrum of student diversity (e.g., disabilities, socio-economic background, migrant background? • Are other professional development opportunities (such as mentorship, learning communities, networks of practice and support) provided to enhance teachers' competences in dealing with diverse and complex student needs?

	• Are these professional development opportunities relevant for educators and their daily challenges? • Are these professional development opportunities accessible for educators (e.g. during working hours while substitution is provided, geographically accessible, monetarily accessible, etc.) • Is there any monitoring and follow-up made of how teachers and education staff are implementing the training they received?
School Leadership	• Are school leaders trained and supported to foster inclusive education within their schools? • Are school leaders equipped with necessary competences to provide effective and collaborative leadership and manage change? • Do school leaders have to promote and report on inclusive practices implemented in their schools?
Flexibility and adaptability	• Do education policies promote flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods to cater to diverse learner needs? • Do training initiatives provide teachers with the necessary knowledge to adapt and personalise teaching approaches to better cater to the needs of each student? • Are teachers provided with sufficient autonomy and support to experiment with and implement new teaching strategies that promote inclusion? • Are educators prepared to engage in collaboration with stakeholders that aid them with experimenting with and implementing new strategies for inclusion? • Are there mechanisms for teachers to share practices and collaborate on inclusive education initiatives?

Practical recommendations for national and regional policy actors

Enhance Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development

a. *Initial Teacher Education: Invest in consistent updating of ITE to ensure that teachers can start their profession with a basic level of competences for inclusive education, but also with attitudes towards pursuing CPD later in their careers. These programs should cover key topics such as inclusive pedagogies, equity and social justice, multicultural education, and special needs education. Equally important is to provide training for teachers and school leaders on data use, to know how to effectively collect, interpret and use data to support all students and identify areas for improvement in terms of inclusion and teaching practices.*

b. *Continuous Professional Development: Invest in comprehensive CPD programmes that equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for inclusive education.*

c. *Integration of Research and Practice: Foster strong links between academia and education practitioners. Encourage collaboration among ministries, education agencies, and universities to ensure that teacher training programmes cover the practical needs of teachers and are informed by the latest evidence available in the scientific literature.*

d. ***Diverse Pathways for Teacher Education:*** *Implement flexible pathways for becoming a teacher, while ensuring minimum quality standards through accredited programs and modular courses that are suited to diverse profiles.*

e. ***Train the Trainer:*** *Teacher Trainers/Educators should fully engage in CPD and see themselves as lifelong learners. Trainers need to model this mindset, cultivating a habit of reflective practice helps teachers to continuously improve their teaching strategies. Trainers must instil values of equity and inclusion, ensuring that trainees can create supportive environments for all students, with specific skills and knowledge that allows targeted support for learners at risk of exclusion, while looking into how specific targeted interventions for more vulnerable learners can be combined with holistic education approaches that seek to cater for the needs of all learners*

Promote Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

a. ***Professional Learning Communities:*** *Establish such communities where teachers and school leaders can share best practices, resources, and experiences. This collaborative approach promotes continuous learning and improvement in inclusive education practices.*

b. ***Action Research****: Make use of Learning Communities or similar structures to implement Action Research on developing inclusive practices in education and training. This can empower teachers to not only develop competences for facilitating inclusive education but also to understand their context better and tailor solutions to local/identified challenges . This can also contribute to increasing the stance of the profession as well.*

c. ***Resource Hubs and Knowledge Networks:*** *Create national and regional resource hubs that facilitate the sharing of inclusive education materials, strategies, and available evidence. Encourage schools and universities to collaborate with these hubs to ensure these hubs remain dynamic and updated.*

Establish networks of teacher support

a. ***Enhance the role of mentoring:*** *Establish structured mentoring programs, especially for novice teachers, to ensure a smooth transition into the profession and support their development of inclusive teaching practices. Experienced teachers should be paired with new teachers to provide guidance, share best practices, and offer emotional and professional support. This approach not only enhances the skills of novice teachers but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and collaboration within schools.*

b. ***Specialist Support Roles:*** *Acknowledging that teachers need support in working with diverse students, promote specialist roles within schools, such as inclusion coordinators, learning support teachers, and school counsellors.*

Foster Inclusive School Leadership

a. **Leadership Development Programmes:** *Invest in leadership development programs that focus on inclusive practices. These programs should equip school leaders with the skills to promote a positive school culture, support teacher development and well-being, and engage effectively with different key stakeholders in and around schools.*

b. **Distributed Leadership Models:** *Encourage leadership models where responsibilities are distributed among staff, fostering a collaborative and inclusive school environment.*

Pillar 4. Resource allocation

Defining the pillar and its key elements

This pillar, which is closely linked to needs assessment, ensures that specific needs are identified and addressed promptly and effectively. By integrating these needs into a dynamic and agile education system, schools can prioritise student-centred approaches, preventive methods, and non-categorisation (EASNIE, 2023). To effectively address these needs, it is essential to ensure that adequate resources are made available both in urban and rural settings. Schools should have access to a robust bank of resources to support teachers and educational staff in addressing each student's specificity. Additionally, a dynamic and agile education system requires not only more tools but also an increase in specialised staff. Specialised educators working alongside subject teachers are essential to support diverse learners and enhance the overall educational experience effectively.

Even though inclusive education relies primarily on the school's pedagogical approach, vision and management, sufficient, adequate and continuous funding remain crucial. Effective implementation of inclusive education measures requires moving beyond the current tendency to rely on reactive input funding based on identified needs and class size. Systematic stakeholder involvement plays a vital role in sustaining initiatives through changes in government policies, ensuring that ethical and practical considerations guide resource allocation (EEA Working Group on Pathways to School Success, 2024-01-18).

Transitioning from reactive to proactive resource allocation strategies—along with increasing resources where possible—is essential for fostering inclusive education systems that meet the diverse needs of all students. Proactive resource allocation offers greater flexibility, allowing for responsive and equitable adjustments across diverse educational settings.

Increasingly, European countries are developing **flexible targeted support systems** and reorganising special provisions for students with SEN to foster inclusive education. These efforts aim to create a comprehensive continuum of support, ensuring that all students have access to necessary resources and opportunities for learning (EASNIE, 2023) and receive the support they need to succeed. These flexible support systems require the effective allocation of human and financial resources, as well as effective coordination process. (Re)allocation of resources is fundamental in this process, requiring funding models that prioritise flexibility and responsiveness, for schools to better address the unique learning requirements of all students (OECD, 2023). While resources are often necessary to ensure additional support to diverse students through, for instance, additional specialised staff, there are examples of

education institutions that manage to improve their inclusion indicators without necessarily retaining more resources, but by better distributing them. **Flexibility** is then a key element in resource allocation to supports inclusive education.

In a similar vein, **smart funding** assumes strategic allocation of financial resources to maximise educational outcomes, ensuring that funds are directed towards programs and initiatives that effectively address the needs of all students in an inclusive manner. Smart funding is linked with implementing and upscaling innovation within education (European Commission, 2018, p.62). Smart funding is also associated with the acquisition of appropriate technology infrastructure, hence contributing to digitalisation efforts (Van Der Graaf et al., 2021, p.13).

Resource sharing is another key strategy, enabling schools to pool resources, expertise, and support services to maximise their impact and reach and assist a broader range of students. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of collective responsibility, promotes the efficient use of available resources and facilitates an equitable distribution of essential materials, specialized expertise, and supportive resources throughout the educational ecosystem..

Adopting a whole-school and whole-system approach ensures that resources are not only distributed effectively but also utilised in a coordinated manner to support the diverse needs of all learners (see image below). This approach enhances the sustainability and impact of inclusive education initiatives by leveraging the strengths and contributions of various stakeholders towards common educational goals.

Community: Business owners can provide scholarships, work placements, and funding for events, creating diverse opportunities for students. Community organisations (e.g. libraries, cultural centres) and Non-formal Education can offer additional learning opportunities	**School**: Uses available resources wisely, reaches out to advocacy groups for resources, and ensures that they are targeted and used effectively.
	Resource Management	
Municipality: Creates a structured approach within the municipality to pool resources and initiate collaboration, seeking additional funds from central authorities and local businesses.	**State**: smart budget planning and inclusive funding models for targeted support.

Source: (EU Working Group on Pathways to School Success, 2024-01-18)

Persisting challenges

Resource allocation, which flexible and smart funding approach, assumes a new mode of thinking, focusing on "collaboration, acceptance of diversity, effective dialogue and resource sharing", rather than competition for resources (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011, p.77). Nevertheless, some challenges to its implementation may arise.

➔ **Reluctance to adopt a paradigm shift:** Adopting a paradigm shift toward inclusive and flexible resource allocation is difficult, as it requires not only a departure from traditional models but also a

fundamental reorientation of mindsets, cultures, and policy-making frameworks. Such a transition demands substantial transformation in institutional practices and societal attitudes.

➔ **Lack of coordination and empowerment of municipal actors:** transitioning to the decentralised and flexible system requires consistent inclusive vision and coordination. Fiscal incentives and income redistribution among municipalities or regions are critical to school success, alongside incentives for good teachers to choose disadvantaged areas (Mangiaracina, 2016, p. 28).

➔ **Difficulty quantifying and allocating increased financial supports to enable system change**: The successful implementation of flexible funding models depends on access to real-time and reliable data to track student needs, progress, and outcomes. Collecting, managing, and using data in education can be complex due to privacy concerns, technological infrastructure limitations, and the capacity of schools and municipalities to analyze and act on the data.

Promising approaches

An expanded role for municipalities: Decentralisation is conducive to giving municipalities more power in shaping policies in line with inclusive practices. To that end, Eurocities emphasised the municipal dimension of inclusive education, highlighting the positive trend in decentralisation in education policies, with more responsibilities being transferred to municipalities. Key instruments at the municipal level include demographic analysis for equitable school planning, defining catchment areas for fair student distribution, and admission policies that consider vulnerable groups. The examples mentioned were successful strategies from various cities, such as Cluj Napoca's education cluster, Milan's segregation monitoring, Oslo's additional resources for segregated schools, and Barcelona's investment in teacher retention (EU Working Group on Pathways to School Success, 2024).

Decentralised funding system (Norway): In Norway, the decentralisation of education policy grants municipalities significant autonomy in resource allocation and allows for "local room to manoeuvre", enabling them to tailor support services and initiatives to address the unique needs of their communities (OECD, 2020; FPIES, 2017). This flexibility, coupled with the long-standing and substantial efforts in Norway to increase inclusive education (Uthus and Qvortrup, 2024), foster a culture of inclusion by allowing schools to "use various types of programs to counteract any sense of exclusion" (Corral-Granados et al., 2023), such as investing in small class sizes, additional support staff, personalised learning programs, and specialised resources to meet the needs of students. In other words, by embracing decentralised decision-making, schools in Norway were able to invest better in inclusion within its education system, while ensuring adaptability and responsiveness to the diverse student needs.

Flexible funding model (Ireland): Traditional funding mechanisms often rigidly allocate resources based on historical costs and narrow program criteria, effectively limiting innovation and adaptability. However, more flexible models—like **Ireland'**s evolving Further Education and Training (FET) system[13]—are demonstrating how adaptability in funding can facilitate more inclusive and responsive education. Rather than relying on historical data, Ireland's FET has been pioneering an outcome-based approach, putting the needs and potential outcomes for learners at the forefront[14]. This flexibility isn't just theoretical; it has practical applications for creating a more inclusive educational landscape. For example, the inherent flexibility allows for dynamic resource allocation in response to emerging crises. In the context of the Ukraine crisis, such a flexible funding model was able to swiftly reallocate resources to provide essential services, such as language training and vocational courses, to facilitate quick societal integration.

---

[13] Unlike higher education, FET is a more inclusive structure that offers a wide array of vocational and educational training tailored to different demographic groups, including school leavers, the unemployed, and those looking to upskill.

[14] See https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/99ca806e56/fet-funding-model-review-june-2022.pdf

School cluster system[15] **(Malta and Portugal):** This approach exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to educational resource allocation and support, emphasising flexibility and localised decision-making (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014). Each cluster operates as a collaborative network, pooling resources and expertise to meet the diverse needs of its member schools. This collaborative approach not only optimizes the allocation of resources but also facilitates inter-school collaboration, as well as fosters a supportive environment where schools can share best practices, professional development opportunities, and specialised support staff such as counsellors or special education experts (Hulme et al., 2018, p. 11). This organisation also provides an effective framework of support for schools to implement inclusive education (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016, p.12), and, importantly, the decentralised decision-making to the cluster level ensures that resources are allocated based on local needs and priorities.

School of change (Lithuania): The "Schools of Change" initiative in Vilnius City focuses on strategic educational reform by enhancing management practices and addressing disparities among educational institutions. This project includes **participatory budgeting, which engages students in the democratic process of allocating public funds for school projects that emphasise sustainability.** The 2023 Participatory Budget has seen significant engagement, with 29% of Vilnius schools participating and students voting for various projects, including relaxation areas, motivational installations, and educational workshops.

Local school contracts (France): Based on the observation that the priority education system in **France** could create threshold effects, local support contracts (CLA) were introduced in 2021. They allow a more progressive approach to the allocation of resources to schools, offering **local flexibility that takes account of the specific characteristics of each area, enabling educational measures to be tailored to the specific needs of pupils and schools**. This funding mechanism, which rewards projects set up by teachers in their schools, not only encourages a fairer distribution of funds, but also the development of innovative and relevant educational projects that aim to reduce educational inequalities and promote educational success for all. By encouraging collaboration between local players and schools, CLAs also strengthen social cohesion and contribute to equal opportunities.

Actionable steps for policy change:

Key Self-Assessment Questions for policymakers for putting flexible and proactive research allocation systems in practice

Flexibility and Responsiveness of Resource Allocation	• Do resource allocation regulations and practices prioritise the adaptability of educational institutions to address the diverse learning needs of all students? • Are funding mechanisms flexible to accommodate evolving educational practices and student requirements?
Equity and Inclusion in Resource Allocation	• Are the current funding models designed to ensure equitable distribution of resources across all educational settings? • Do current resource allocation strategies promote inclusion and cater to the needs of all students, especially students learning in spite of vulnerability? • Can gaps in current resource allocation be quantified – where are more resources needed and how can these gaps be addressed?

---

[15] This system, known as the School Development Teams (SDTs), groupes schools into clusters based on geographical proximity and similar educational needs.

Promoting Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

- Are challenges in implementing inclusive resource allocation monitored and addressed?
- Are there capacity-building efforts in place to facilitate the transition towards inclusive education practices in resource allocation?

Practical recommendations for national and regional policy actors

Ensuring flexibility in Funding Mechanisms:

a. *Adopt funding models that prioritise flexibility and responsiveness to address diverse student needs.*
b. *Encourage decentralisation in funding systems to empower local communities and schools in better tailoring support services and initiatives.*
c. *Establish mechanisms for continuous evaluation and adjustment of funding allocations based on evolving educational practices and student demographics, while also evaluating the implementation of inclusive principles in these mechanisms.*

Investing in capacity building and mindset shift:

a. *Allocate resources towards comprehensive capacity-building programs aimed at equipping teachers, policymakers, and other stakeholders with the essential competences required for implementing inclusive resource allocation practices.*
b. *Develop awareness campaigns and professional development opportunities to promote a shift in institutional practices and societal attitudes towards inclusive resource allocation.*

Promote resource sharing:

a. *Encourage collaboration and resource sharing among educational institutions to maximise the impact of available resources in fostering inclusive practices.*
b. *Establish platforms or networks for teachers to exchange best practices, teaching resources, and expertise in inclusive education.*
c. *Provide incentives or recognition for schools and teachers who actively participate in collaborative resource-sharing initiatives.*

Pillar 5. Curriculum and pedagogical approaches

Defining the pillar and its key elements

Curriculum and pedagogical approaches that acknowledge *and* celebrate differences among learners are pivotal pillars in fostering inclusive education. This begins with the development of **inclusive core curricula** that integrates diverse content, materials, and assessment methods, while also fostering student engagement, and **pedagogical approaches** (including teachers' attitudes) towards inclusive education (Johnsen, 2014; Florian and Beaton, 2018; Boyle et al. 2020; University of Cambridge, n.d.). Accordingly, "the key element of inclusion is not individualization but the diversification of the educational provision ..., where the teaching and learning process, and the curriculum consider from the very beginning the diversity of needs of all students" (Imaniah and Fitria, 2018, p.2)

Pedagogical approaches must be defined by **sensitive and adaptable teaching methodologies** that reinforce the principles of inclusive education and meet the varied needs of students (especially SEN students) (Batu et al., 2017). In other words, by adopting personalised and flexible teaching methods, teachers can effectively help overcome learning barriers students may face, promoting a more inclusive learning environment (Agius, 2024). Additionally, the adaptation of teaching approaches to **address the evolving needs of students** ensures that inclusion remains a dynamic and responsive aspect of the educational experience (UNESCO, 2024; NCSE, 2024).

Curricula need to incorporate emotional skills in order to support a safe and empathetic environment in schools, where every student can participate in the learning process equally. The integration of **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and life skills** in education allows students to more effectively integrate into communities and collaborate successfully with others (Hassani and Schwab, 2021; Dussault and Thompson, 2024). Over recent decades, schools have increasingly adopted social-emotional learning interventions to enhance students' non-academic abilities, relying on strong evidence regarding the positive effects of SEL on enhancing equity and inclusion of education (Lee et al., 2023). Importantly, the implementation of SEL must happen through the cooperation of various actors, most importantly the parents, and across various fields beyond education, thus requiring a holistic—at the level of the school and entire system—approach to inclusion (Dussault and Thompson, 2024).

Furthermore, ensuring that all young people reach **an adequate level of basic skills** to be able to participate successfully in our societies and economies is key to promoting equity. Socioeconomic background remains a decisive factor for basic skills performance with underachievement being much more frequent among disadvantaged students than among their advantaged peers. Pedagogic approaches adaptable to the needs of different students and adjusted to their diverse learning paces are hence crucial to promote basic skills achievement for all.

Assessment practices that are able to capture the diverse ways in which students learn should also be promoted and used, to ensure all students are given the opportunity to develop to their full potential. Summative assessment practices need to be complemented with **formative and ipsative[16] assessment**, to ensure assessment promotes reflection, learning and growth, rather than simply measuring certain

---

[16] LLLP (2021), Position paper on well-being and assessment

indicators that are often insufficient to capture the complexity of teaching and learning processes (European Commission. Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture., European Institute of Education and Social Policy., and ECORYS., 2023). For instance, the ongoing feedback and adjustment that characterises formative assessment is particularly beneficial for students with diverse learning needs (Black and Wiliam, 2009), as well as the variety of assessment methods that allows students with different strengths and learning styles to demonstrate their knowledge (Carless, 2012). Moreover, by gathering frequent data on student progress, formative assessment enables teachers to tailor instruction and provide targeted support to meet each student's needs (Sanford, Park, and Baker, 2013).

Persisting challenges

The challenges to improving curricular and pedagogical approaches towards a more inclusive education system are multifaceted, involving both a lack of clear frameworks and the need for coordinated stakeholder collaboration.

➔ **Lack of guidance and frameworks:** One of the primary challenges is the lack of guidance and frameworks for restructuring education systems in a more inclusive manner. Without clear, cohesive guidelines, schools and educators may struggle to implement inclusive pedagogical strategies effectively, leading to inconsistencies in practice and outcomes. To effectively incorporate inclusive pedagogical strategies and SEL into education, there is currently **no cohesive framework** that provides clear guidelines for implementation in education (Dussault and Thompson, 2024). Such a framework is necessary to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders from different fields and enable collaboration for developing tailored SEL programs that address the specific needs of diverse groups.

➔ **Insufficient involvement of Higher Education institutions and education support services**: The involvement of Higher Education Institutions and education support is critical in advancing inclusive practices in the curriculum and pedagogical strategies, especially when it comes to researching, piloting and validating successful approaches.

Promising approaches

Co-teaching (Ireland): In Ireland, the approach to co-teaching has evolved significantly since its introduction in 1993, reflecting a progressive shift towards inclusive education. Central to this evolution is the adoption of co-teaching as a pedagogical strategy aimed at creating inclusive learning environments. This approach involves additional teachers supporting classroom instruction to meet diverse student needs, enhancing engagement, attendance, and academic achievement, while also fostering a more equitable educational environment. The implementation of co-teaching has yielded notable educational outcomes: students have shown improvements in academic results and their satisfaction with their learning experiences increased. Furthermore, teachers experienced enhanced professional development, increased collaboration with peers, and the acquisition of new instructional methodologies. These outcomes underscore the effectiveness of this pedagogical innovation in promoting inclusive education practices (EASNIE, 2023).

Blended learning (Sweden): Another promising pedagogical approach to inclusive education is blended learning. In **Sweden**, for example, the use of blended learning through digital tools to promote inclusive education is exemplified by schools such as Kunskapsskolan and the Sigtuna Foundation. Kunskapsskolan, a network of schools across Sweden, employs a personalised education model that integrates digital platforms with traditional classroom instruction (Eiken, 2011). Students use the digital tool "Kunskapsporten" to access a wide range of learning resources, track their progress, and set individual learning goals (Handscomb, n.d.). This platform allows teachers to provide personalised support and feedback, ensuring that students with diverse learning needs, including those with special educational needs, receive the necessary support to succeed with their studies (Rönnberg, 2019).

Kunskapsporten is not only a pedagogical model but can be seen as an approach to education from the entire school's perspective: for example, spaces are organised in a way to facilitate inclusion and individualised attention, and the study pace of the curriculum may also be individually adjusted (Bilbo, 2012). This model was seen as promising and other schools began using it to restructure their pedagogical approaches (see example of the Netherlands, discussed in Stevens, 2021; Mhairi and Quinta, 2021).

> **Language aware curriculum (Finland):** The Finnish National Agency for Education has updated the curriculum for basic education in a way that places great emphasis on the role of languages in learning. Its values are specifically connected to the Constitution of Finland, Non-discrimination Act 21/2014, and to human rights. Under to the curriculum, pupils from diverse linguistic backgrounds should be able to encounter each other in schools and learn together in interactions taking place in other languages than the language of schooling. Thus, the goal of the curriculum is to provide educational equity for all pupils, and to ensure that every pupil, regardless of their background, achieves effective literacy and academic language skills during basic education. As a result, the current curriculum emphasises that language-sensitive teaching is relevant for every pupil, and targets not only Finnish language learners (Alisaari, J., Vigren, H. & Mäkelä, M.-L., 2019).

Actionable steps for policy change:

Key Self-Assessment Questions for policy-makers for developing inclusive curricula and pedagogies

Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches	• Does your current curriculum integrate diverse content, materials, and assessment methods to cater to the needs of all learners? • Are frameworks or guidelines in place to guide the implementation of inclusive pedagogical strategies and SEL? • Are specific pedagogical approaches that promote inclusion and accommodate diverse learning styles widely used? • Do teachers' attitudes and instructional methods reflect sensitivity towards inclusion and diversity?
SEL Integration	• Is SEL integrated into the educational framework to support emotional development and inclusion? • Are there strategies in place to ensure that SEL is effectively implemented across different educational levels and settings? • Are parents and other stakeholders involved in promoting SEL and fostering a supportive learning environment?
Flexibility and Adaptability in Teaching Methods	• Are teaching methods most widely used flexible and adaptable to meet the evolving needs of students, particularly those with SEN? • Are professional development opportunities available to teachers to enhance their ability to employ personalised teaching methods? • Is the use of flexible teaching strategies in promoting inclusion and removing learning barriers measured? • Are partnerships with relevant stakeholders established to advance inclusive practices in curriculum and pedagogical strategies?

Practical recommendations for national and regional policy actors

Develop Comprehensive Frameworks and Guidelines:

a. *Develop and disseminate comprehensive frameworks and guidelines that provide clear, actionable steps for implementing inclusive pedagogical strategies and SEL across diverse educational settings.*

b. *Ensure these frameworks are adaptable to address the specific needs of students, including those with diverse learning requirements and mental health considerations.*

c. *Foster partnerships with relevant institutions and relevant stakeholders to co-design and implement tailored SEL programs that enhance students' social-emotional competencies and overall well-being.*

Promote Innovative Pedagogical Approaches:

a. *Encourage the adoption and adaptation of innovative pedagogical approaches and collaborative teaching strategies to facilitate inclusion.*

b. *Provide support and resources for teachers to implement these approaches effectively, ensuring they meet the diverse needs of students and enhance their engagement and academic success.*

c. *Provide support and resources to students to adapt to new approaches.*

d. *Allocate resources for ongoing professional development and training opportunities that emphasize inclusive teaching practices, SEL integration, and leadership development at all educational levels.*

Pillar 6. Data collection and monitoring

Defining the pillar and its key elements

Regular data collection and monitoring are necessary for building and maintaining inclusive education systems. They are crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of the policies implemented and the efficiency of resource-allocation as well as to support continuous improvement by showing "what works" – while they also serve the transparency of public spending. Beside supporting policymaking and building inclusiveness at the school level, they also help to inform other stakeholders, including students with individual learning needs and their parents, about the outcomes of the support available. The data collected can be also used and tailored for different purposes – e.g., monitoring the system needs and inform the policy / practice improvement , follow-up the progress of individual students with diverse needs, that serve the purpose of supporting the development of the student and informing teachers and support staff especially during transition between schools.

Developing an effective monitoring system and evaluating the progress towards inclusive education require the identification of relevant indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, to capture key aspects of the progress. Indicators need to be measured and followed through systematic and **regular collection of relevant, reliable and sufficient data** at the school level (to be further aggregated at the regional and national levels). Data collected should provide information on the *needs* of students, relying on a carefully chosen categorisation of educational needs; the *resources* invested in implementing strategies adapted to their needs (inputs) as well as the specific *services* and support provided (process).

To facilitate the **evaluation of the progress towards inclusive education**, further data is needed capturing the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the interventions, reflecting their results and consequences in the short- as well as the longer term. With such data, it is possible to assess the effectiveness (Were the objectives of the intervention achieved?), as well as the efficiency (Was it achieved without spending resources that were not necessary to the success of the intervention?). Monitoring and evaluation can often rely on administrative data, to be supplemented (or replaced if necessary due to data protection considerations) with surveys and other forms of ad hoc data collection methods. Some countries for example rely on educational inspectors to collect specific information on how targeted support is implemented at the school level. **Self-assessment** tools are important means to complement the external, centralised data collection system and help raise schools' awareness and support them in understanding and reflecting on students' diverse needs and the processes they have in place to cater for them[17].

Relevant **stakeholder groups**, including not only practitioners but also parents and students (including those from vulnerable groups) need to be involved in the entire process, from identifying indicators to the validation of the findings.

Persisting challenges

The need for monitoring is in **tension with the intentions to avoid labelling** – hence, any system needs to find the right balance between identifying students' needs (also) for monitoring purposes and avoiding the harmful effects of labelling. EASNIE recommends that the non-categorical term 'learners' needs' should be applied (EASNIE, 2022)[18] and disagrees with the current practice of many countries applying categorical descriptions of SEN to gather data about the effectiveness of services provided. At the same time, UNESCO points out that categorisation is a valuable tool in making specific vulnerable student groups and their needs explicitly recognisable through data collection and emphasises that data collected for administrative and statistical purposes do not need to lead to labelling at the classroom level[19].

➔ **Challenges linked to data protection regulations:** Data protection regulations can pose serious challenges to collecting and analysing data. For instance, in Sweden, regulations can prevent collection of personal data and educational needs often fall under this category. Regulations can also restrict the mode of analysis and only allow the publication of highly aggregated information, which does not provide sufficient information for parents to choose between schools and services.

➔ **Incomplete data:** Data collected are often incomplete, not necessarily capturing (all the) relevant aspects, and therefore, they do not necessarily meet arising policy and practice needs. In some cases, the categories of needs registered in the system are not considered to be sufficiently detailed to allow for meaningful planning (Poland), and often there is little scope for looking at intersectionality of needs as well as at correlations between other forms of disadvantages and special needs. Further, parents are sometimes not motivated to report precise medical diagnosis to the school, that will then lack information on the reason why a certain type of support needs to be provided. Currently, no standard categorisation of SEN exists at the European level, but inconsistencies in definitions and categories used often exist at the country level, where parallel, non-synchronised data collections and unclear

---

[17] See e.g., European Toolkit for Schools Self-Assessment Tool (forthcoming).
[18] European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE), 2022. Legislative Definitions around Learners' Needs: A snapshot of European country approaches. (M. Turner-Cmuchal and A. Lecheval, eds.). Odense, Denmark
[19] UNESCO 2020: Global education monitoring report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all.

responsibilities for monitoring can create further challenges. Data gaps can hence occur when specific information is not collected, when it is not collected with the necessary frequency or when it cannot be linked to other information e.g., to consider intersectionality of vulnerabilities etc

➔ **Unreliable data**: Data collected is not always considered to be reliable. This can be due to the unintended effects of the financial benefits provided to families and schools that support students with additional needs, resulting in over-diagnosing and over-reporting of such cases as noted in the challenge part of the pillar on needs identification.

➔ **Scarcity of the outcome data and impact on evaluation:** Data on outcomes and effects is particularly scarce, which seriously restricts the analysis of the effectiveness of the support services and limits the understanding of "what works". This is also due to the specific challenges involved in defining- and identifying relevant indicators to measure success of students with SEN and other needs, which needs to go beyond academic achievement and should reflect their well-being as well as students' experiences and parents' views[20]. UNESCO (2020)[21] recommends considering students' sense of belonging in schools, as measured for example in PISA. Furthermore, to measure impact, longitudinal data would be necessary, which is rarely available.

➔ **Lack of a sufficient level of data-literacy:** Schools often lack the resources to apply and make effective use of available self-assessment tools. Making sense of a large body of data and drawing actionable policy conclusions from those require significant resources as well as specific skills and competencies not always available even in Ministries and other authorities administering the implementation of inclusive education policies.

Promising approaches

Law on inclusive education monitoring (Portugal): Portugal has designed and put in place a system to monitor the law on inclusive education (Educação Inclusiva). The action plan is based on monitoring, production of resources for training the staff, trainings for trainers, a national programme for training teachers and technicians, research in the field of inclusive educational practice as well as dissemination and communication of results. Since 2018, the Decree-Law on Inclusive Education (DL 54/2018, 6th July) has been in place. Two years after implementation, an evaluation of the decree implementation was carried out and every five year a new monitoring will take place. The evaluation involved desk review, interviews with key decision makers (government bodies, parents…), online survey as well as visits to school clusters. Results were disseminated among several stakeholders. Data on inclusive criteria is also publicly accessible via the Ministry of Education's website, which includes information on organizational resources supporting learning and inclusion, along with a list of reference schools. The centralised monitoring system is complemented by a self-assessment tool (booklet for self-reflection) available to the schools and allowing them to self-evaluate and seek additional support when needed. The action plan is being implemented with the support of the Structural Reform Support Service (DG REFORM) and of EASNIE.

Online tracking system (Croatia): Croatia has developed a fully centralised online tracking system that delivers longitudinal data on students' progress, making it possible not only to link needs to input but also to look at some outputs – e.g. in terms of progress to the next level(s) of education. Only certain staff at the Ministry can have access to this data. Students with special needs are also receiving additional points in the application process when entering secondary/tertiary education, and this is also registered in the system, promoting better tracking.

---

[20] Measuring effectiveness is somewhat less challenging with for example students with language difficulties (migrant students etc.) as progress in language skills is easier to assess through standard means.
[21] UNESCO 2020: Inclusion and education: All means All

Monitoring education data (Lithuania): Edu Vilnius has designed a system of [monitoring of education data](#), which aims to provide comprehensive data monitoring for informed decision-making. **The monitoring system was launched in December 2022 and assesses the learning environment and school microclimate to aid in interventions through voluntary school surveys.** In 2023, the system recorded participation from 3,987 school staff, 15,365 students, and 19,111 parents, with overall satisfaction ratings from students, teachers, and parents being 7.4, 8.5, and 8.0 respectively (on a scale of 1 to 10).

Evaluation of bilingual inclusive education (Spain): The Ponce de León Education Centre in Spain has been implementing inclusive education for both deaf and hearing learners since 2003. The main aims of the initiative are to support the personal development and abilities of all learners, including both deaf and hearing individuals. The evaluation process considers both internal and external evaluations of learners' development in various aspects, including social relationships, acquisition of oral language, and acquisition of sign language. Results indicate that bilingual education supports the acquisition of LSE in both deaf and hearing learners. Annual knowledge tests and external evaluations consistently yield good academic results. More information can be found here: https://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/case-study/bilingual-inclusive-education-madrid-spain-deaf-and-hearing-pupils Actionable steps for positive change

Monitoring of actions for school inclusion (Italy): A permanent Observatory for school inclusion is established at the Ministry of Education linking up with the national Observatory for on the condition of persons with disabilities. It performs the following tasks:

- analysis and study of issues concerning the inclusion of children, pupils, and students at national and international levels
- monitoring of actions for school inclusion
- proposals for inter-institutional agreements for the implementation of individual inclusion projects
- proposals for piloting methodological innovation
- opinions and proposals on legislative acts concerning school inclusion

Actionable steps for policy change:

Key Self-Assessment Questions for policy-makers to improve data collection and monitoring

Available data and statistics in use	• Are data collections systems currently in place useful for monitoring the progress towards inclusive education? (Consider administrative data, population censuses as well as household- and other surveys). • Do data collections systems apply a clear and standard set of definitions, that are well suited for the needs of monitoring? • Do data collections systems cover important aspects necessary to monitor progress? • Do available data support reflections and effective strategy-making at the school level? • Do available data help answer key policy-relevant questions? • Is available data sufficiently disaggregated e.g., by gender, ethnicity etc. to help identify inequalities? • Are there any data gaps to be filled to better support monitoring and evaluating inclusive education? • Does data collection for administrative and evaluation purposes efficiently avoid labelling in the classroom?
Legal environment	• Are there measures in place to ensure that legal requirements and restrictions to collecting, using and publishing data about the various vulnerabilities of students

	(including data on disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic background etc.) do not hinder the collection of key information for policy monitoring?
Stakeholder involvement	• Are key stakeholder groups and organisations actively involved in the process of monitoring and evaluating the system? • Are students' and parents' voices heard during the monitoring and evaluation process?
Using and disseminating data collected	• Are lessons learned from analysis and evaluations used for improving the school-policies as well as the system as a whole? • Are available data widely disseminated and made available to the relevant stakeholder groups?

Practical recommendations for national and regional policy actors

Identify the purpose of monitoring:

a. *Identify the policy objectives of interest to monitoring and evaluating. Then identify specific interventions / policy actions that need to be evaluated.*

b. *Set clear objectives for the different monitoring systems and tools, as monitoring can serve a multitude of purposes and, depending on its objective, it will require different approaches.*

Map the status quo:

a. *Assess the data already available by looking at existing administrative data collection processes, regular and hoc surveys as well as the availability of qualitative research and assessments provided by school inspectors to identify existing data gaps.*

b. *Asses the legal environment and identify any restrictions that apply to the types of data or modes of data collection and analysis.*

Set up a data collection and monitoring strategy:

a. *Define a set of indicators, in line with the purpose of the monitoring, relating to the inputs, the process, the outcomes, the outputs and the results of the interventions.*

b. *Ensure different and complementary data sources and data collection methods are used. E.g., quantitative data should be complemented by qualitative data and indicators, to obtain a more complex picture of the measures under analysis.*

c. *Establish partnerships with academic researchers, policy and data experts. These can bring important insights on reliable methodologies and extend the knowledge-base available for such a complex task like data collection and monitoring.*

d. *Support schools in improving data collection and monitoring practices at institutional level. E.g., by offering them appropriate self-assessment tools to be able to reflect and develop their progress.*

Ensure stakeholder engagement throughout the process:

a. *Consult relevant stakeholders, including teacher-, parent- and student organisations at every crucial phase of the process. This includes the identification of data needs and data availabilities as well as the set-up of the monitoring system.*

b. *Raise awareness in schools but also among parents and other stakeholder groups on the importance of monitoring. Support stakeholders (through campaigns, information-provision, trainings etc.) to better understand the purposes and benefits of reliable data-provision and monitoring to ensure their full cooperation and improve the accuracy of data collected.*

c. *Ensure various data-collection methods, including surveys, qualitative assessments, school visits etc. are available to make sure that crucial voices are heard in the evaluation process.*

d. *Ensure the dissemination of the findings from the monitoring and the evaluation needs reaches all the relevant and interested stakeholder groups.*

Chapter 5. Key takeaways

Pillar 1: Whole-school and whole-system approach

A whole-school and whole-system approach is foundational to achieving inclusive education. It emphasizes collaboration among educators, administrators, students, policymakers, and community stakeholders. This comprehensive strategy ensures that inclusive practices are integrated into every aspect of the education system, from policy-making to classroom activities. Effective leadership, collaboration, continuous professional development, a positive school climate, and a shared vision for inclusion are critical components. Challenges include resistance to change, insufficient training, and the need for robust stakeholder engagement. Promising practices include distributed leadership models, stakeholder engagement models, professional learning communities, and multi-level governance frameworks.

Actionable steps

- ➔ Promote distributed leadership and collaborative culture.
- ➔ Develop clear, inclusive education policies with long-term vision.
- ➔ Foster collaborative culture and students' agency.
- ➔ Foster stakeholder engagement and multi-level governance, ensuring systematic policy coordination across different levels.

Pillar 2: Needs Identification

Early and accurate identification of students' needs is crucial for providing timely and appropriate support. This involves developing standardized assessment frameworks as well as flexible approaches to understand and address diverse learning requirements. Challenges include balancing the need for detailed data without stigmatizing students, navigating data protection regulations, and ensuring the reliability and completeness of collected data. Effective strategies involve multidisciplinary teams, preventive counselling, and systems that recognize and respond to the intersecting vulnerabilities of students. Promising practices include non-categorical needs assessment frameworks and holistic, student-centred approaches.

Actionable steps

- ➔ Develop standardized yet holistic assessment frameworks.
- ➔ Ensure flexible, responsive participatory needs identification processes.
- ➔ Develop multidisciplinary teams for comprehensive support and enhance resource availability.
- ➔ Implement early identification and support systems.
- ➔ Enhance data collection systems to capture diverse needs.

Pillar 3: Building Professional Capacity for Inclusion

Building professional capacity for inclusion involves comprehensive training and continuous professional development for educators, school leaders, and support staff. Key elements include inclusive school leadership, collaboration among teachers and support staff, and robust support systems. Challenges include teacher shortages, insufficient training in inclusive practices, and lack of collaboration. Effective strategies involve creating professional learning communities, enhancing

mentorship programs, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Promising practices include flexible teacher training systems, regional support centres, and initiatives that encourage professional exchange and networking.

Actionable steps

➔ Enhance initial teacher education and continuous professional development.
➔ Establish professional learning communities and promote collaboration and knowledge sharing.
➔ Promote mentoring and support among educators.
➔ Develop inclusive leadership programs.

Pillar 4: Resource Allocation

Adequate and flexible resource allocation is essential for supporting inclusive education. This involves ensuring sustainable funding, smart and flexible allocation of resources, and promoting resource sharing among educational institutions. Challenges include **insufficient funding to enable change - perceived or actual,** resistance to changing traditional funding models, ensuring fairness in decentralized systems, and addressing the complexities of multi-level governance. Effective strategies involve developing funding models that prioritize flexibility and responsiveness, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and leveraging technology to support inclusive practices. Promising practices include decentralized funding systems, municipal-level initiatives, and strategic resource pooling.

Actionable steps

➔ Advocate for flexible, sustainable funding models.
➔ Promote resource sharing and collaborative initiatives, discontinuing models in which education and training institutions compete for resources.
➔ Invest in technology and infrastructure for inclusivity.
➔ Invest in capacity building and mindset shift and engage key stakeholders in resource allocation decisions.

Pillar 5: Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches

Inclusive curricula and adaptable pedagogical approaches are vital for addressing the diverse needs of learners. This involves integrating diverse content, materials, and assessment methods into the core curriculum and adopting flexible teaching methods. Challenges include lack of clear frameworks for implementing inclusive pedagogies, coordinating collaboration among stakeholders, and ensuring ongoing professional development. Effective strategies involve developing comprehensive frameworks and guidelines, promoting innovative pedagogical approaches, and integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the educational framework. Promising practices include co-teaching models, blended learning approaches, and personalized education models.

Actionable steps

➔ Develop inclusive curricula and adaptable teaching methods.
➔ Integrate SEL and life skills into educational frameworks.
➔ Promote innovative pedagogical approaches (incl for teaching basic skills), as well as advocate for flexibility and adaptability.

➔ Provide ongoing training and support for teachers and support staff.

Pillar 6: Data Collection and Monitoring

Robust data collection and monitoring systems are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of inclusive education policies and practices. This involves identifying relevant indicators, ensuring reliable and comprehensive data collection, and using data to inform policy adjustments. Challenges include navigating data protection regulations, avoiding stigmatization through data collection, and ensuring data reliability. Effective strategies involve developing standardized data collection frameworks, engaging stakeholders in the monitoring process, and ensuring data is used to drive continuous improvement. Promising practices include centralized monitoring systems, self-assessment tools for schools, and longitudinal tracking of student progress.

Actionable steps

➔ Develop comprehensive data collection frameworks.
➔ Ensure data reliability and comprehensiveness.
➔ Engage stakeholders in the monitoring process.
➔ Use data to inform continuous improvement and policy adjustments.

Glossary

Accessibility: Accessibility refers to ensuring that all students, regardless of their background and personal characteristics, can fully participate in the education system. This involves removing physical, digital, and systemic barriers to create an inclusive environment. Accessibility includes improving infrastructure, digital tools, and learning resources to accommodate students with diverse needs ensuring they have equitable opportunities to succeed in education.

At-risk students: At-risk students are learners who are vulnerable to underachievement, disengagement or dropping out due to factors such as socio-economic disadvantage, disabilities, migrant background, or exposure to adverse life conditions. Early identification, comprehensive support, and targeted interventions are crucial to addressing the specific challenges they face in education.

Blended learning: Blended learning refers to an educational approach that combines various learning environments (such as physical schools and external settings such as companies, training centres or cultural sites) with both digital and non-digital tools. The aim is to create more engaging and personalised learning experiences, catering to the diverse needs and abilities of all students.

Continuing professional development (CPD): CPD refers to the ongoing training and education that teachers, school leaders, and support staff engage in throughout their careers to improve their skills and knowledge. It is vital for adapting to new educational challenges, especially in fostering inclusive environments, addressing diverse learner needs, and integrating innovative teaching practices. CPD ensures that educators remain up to date with best practices, thus enhancing their ability to support all students, particularly those at risk of exclusion or underachievement

Curriculum adaptation: Curriculum adaptation refers to modifying and diversifying the curriculum to accommodate the diverse needs, abilities, and contexts of learners. It involves integrating flexible teaching methods and personalised learning strategies to ensure that all students, including those with special educational needs, can fully engage and succeed. This process emphasises the importance of involving educators, students, and parents in curriculum design and implementation, as well as incorporating SEL to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment

Decentralisation in education: Decentralisation in education refers to the process of transferring decision-making powers from central authorities to regional or local bodies, such as municipalities and schools. This allows for more flexible resource allocation and the development of education policies tailored to the specific needs of local communities and students. Decentralisation encourages innovative approaches to inclusive education by enabling schools and municipalities to address the diverse needs of learners, improve support structures, and foster collaboration with local stakeholders

Digital inclusion: Digital inclusion refers to ensuring equitable access to digital tools, technologies, and online resources for all learners, particularly those from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds. It involves bridging the digital divide by providing necessary infrastructure, devices, and training to support digital education. Digital inclusion aims to ensure that no student is excluded from learning opportunities due to a lack of access to technology.

Equality and equity in education: Equality in education means providing all students with the same opportunities and access to educational resources, regardless of their background or circumstances. It emphasises uniform treatment, ensuring that no one is excluded from educational opportunities based

on personal characteristics such as socio-economic status, gender, or ethnicity. However, equity goes further by acknowledging that students have different needs and face unique challenges. Equity focuses on customising support to meet these individual needs, ensuring that every student, especially those facing disadvantages, has the resources and assistance required to achieve their full potential. While equality treats everyone the same, equity adjusts the level of support based on each student's circumstances, aiming for fairness in outcomes, not just opportunities.

Early intervention: Early interventions in education refer to the timely identification and targeted support provided to learners who show early signs of academic, emotional, or behavioural difficulties. These interventions aim to prevent more complex and chronic issues from arising. They often involve multidisciplinary teams and collaborative approaches, focusing on resilience-building and offering specialised support to ensure students remain engaged and successful in school.

Flexible funding: Flexible funding in education refers to the adaptable allocation of financial resources that allows schools and educational systems to respond to diverse and evolving needs. It enables the reallocation of funds to address urgent challenges, such as support for disadvantaged students or crises, while promoting inclusive practices by allowing local authorities to tailor resource distribution according to local priorities. Flexible funding ensures that educational initiatives remain responsive and equitable.

Formative assessment: Formative assessment is an ongoing assessment method that provides continuous feedback to both students and teachers to enhance learning. It focuses on adapting teaching practices and promoting student reflection, encouraging active involvement in the learning process. This approach supports personalised learning and the development of key competences, such as collaboration and self-regulation, by fostering a deeper understanding of progress rather than merely measuring outcomes.

Initial teacher education (ITE): ITE refers to the first phase of teacher training, focusing on providing future educators with the foundational knowledge, skills, and competences needed to lead effective learning. ITE combines theoretical courses in pedagogy, subject matter, and psychology with practical experiences in schools. It prepares teachers to meet the diverse needs of learners and emphasises collaboration and inclusive teaching practices to foster positive educational outcomes for all students.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality in education refers to understanding and addressing the overlapping and interacting aspects of an individual's identity, such as race, gender, socio-economic status, and disability, which shape their experiences and may lead to multiple forms of discrimination. Intersectionality is essential for developing inclusive policies that respond to the varied and unique needs of students, ensuring that education systems are equitable and accessible for all.

Learning diversity: Learning diversity refers to the variety of individual differences among students in terms of their abilities, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences. It emphasises the need for inclusive teaching approaches that recognise and adapt to these differences to ensure all students can succeed. Learning diversity is seen as a strength, and education systems should employ differentiated teaching methods and flexible curricula to cater to the needs of each learner.

Multidisciplinary teams: Multidisciplinary teams in education consist of professionals from various sectors, including teachers, social workers, psychologists, and health professionals, working together to address the complex educational, emotional, and social needs of students. These teams provide a holistic,

coordinated response, focusing on the learner's well-being and ensuring all aspects of their development are supported.

Non-categorisation: Non-categorisation in education refers to the approach of avoiding the labelling of students based on specific characteristics, such as disabilities or learning difficulties. Instead, it focuses on addressing the unique needs of each learner without reinforcing stereotypes or segregation. The aim is to foster an inclusive environment where students are supported based on their individual needs, not categorised into predefined groups.

Parental engagement: Parental engagement refers to the active involvement of parents in both school-based and home-based educational activities that support their children's academic and social development. This encompasses attending meetings, volunteering, and helping with homework, as well as being involved in decision-making processes at schools. Effective engagement requires overcoming barriers like language, socio-economic status, and systemic biases to ensure that all parents, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can participate fully in their children's education. A strong partnership between schools and families is essential for fostering better educational outcomes and well-being for students.

Pathways to School Success: Pathways to School Success is a comprehensive framework designed to improve educational outcomes for all learners by reducing underachievement and early school leaving. It adopts an inclusive, whole-school and whole-system approach that integrates both academic and socio-emotional factors to foster well-being, inclusion, and success. The framework emphasises the need for equity in education, with targeted support for disadvantaged learners and a focus on ensuring all students have the opportunity to thrive

Resource allocation: Resource allocation in education refers to the distribution of financial, human, and material resources to support the needs of all students, particularly those at risk or facing disadvantages. Effective resource allocation emphasises flexibility, allowing funds to be adjusted in response to changing circumstances and educational practices. It focuses on equity and inclusion, ensuring that schools can provide the necessary support to foster the success of all learners.

Social-emotional learning (SEL): SEL refers to the process of developing students' abilities to understand and manage their emotions, build positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. SEL is essential for promoting emotional resilience, mental health, and academic success, and it contributes to creating inclusive and supportive learning environments. By integrating SEL into the curriculum, schools help students develop the skills needed to face personal and academic challenges effectively.

Social justice: Social justice in education refers to the creation of equitable learning environments where all students, regardless of socio-economic, ethnic, or personal background, have equal access to quality education. It involves addressing systemic inequalities, removing barriers, and ensuring that no student is left behind due to their circumstances. Achieving social justice requires educational systems to promote fairness and inclusion, enabling every learner to reach their full potential.

Stakeholder engagement: Stakeholder engagement in education refers to the active participation of various actors, including teachers, parents, local communities, policymakers, and other relevant groups, in designing, implementing, and supporting educational policies and initiatives. Effective stakeholder

engagement ensures that diverse perspectives and needs are considered, promoting collaboration and creating inclusive, supportive environments for all learners.

Targeted support: Targeted support refers to the provision of specific educational interventions aimed at addressing the unique needs of learners who are at risk of underachievement or exclusion due to factors such as socio-economic challenges, learning difficulties, or disabilities. This support is integrated within broader inclusive strategies, ensuring that vulnerable students receive the necessary resources and assistance to succeed within mainstream education.

Whole-school approach (WSA): The WSA refers to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all school components—teachers, administrators, students, and the wider school community—collaborate to promote academic success and well-being for all learners. This approach emphasises the shared responsibility of the entire school community to foster inclusive education. It requires collaboration among teachers, continuous professional development, and adaptation of curricula and teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs.

Whole-system approach: The whole-system approach expands the WSA concept to involve coordination and alignment at all levels of the education system, including national and local authorities, policymakers, schools, and other stakeholders. It focuses on ensuring that the policies, resources, and governance structures at every level of the system work together to support inclusive education. This approach aims for systemic changes, integrating educational, social, and health services to create a comprehensive support network for learners.

Bibliography

Aigus, J., 'Inclusive Education for All: A Qualitative Exploration of Fostering Social Justice and Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in the Learning Environment', *MCAST Journal of Applied Research & Practice*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2024, pp. 20-39.

Aktan, O., 'Determination of Educational Needs of Teachers Regarding the Education of Inclusive Students with Learning Disability.', *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2020, pp. 149–164.

Allan, J., and E. Persson, 'Students' Perspectives on Raising Achievement through Inclusion in Essunga, Sweden', *Educational Review*, Vol. 68, No. 1, 2016, pp. 82–95.

Barow, T., and G. Berhanu, 'Inclusive Education in Sweden: Policy, Politics and Practice', *Dialogues between Northern and Eastern Europe on the Development of Inclusion: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*, Hanssen, N.B., Hansén, S.-E. & Ström, K. (eds.)., Routledge, London, 2021, pp. 35–51.

Batu, E.S., S. Odluyurt, E. Alagözoğlu, M. Cattlk, and Ş. Şahin, 'Determining the Opinions of Preschool Teachers Regarding Inclusion.', *Journal of Special Education*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2017, pp. 401–420.

Bauer, L., *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education: Recommendations for Policy Makers*, Edited by Amanda Watkins, European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010.

Bilbo, K., *Kunskapsskolan's Approach to School Management*, 2012.

Black, P., and D. Wiliam, 'Developing the Theory of Formative Assessment', *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability (Formerly: Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education)*, Vol. 21, 2009, pp. 5–31.

Boyle, C., J. Anderson, and K.-A. Allen, 'The Importance of Teacher Attitudes to Inclusive Education', *Inclusive Education: Global Issues and Controversies*, *C. Boyle, J. Anderson, A. Page, & S. Mavropoulou (Eds.)*, Brill, 2020, pp. 127–146.

Braun, A., and Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 'Referral and Identification of Special Educational Needs', UNESCO, 2020.

Brunello, G., and M. De Paola, 'The Costs of Early School Leaving in Europe', EENEE report, 2013.

Brunello, G., and L. Rocco, 'The Pecuniary Costs of Early School Leaving and Poor Basic Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2024.

Building Capacity for Inclusive Teaching: Policies and Practices to Prepare All Teachers for Diversity and Inclusion, OECD Education Working Papers, Vol. 256, Vol. 256, *OECD Education Working Papers*, October 18, 2021.

Carless, D., *From Testing to Productive Student Learning: Implementing Formative Assessment in Confucian-Heritage Settings*, Routledge, 2012.

Cefai, C., C. Simões, and S. C.S. Caravita, *A Systemic, Whole-School Approach to Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools in the EU*, NESET analytical report, 2021.

Cerna, L., C. Mezzanotte, A. Rutigliano, O. Brussino, P. Santiago, F. Borgonovi, and C. Guthrie, *Promoting Inclusive Education for Diverse Societies: A Conceptual Framework*, OECD Education Working Papers, Vol. 260, Vol. 260, *OECD Education Working Papers*, November 18, 2021.

Corral-Granados, A., A.C. Rapp, and E. Smeplass, 'Barriers to Equality and Cultural Responsiveness in Three Urban Norwegian Primary Schools: A Critical Lens for School Staff Perceptions', *Urban Rev.*, Vol. 55, 2023, pp. 94–132.

Donnelly, V., and M. Kyriazopoulou, *Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education: Summary Report*, 2014, European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, n.d.

Dussault, M., and R.B. Thompson, 'Fundamental Themes in Social–Emotional Learning: A Theoretical Framework for Inclusivity', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2024, p. 506.

EASNIE, *Special Education Needs? Working towards More Flexible Systems of Support to Meet All Learners' Needs*, European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE), 2023.

———, 'Voices into Action: Promoting Learner and Family Participation in Educational Decision-Making', 2022.

EASNIE, E.A. for S.N., 'Supporting Inclusive School Leadership: Literature Review', *Odense*, 2018.

EEA, 'Supporting Well-Being and Mental Health through Education: A Series of Inspiring Factsheets for Schools', 2023. https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/supporting-well-being-and-mental-health-through-education-factsheets-for-schools.

Eiken, O., *The Kunskapsskolan ("the Knowledge School"): A Personalised Approach to Education*, OECD, 2011.

EU Working Group on Pathways to School Success, 'Plenary Meeting #8. Day 1, Joint Session WG Schools, Pathways, and WG Equality and Values in Education and Training', , October 26, 2023.

———, 'Plenary Meeting #9', , January 18, 2024.

———, 'Seminar on the Role of Municipalities in Supporting the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Practice', , April 24, 2024.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 'Legislative Definitions around Learners' Needs', 2022.

———, *Teacher Education for Inclusion Across Europe – Challenges and Opportunities*, Odense, Denmark, n.d.

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, *Country Policy Review and Analysis – Malta*, 2016.

———, *Education for All: Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta*, 2014.

European Commission, *Study on Supporting School Innovation across Europe – Final Report*, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2018.

———, *Targeted Support in the Context of Inclusive Frameworks*, 2023.

European Commission. Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture., European Institute of Education and Social Policy., and ECORYS., *Assessing Learners' Competences: Policies and Practices to Support Successful and Inclusive Education : Thematic Report.*, Publications Office, LU, 2023.

European Education and Culture Executive Agency., *Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Schools in Europe.*, Publications Office, LU, 2023.

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, ed., *NEETs: Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training Characteristics, Costs and Policy Responses in Europe*, Publications office of the European union, Luxembourg, 2012.

Eurydice, 'Portugal', 2023. https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/portugal/legislation-and-official-policy-documents#:~:text=Decree%2DLaw%20No%2054%2F2018,is%20tailored%20to%20each%20student.

Florian, L., and M. Beaton, 'Inclusive Pedagogy in Action: Getting It Right for Every Child. International', *Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 22, No. 8, 2017, pp. 870–884.

FPIES, *Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems: Countr Report Norway*, 2017.

Gausas, S., I. Daminov, D. Jasinskaite, D. Cop, I. Mileiko, and G. Gudauskaite, *Research for CULT Committee – The European Schools System: State of Play, Challenges and Perspectives*, 2022.

Handscomb, G., 'Kunskapsskolan – The Approach That Really Delivers Personalised Learning!', *Teaching Times*, n.d.

Hanushek, E.A., and L. Woessmann, *The Economic Benefits of Improving Educational Achievement in the European Union: An Update and Extension : Executive Summary*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019.

Hardy, I., and S. Woodcock, 'Inclusive Education Policies – Objects of Observance, Omission, and Obfuscation: Ten Years on … .', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2023, pp. 1–19.

Hassani, S., and S. Schwab, 'Social-Emotional Learning Interventions for Students With Special Educational Needs: A Systematic Literature Review', *Front. Educ.*, Vol. 6, 2021.

Hopkins, D., A. Harris, S. Stringfield, and L. Stoll, 'School and System Improvement: A Narrative State-of-the-Art Review', *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2014, pp. 257–281.

Hulme, M., E. Rauschenberger, and B. Haines, *Development of Cluster-Based Approaches to School Improvement: Final Report*, *Development of Cluster-Based Approaches to School Improvement. Project Report.*, Manchester Metropolitan University: ESRI, 2018.

Imaniah, I., and N. Fitria, 'Inclusive Education for Students with Disability', *SHS Web Conf.*, Vol. 42, *Global Conference on Teaching, Assessment, and Learning in Education (GC-TALE 2017)*, 2018.

Jamtsho, S., 'Implementing a Whole-School Approach to Student Wellbeing: A Study Examining the Implementation Experiences of Bhutanese and Australian Teachers in Wellbeing Leadership Roles', Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, 2015.

Johnsen, B.H., 'A Curricular Approach to Inclusive Education', *Theory and Methodology in International Comparative Classroom Studies*, 2014, pp. 115–163.

Kenny, N., S. McCoy, and J. O'Higgins Norman, 'A Whole Education Approach to Inclusive Education: An Integrated Model to Guide Planning, Policy, and Provision', *Educational Sciences*, Vol. 13, No. 9, 2023, p. 959.

Kozibroda, L.V., O.P. Kruhlyk, L.S. Zhuravlova, S.V. Chupakhina, and E.M. Verzhihovska, 'Practice and Innovations of Inclusive Education at School', *International Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 9, No. 7, 2020, pp. 176–186.

Lee, J., V.B. Shapiro, and B.E. Kim, 'Universal School-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for Diverse Student Subgroups: Implications for Enhancing Equity Through SEL', *Prev Sci*, Vol. 24, 2023, pp. 1011–1022.

Looney, J., and G. Kelly, *Assessing Learners' Competences: Policies and Practices to Support Successful and Inclusive Education : Thematic Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023.

Mac Ruairc, G., E. Ottesen, and R. Precey, *Leadership for Inclusive Education: Values, Vision and Voices*, Vol. 18, Vol. 18, Springer Science & Business Media, 2013.

Mangiaracina, A., *Financing of Inclusive Education: Background Information Report*, European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016.

McLennan, H., J. Roberts, and G. Johnson, 'Stakeholder Experience Evaluating Whole-School Practice Designed to Improve Educational Outcomes for Autistic Students', *Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2023.

Mhairi, R., and E. Quinta, 'Valuing Knowledge Exchange and Professional Learning for Educational Inclusion: Understanding Professional Dilemmas in Policy and Practice Contexts', *Pedagógusképzés*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2021, pp. 8–29.

NCSE, *An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society Policy Advice Paper on Special Schools and Classes*, National Council for Special Education, 2024.

OECD, *An Implementation Framework for Effective Change in Schools*, OECD Education Policy Perspectives, Paris, 2020.

———, *Education Policy Outlook Snapshot: Norway*, 2020.

———, *Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding Strength through Diversity*, OECD, 2023.

———, 'Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal', 2022. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/7ab1d65e-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/7ab1d65e-en#:~:text=Portugal%20has%20a%20long%20history,with%20SEN%20in%20mainstream%20schools.

———, *Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal*, *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2022.

———, *Review of Inclusive Education in Portugal*, Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development, Paris, 2022.

Óskarsdóttir, E., V. Donnelly, M. Turner-Cmuchal, and L. Florian, 'Inclusive School Leaders–Their Role in Raising the Achievement of All Learners', *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 58, No. 5, 2020, pp. 521–537.

Pak, K., and A. Parsons, 'Equity Gaps for Students with Disabilities.', *Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education*, Vol. 17, 2020.

Pathways to School Success: Commission Staff Working Document, Accompanying the Document Proposal for a Council Recommendationon Pathways to School Success, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022.

Persson, E., 'Raising Achievement through Inclusion', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 17, No. 11, 2013, pp. 1205–1220.

Policy Approaches and Initiatives for the Inclusion of Gifted Students in OECD Countries, OECD Education Working Papers, Vol. 262, Vol. 262, *OECD Education Working Papers*, December 21, 2021.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Schools in Europe Eurydice Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023.

Promoting Inclusive Education for Diverse Societies: A Conceptual Framework, OECD Education Working Papers, Vol. 260, Vol. 260, *OECD Education Working Papers*, November 18, 2021.

Rönnberg, L., 'Swedish School Companies Going Global', *Neoliberalism and Market Forces in Education*, Routledge, 2019, pp. 183–196.

Rooney, L.E., D.M. Videto, and D.A. Birch, 'Using the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model: Implications for Practice', *J Sch Health*, Vol. 85, No. 11, 2015, pp. 817–23.

Ryndak, V.G., and O.V. Saldaeva, 'Inclusive Education in the Context of Global Digitalization', *Relações Internacionais No Mundo, 2022*, Vol. 4, No. 37, 2022.

Sanford, A.K., Y. Park, and S.K. Baker, 'Reading Growth of Students With Disabilities in the Context of a Large-Scale Statewide Reading Reform Effort', *The Journal of Special Education*, Vol. 47, No. 2, August 2013, pp. 83–95.

Schuelka, M.J., *Implementing Inclusive Education*, UK Department for International Development, 2018.

Smeets, E., and J. Roeleveld, 'The Identification by Teachers of Special Educational Needs in Primary School Pupils and Factors Associated with Referral to Special Education', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, Vol. 31, No. 4, October 2016, pp. 423–439.

Stevens, E.P.M., 'School Building Adaptations for Blended Learning Practices', Thesis, Eindhoven University of Technology, 2021.

UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All. Paris*, UNESCO, 2020.

———, *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*, 2005.

———, *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*, United Nations Educational, Scientifi c and Cultural Organization, Paris, 2009.

———, 'Q&A: How Inclusion in Education Has Evolved', 2024. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/qa-how-inclusion-education-has-evolved.

———, *Reaching Out to All Learners: A Resource Pack for Supporting Inclusive Education*, 2016.

University of Cambridge, 'Inclusive Curriculum Design', *Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning*, n.d. https://www.cctl.cam.ac.uk/mind-gap-toolkit/what-works/examples/curriculum#:~:text=An%20inclusive%20curriculum%20is%20one,and%20acros s%20the%20whole%20course.

Uthus, M., and A. Qvortrup, 'Lessons Learned from Norway: A Values-Based Formulation of Inclusive Education', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 2024, pp. 1–15.

Van Der Graaf, L., J. Dunajeva, H. Siarova, and R. Bankauskaite, *Education and Youth in Post-COVID-19 Europe: Crisis Effects and Policy Recommendations*, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, 2021.

Van Hove, G., E. De Schauwer, M. Valles, and S. Fontes, *Inclusive Education: The Way Forward National Report: Portugal*, n.d.

Vlcek, S., and M. Somerton, 'Collaborative Engagement between Stakeholders in the Education of Australian Students with Disability: A Scoping Review', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2023, pp. 1–18.

Xie, Z., M. Deng, and Y. Ma, 'Measuring Social Support Perceived by Inclusive Education Teachers in China', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2021, pp. 219–235.