



FINANCING POLICIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Country Study Visit Report: Slovenia





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1. INTRODUCTION

The Country Study Visit (CSV) in Slovenia took place at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in Ljubljana, from 17–19 January 2017. There was a wide range of stakeholders from governmental level, municipalities and both special and mainstream schools presenting their experiences and visions. There were participants from the host country, plus five colleagues from partner countries (Portugal and Norway) and four from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency). During the first two days, 16 presentations were given.

The aim of the first day was to present the characteristics of implementing inclusion within the Slovenian educational system. The focus was on the financial and legislative aspects. The General Director for Pre-school and Basic Education presented the ‘General view on the financing of education’ through the budget of the Ministry of Education and highlighted the ‘Tracking mechanisms for funding Basic Education’. The ‘Model of Inclusion and Financing Policies for Inclusive Education System in Slovenia’ was presented, along with the ‘Commissions for Placement of Children with Special Needs’ that currently plays an important role in the inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN).

The presentations in the second day aimed to outline the current situation in mainstream schools, where 98% of learners with special needs are included. Furthermore, the directors of different Resource Centres presented the role of their institutions and professionals. Resource Centres and mobile specialist teachers provide support to learners and teachers and are therefore the most important collaborators and supporters of inclusion in mainstream schools.

Stakeholders from the municipalities were invited to show the importance of local support provided by municipalities through the funding of different services for learners, parents and teachers. These partnerships are becoming more and more important and necessary. Municipalities are very important stakeholders in the process of implementing inclusion in education and every day social life, with the aim of developing an inclusive society.

The second day gave an interesting insight into the different, inventive methods that schools, resource centres and municipalities use, despite quite a regulated and centralised education and financing system.

2. ANALYSIS OF DISCUSSIONS IN THE COUNTRY STUDY VISIT

One of the characteristics of the Slovenian system of inclusive education and its financing is centralisation.

The centralised system was viewed as a strength for monitoring finances. Existing governance and financing monitoring mechanisms create a huge database, that should be analysed and used for development and change. However, existing data is not easy to gather because the various institutions responsible for collecting data do so at different times. The data is also spread across different databases. Some improvement could be made through the development of indicators. These make the system more transparent regarding learners and the strengths and weaknesses of support systems. They also allow the development of data collection systems by focusing on the enabling effect of support, as well as on the cost-effectiveness of allocated means.

Governance and monitoring mechanisms that reinforce co-operation between all stakeholders and increase their level of accountability at territorial and school level are needed. One of the suggestions for improving the system was to give school administrations more autonomy to manoeuvre within their own budget. Schools complain that there is too much bureaucracy. They say that procedures for gathering learners' official decisions and hours for additional professional support (APS) are too long (it may take six months) and are sometimes inadequate for the learner's needs (which are also changeable).

There is a lack of co-operation between education and welfare, particularly when a learner needs additional help and assistance because of specific health needs or very demanding behavioural issues. When a learner is provided with a full-time assistant, things usually improve. However, when a learner only has a right to a part-time assistant, one or more teachers from the school are made responsible for their help and support during most essential daily routines. Sometimes staff do not feel competent enough to help in specific areas of health care (e.g. diabetes). As the number of children with special health needs is increasing from year to year, schools are highlighting the need for nurses in schools.¹

¹ Decades ago, in-school first aid care was provided in some schools. Some schools still have a dental health care provision.

One suggestion is to have specialised assistants for children with very challenging behaviour, autism, etc. These children need very competent assistants to support their inclusion in mainstream school. In some schools, assistants do not have the same rights as in-service education. They are temporarily employed, usually through public work funds, which means that schools are not always able or motivated to invest in them.

Inclusion is not yet officially defined or implemented in national legislation. However, a high level of centralisation with regard the implementation of inclusion may allow the clear definition of criteria for responsibilities, roles and procedures to support changes within the system. The Response to Intervention (RTI) model is very well incorporated in the education system as the five-step model. It is well known and used by professionals and may therefore support a whole school approach.

There is a good existing system of tracking expenditure that may enable stakeholders to analyse trends and progress made. It may also support further development aimed at a shift towards a more inclusive education system.

The current system of Guidance of Children with SEN, provided by the National Education Institute Slovenia (NEIS), is very regulated and procedural. The approach to an official decision of SEN is medical, defining a child's disabilities and translating them into their educational needs through the individual education plan (IEP). For example, all available documentation on the child is assessed by a multidisciplinary team. The team outlines the child's disabilities and their need for additional help and support and the right to an IEP, which is given to all children with an official decision. The discussions showed that there are some advantages to this system, however:

- the system is too rigid. The official decision may last for the entire nine years of elementary school and the type and extent of APS is set, but needs to be flexible;
- the system is not equitable. Schools reported that some learners that need IEP and APS (which is only available with an official decision) do not have them, and some learners have the APS who do not need it anymore (or at least not all the time).

There is a lack of specialists (e.g. speech therapists) for schools to access, especially schools in the peripheries. Some schools also need physiotherapists and occupational therapists, but they cannot employ them as they are not pedagogical staff. A lack of flexibility in support allocation was highlighted as a possible hindrance to stakeholders acting according to learners' needs. The system may be improved by shifting from an input-based model to a throughput model. An input-based model requires a medically-legitimated official decision. A throughput model would relate to learners' educational needs and the schools' ability to meet diverse educational profiles.

Rather than a focus on compensating needs for support resulting from an official decision, there should be support for and promotion of a school development approach, building upon inclusive design for learning. To assist this shift, special schools and counselling centres could advise and support stakeholders of the schools between RTI steps one and three without the need for an official decision. This is a goal of steps four and five of the RTI model:

- Preventive, primary help and support is provided to all learners in the first level. It is provided through good multisensory teaching practice and the general principles of differentiation and individualisation in mainstream classrooms. At this level, funding is general. No special incentives for tuition or identification of learners with possible SEN are provided at this level. The tuition lies with the general class teacher.
- The second and third steps of Slovenia's five-step RTI model of assistance are included in the second level. Learners with identified learning difficulties are invited to remedial education and/or individual and group support. Working methods and approaches are also adapted for them (Elementary School Act, Article 11, Paragraph 2). The resources are allocated to existing forms of help and support within schools. School advisors provide assistance, help and support and can create individual help plans, in collaboration with the learner, their teacher and parents.
- If the learner's needs are more severe and complex, external assessment and advisory help is provided in the fourth step. This is usually undertaken by Counselling Centres for Children, Adolescents and Parents. These centres are mainly financed by the Ministry of Health and the municipalities, or by their own resources (but not from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture

allocation). They may also be financed within the pre-school or school health services that are organised within healthcare centres (and financed by the Ministry of Health). The fourth step is not compulsory as learners cannot always be assessed this way. In this case, and when the external opinion is that the learner may have SEN, the learner is presented to the Commission for Guidance (fifth step), which is financed by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture.

The discussions showed that head teachers are able to use the existing financing system in as flexible way as possible at school level. Head teachers suggested more autonomy in allocating help to learners at risk of learning difficulties. They believe schools can develop financing mechanisms to assure early intervention for most learners with learning disabilities who need targeted and immediate educational support rather than an official decision. They suggest investing money directly in teachers to supplement learning help, rather than on the commissions that prepare official decisions.

It was recommended that schools and teachers be empowered in their teaching capacity to allow them to decide which learners should be supported and how. This should be a dynamic process that supports better detection, flexibility and recognition of learners who need additional help and support. The system should become more decentralised by increasing the commitment of teachers and schools. This might mean fewer costs for assessment.

The second day of presentations moved from the systemic view to the experiences of different stakeholders. They outlined their efforts in implementing inclusion in everyday life, with a focus on the financing aspect. Since municipalities are the founders of educational institutions, their contribution and their understanding of inclusive education are very important. It is important to state that there is not always consistency between local and national levels. As such, the local model of financing inclusion by the municipality of Ljubljana was presented.

Ljubljana is a principal city and one of the biggest and best-standing municipalities. It presented a good practice model of collaboration with different stakeholders from educational and non-educational fields regarding the implementation of inclusion. Smaller municipalities do not have such a wealthy network of different specialised centres and actions that support the inclusion of learners and their families. However, the majority are now positive and sensitive towards responding to the

special needs of learners, their families and schools (although this always depends on the mayor and municipality council).

The municipality of Ljubljana finances the inclusion of children with special needs across society through various means. These are:

- the provision of funds to kindergartens and schools through annual funding contracts;
- the allocation of resources to children with disabilities and their families through public tenders (in 2016, the municipality co-financed 21 programmes, including therapy with dogs, moto-pedagogy, etc., at a total cost of almost EUR 55,000);
- financing of investments or maintenance of special school equipment and accessories for disabled people. This includes equipping schools with disability aids. The municipality has recently financed:
 - elevators and stair lifts;
 - wheelchair ramps;
 - adaptations to toilet facilities (washbasins, toilets, etc.);
 - the installation of customised tables, chairs, computers, etc.;
 - the installation of calming rooms with multisensory spaces in some kindergartens and schools.

The Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL) is the founder of 23 kindergartens, 47 public elementary schools, three private elementary schools and the Janez Levec Special Education Centre. In 2016/2017, there were 390 learners with special needs in pre-primary education (out of a total of 13,449 learners attending kindergarten) and 1,181 learners with special needs in basic education (out of 23,761). Additionally, 405 learners with special needs attend the Janez Levec Special Education Centre. The MOL also provides approximately EUR 1 million per year for professional assistance and escorts. Material costs are not included in the price of the programme, in accordance with the law.

In 2016, the MOL supported the establishment of the PIKA Educational Centre, which operates within the Janez Levec Special Education Centre. This was an inventive response to the needs of schools and families who are facing the new challenges that inclusive education brings. The PIKA Educational Centre aims to



provide the systematic training of teaching staff, following contemporary efforts to qualitatively include more learners with special needs in mainstream schools. The MOL provides strong financial support to this initiative, via the remuneration of employees and refunds of material costs (books, teaching aids, stationery, etc.). In 2016, they allocated EUR 114,994 to the PIKA Educational Centre.

Municipalities are also the founders of Counselling Centres for Children, Adolescents and Parents. There are five of these centres across Slovenia. They are responsible for supporting all children and families who are facing educational and learning difficulties. Centres also collaborate closely with schools. The biggest centres are in Ljubljana and Maribor.

The annual budget of the Counselling Centre in Ljubljana for remuneration of employees (the manager, staff in the psycho-socio-pedagogical unit and administrative and technical staff) is EUR 1,189,666, 41% of which is financed by MOL. The Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia finances an additional 55%, with the remaining 4% coming from the Centre's own activities (e.g. educational courses, publications and projects).

The Counselling Centre in Maribor works with approximately 2,100 children and their families per year. It has an annual budget of EUR 418,800, 62% of which is financed by Maribor municipality. The reasons for families asking for advice and help vary, but they are mostly connected with learning difficulties caused by:

- emotional distress;
- problems with attention and hyperactivity;
- behavioural problems;
- parenting problems;
- dysfunctional family relationships;
- divorce.

The professionals at the Counselling Centres are also responsible for:

- assessing children with special needs (in contract with NEIS, approximately 250 cases per year);
- identifying gifted learners;
- assessing school readiness.

- organising lectures and seminars for parents and teachers, on topics including:
 - parenting;
 - learning;
 - emotional and behavioural difficulties;
 - special needs;
 - strategies for working with difficult learners;
 - mediation, supervision and mindfulness for teachers.
- organising workshops for children and young people, on topics including:
 - improving reading;
 - learning to learn;
 - anger management;
 - learning assertive behaviour.

During the discussions, the importance of the wide support that Counselling Centres represent for families and schools was emphasised. The staff are very skilled and use a teamwork approach in all cases. They are flexible and can respond immediately, organising multidisciplinary team meetings and providing action plans for acute problems in kindergartens and schools, in collaboration with all involved parties. They also offer lectures during parent meetings and make arrangements for individual counselling for parents or treatment for children.

However, the limits of Counselling Centre support were also stressed. They mostly consist of small groups of experts that cover a very large regional area that is not limited to the city. It is therefore common for an individual to have an appointment only once per month for treatment, which is not enough to be effective. There is an obvious lack of these support centres, especially in more rural areas where families and schools cannot access the support they need. All five Counselling Centres in Slovenia are located in the larger cities, although in-school advisory services cover most basic counselling and help. The most severe cases are forwarded to Counselling Centres. Representatives of the Centres also emphasised that, from their point of view, the financing is not well regulated and they work on annual

contracts with municipalities. There are currently no promotion opportunities for employees and professional staff.

The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act of 2000 gives learners the right to education in mainstream schools. Additionally, the official decision gives them a right to their own personalised IEP and, depending on their needs, additional professional support (APS). APS for overcoming learning difficulties and gaps can be provided by a specialist teacher that is not necessarily a school employee. Inclusion encouraged a reorganisation of specialist teachers who were mostly employed in special schools. Special schools became bases for mobile special educators who work as APS teachers for learners with SEN in different mainstream schools. The Janez Levec Special Education Centre, which is becoming a resource centre, has 40 mobile specialist teachers.

Within the discussion, the professional development of specialist teachers was viewed as an advantage of mobile services. Specialist teachers working from mobile centres benefit from daily professional conversations and exchanges of new gathered experiences and skills. This cannot happen in schools where only one specialist teacher is employed. However, specialist teachers employed in schools are more connected with the school, teachers, learners and parents. Their help can be more needs-orientated and the approaches more inclusive. There is more collaboration and mutual learning between the specialist teacher and class teacher and the APS is more often provided in class, rather than individually. Since inclusion is the key process to develop, there is a search in professional meetings and conferences for the most effective inclusive approaches.

Capacity building is needed at a school level. Not all class and subject teachers perceive themselves as competent enough to teach learners with SEN. However, they are expected to be stronger in subject didactics. As such, closer collaboration and teamwork with specialist teachers could help to develop teachers who are confident and competent in including learners with SEN and are responsible for the learning processes of all learners. Monitoring would also enable better understanding of the quality effects, and therefore which approaches are more effective from an educational and financial aspect.

The fact that the mobile specialist teachers are not deeply involved in day-to-day school life and things that happen between their visits is one of the biggest disadvantages of the service. Mobile teachers lack opportunities to recognise and

react to the needs of teachers and schools that arise in relation to learners with SEN. They do have meetings with class teachers, but they tend to be more formal.

The financing system focuses more on learners and less on school development. The labelling system is too rigid and too wide and only learners with an official decision of SEN qualify for special provisions and APS. There are nine specified types of SEN:

- Intellectual
- Sensory
- Motor
- Health
- Emotional
- Behavioural
- Communication
- Autistic
- Learning.

The general opinion is that children with learning needs should receive help and adjustments without an official decision.

In the Slovenian school system there are also other opportunities to help children with learning disabilities. These include remedial and supplement learning and differentiation, which is an important part of the curriculum. Discussion participants claimed that too much money is spent on bureaucratic procedures to decide on support for learners, rather than developing schools and supporting innovative practices and inclusive teaching. More decentralised decision-making may give schools more freedom to work inclusively.

This was echoed by the head teacher of a very diverse mainstream school, which includes learners with SEN and cultural, economic, religious and linguistic diversity, among other things. He showed his commitment to supporting and fostering inclusive education and equal opportunities for all learners in his school. He is recognised as a very skilled school manager with a lot of knowledge about the financing system and the ability to work as flexibly as possible within the system. He also presented some good examples of ways of working inclusively in school, including:

- good teaching practice;
- peer help;
- additional education for learners;
- help from volunteers;
- additional education and training for school workers;
- teamwork;
- strong co-operation with external experts;
- support from school leadership.

Other participants added the engagement and commitment of school teams to work inclusively to this list.

Participants suggested that the Ministry should trial more flexibility in a selection of schools. External bodies could monitor and evaluate how the empowerment and local freedom to decide works in the schools and what the consequences are. The schools seem very competent and should be able to manage their finances without all the paperwork concerning official decisions. Supporting learners in schools is about more than just the added hours, it should be evident in the whole educational programme around them. Many teachers and school counsellors are very committed to helping learners with SEN. They often spend many additional hours preparing adaptive didactical and methodical strategies and materials connected to learners with SEN. The Ministry needs to clearly state that financing is to support inclusive education practices.

A specialist teacher representative, who is employed full-time in a mainstream school, presented how the five-step RTI model (which is outlined above and in the Country Report) functions in practice. The five-step model is clearly very well adopted in schools and enables professionals to collaborate to support learners with or at risk of SEN. There is added value in the formalised approach to RTI, which supports a school development approach towards an inclusive design for learning. Incentives were suggested, to reward schools for developing universal design learning environments and promoting inclusive practices on a daily basis.

More research is needed into the difference between how the system is supposed to function in theory and how it is functioning in practice. In 2016, the findings of

the National Evaluation Study² were published. The Study consisted of extensive nationwide research into different forms of APS assigned to learners with SEN according to the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act. The purpose of the Study was:

1. to analyse the general characteristics of assigning and implementing APS based on official data sources;
2. to identify the strengths and weaknesses of planning, implementation and evaluation of APS;
3. to review how the implementation of APS is reflected in learning achievements and in learners' social inclusion through a reduction in the influence of their special needs;
4. to determine the characteristics and the importance of the individualised programmes for the planning, implementation and evaluation of different types of APS;
5. to identify the APS needs of educators;
6. to analyse the views and opinions of educators regarding some of the important issues of APS.

A presentation on the educational needs of chronically ill learners showed a need for more flexibility in organising APS in larger amounts and much more quickly than is possible via guidance procedures.

The principal of the hospital school in Ljubljana explained problems connected with the waiting time for the official decision about the placement. The wait can be considerably long. There are insufficient hours of learning help available, especially for learners who cannot attend school due to health conditions, but are no longer in hospital.

Learners who have left hospital but cannot attend school need education at home. This should be assigned by the official decision and provided by their own school, or through a collaboration between the learner's school and the hospital. However, this home education fails to take place, due to:

- problems regarding the payment of hospital teachers' travel expenses;

² [National Evaluation Study](#) (in Slovenian)

- long distances between home and school, in particular for secondary school learners, who may attend a school outside their residential area.

Consequently, learners are often left to themselves in the learning process, parents take over the teaching of their own children, or they pay for private lessons. Some schools offer so-called online lessons. However, even if they function well, learners with severe health conditions remain home alone and, when possible, only attend school to get their marks.

One of the proposed solutions is obvious. To take advantage of existing professional potential, hospital teachers should be better incorporated into the inclusive school system for chronically sick learners in general. The Ministry pays for the hospital schools, but is too rigid to allow quick and efficient reactions to educational needs in inclusive settings.

The suggestion was again orientated towards more autonomy and flexibility in managing appropriate support for learners and supporting parental involvement. Inclusive practices should embrace inventive and effective solutions in educational approaches.

Mainstream schools can employ their own experts in special education (specialist teachers, inclusive pedagogues, surdo-pedagogues, speech therapists, tiflo pedagogues, social pedagogues, etc.). Alternatively, they can ask for expert assistance for the implementation of APS at special institutions (special schools and resource centres). These sign individual contracts with each school for every learner. Expert support for learners is funded by the Ministry of Education. For example, on top of its own learners, the Ljubljana School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is supporting over 300 learners who are included in mainstream schools this year. It is offering over 400 hours of additional support per week in over 170 different schools and kindergartens.

Recently, many special schools and centres converted into support (resource) centres and had to rethink their roles and areas of work. These are now not just connected to children, but more to society and families confronting everyday challenges and duties.

The principal of the Centre for Education, Rehabilitation, Inclusion and Counselling for the Blind presented her experience. She underlined that successful inclusion is strongly related to donations. The Centre is dedicated to developing the best

support for educational opportunities for learners with visual impairments (VI) who mainly attend mainstream schools. Alongside assessment and official decisions, the Centre provides individual and group support to learners, parents and teachers across Slovenia, as it is the only centre for learners with VI.

A detailed look at the financial support that they get from the state shows that it mainly covers the salaries of teachers supporting learners with VI in inclusion and the travel costs when they implement APS in a learner's school. The Centre also receives a small annual transfer for material costs. However, this does not meet their needs, especially regarding costs for special equipment that should be available in all schools that include learners with VI (e.g. computers, Braille machine, electronic magnifiers, adapted maps, other school materials and books).

Changes brought about by inclusion and the Placement of Children with SEN Act caused a significant drop in learners choosing education within special education settings. Despite this, the Centre has breakthrough ideas and vision. It wants to implement an Extended Core curriculum and to provide programmes and activities to support the educational and social inclusion of learners with VI. These can only be realised with strong support from donations.

Again, this highlighted the need for a more flexible system of support. There is also a need to change the financial system for new support centres. They work in a completely different way and should not be financed as schools. Due to their wide working area, support centres will also need new experts who are not currently part of the school system.

It was obvious that, in the present situation, donations are essential for implementing the inclusion of learners with VI (and other types of SEN). Collaboration and local support are closely connected with inclusive practices. However, there is a question around whether it is acceptable for quality education to depend on donations. The importance of trans-sectoral (health and welfare) collaboration in educational settings was also stressed.

There are many challenges ahead in implementing inclusion in schools and society. The principal of the Centre for Children with Mobile Impairment presented the causes of the gap between aspiration and possibility:

- learner support in inclusion is too often focused on a learning area;
- the guidance process is too long;

- there should be gradual increase in APS hours;
- there is excessive involvement in the system and consequently less flexibility in performance.

The gap could be overcome by stronger co-operation with different professionals in inclusion and with more autonomy regarding the implementation of APS. These changes might bring financial gains for inclusion, without waiting for decisions and consensus.

3. ANALYSIS OF KEY FACTORS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE FPIES PROJECT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section will focus on analysis of the discussions in the CSV regarding governance, accountability, quality assurance and monitoring issues and mechanisms, as framed in the Project Conceptual Framework. Again, the issues of gaps between policy and practice will be taken into consideration.

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms

Analysis of the discussions and reflection sheets at the CSV give an insight into the perceived strengths of the system when it comes to monitoring and accountability mechanisms. It also shows where there are challenges to be confronted.

The centralised system allows good monitoring of finances and expenditure. While this is a strength, there is still a challenge to develop governance and monitoring mechanisms that reinforce co-operation between all stakeholders.

The important questions that arose were:

- How the financing be monitored from national level downwards to ensure that education is actually inclusive?
- Which financing and monitoring mechanisms can be developed to give schools more autonomy and make them more accountable?
- How do monitoring and accountability mechanisms allow for appropriate flexibility at territorial, local and school level?

There is a good system for tracking financial support and an extensive database which includes a lot of financing data details. The database can assist with following up and be used to improve accountability, governance and monitoring mechanisms. Existing data is important for research into the effects of support and for the development of mechanisms that ensure cost-effectiveness of allocated means. Nationwide research focusing on the effectiveness of guidance and additional professional support for learners with SEN is in its final stages. It will provide important guidelines for future work.

School representatives suggested increasing the level of accountability of stakeholders at territorial and school level. The majority of school head teachers already try to work as flexible as possible within the system to ensure the best

possible outcomes. There was strong agreement that financing issues can support changes and that they could be used more inclusively. Therefore, it is very important to develop a common understanding of inclusion. Sharing experiences and good practice and creating networks can break the isolation stakeholders may be confronted with.

Promoting a school development approach and building on inclusive design for learning could cause a shift from focusing primarily on compensating needs for support resulting from the official decisions.

Stakeholders' ability to act inclusively may be improved by funding and monitoring mechanisms which enable special schools to act as resource centres at territorial and school level.

There were two main learning points reported by the participants:

- the enabling effect of governance mechanisms which provide a clear definition of criteria for responsibilities;
- a strong finance monitoring system.

Discussions also highlighted the added value of a formalised approach to RTI which supports a school development approach towards an inclusive design for learning.

Funding and governance mechanisms

This section analyses the discussion topics concerning governance and how the financing system can enable stakeholders to act inclusively.

Slovenia recently started the process of transforming special schools into resource centres. This is why there was so much interest in topics related to governance and accountability mechanisms in the discussions. An extension of the aims and working areas of Resource Centres compared to former special schools or institutions is expected, needed and wanted. However, in the process, centres are confronting many challenges around funding and governance mechanisms. Their aim is to provide additional help and support to learners, their families and their teachers in inclusion. The Ministry ensures salaries for teachers who support children with VI in inclusion and pays travel and material costs. There are not enough funds for special equipment (e.g. Braille machines) or adapted didactic materials and tools for learners to access at school or at home. Centres usually receive some extra funds from donations and some funds are allocated from municipalities and other

Ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). There could be a risk of reconnecting with a medical model, instead of shifting to social and educational model, without needing to focus so much on labelling. The focus should be on individuals' needs, rather than their deficits.

Inclusion may also be fostered by the improvement of capacity building mechanisms. Since 2010, there has been a new Inclusive Pedagogue qualification from the Faculty of Education. This aims to promote an inclusive, in-class approach, instead of the special education approach that usually still involves removing individuals from the class.

Stakeholders highlighted the gap between the principles ruling inclusive education at policy level and their ability to put them into practice. They particularly insisted on the need to improve capacity building mechanisms, to develop more flexible financing mechanisms, and to enable special schools to effectively support stakeholders at municipal and school level. They also highlighted the need to improve existing governance and accountability mechanisms.

Support of integrated and cross-sectoral services

The support of integrated and cross-sectoral (social, health and education) services is not regulated and financed at state level.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY'S SYSTEM OF FUNDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The final section of the report focuses on ways to move forward, based on analysis of discussions in the CSV. This section aims to identify the funding mechanism areas that need further development.

One of the most important challenges is to develop policies and strategies to overcome the gap between the principles of inclusive education and their implementation. This would allow for the development of schools for all, which meet the needs of all learners.

A first step at the national level should be to focus more on universal design and inclusive education. The existing data should be analysed to develop a common vision about inclusive education. School administrations need more room for manoeuvre within their budget and an improvement in throughput funding capacity mechanisms.

The current system may be improved by shifting from an input-based model, related to the need for a medically-legitimated official decision, to a throughput model. This model, connected to a socio-pedagogic model, would follow learners' adaptive skills, educational and academics needs and schools' abilities to meet diverse educational profiles. The challenge should be approached with stronger support from capacity building mechanisms by the collaboration of different stakeholders. The introduction of inclusive didactical and methodical approaches in initial teacher education programmes at universities can be additionally supported by:

- selected schools which have developed good inclusive teaching practice;
- special schools (Resource Centres) who follow up the new approaches, technologies and equipment and develop special didactical materials and tools.

Funding mechanisms should focus more on implementing universal design (throughput funding). The emphasis on official decisions might be too excessive, since there is quite a well-developed five-step RTI model of support – there should be more flexibility in financing mechanisms and accountability. Decentralisation of the system may affect the increase in teachers' and schools' commitment and responsibility to all learners. In cases of learning difficulties, schools and teachers should have more autonomy to decide which learners need to be supported and

how. Such decision-making would be a more dynamic process, but also more equitable and effective. Schools seem very competent and could manage their finances without all the guidance paperwork. This change would also reduce the costs of assessment and waiting times in the guidance process.

One of the options discussed was that the Ministry should test giving more flexibility to a few schools and have an external evaluation of the process and its consequences. The aim would be to develop inclusive schools with diverse learners together and to implement a flexible financing model. This would allow monitoring of what happens when there is local freedom in decision-making and empowerment in the school. It was highlighted that, in inclusive education, supporting children in schools means more than just a few additional hours of professional support. The whole school environment (physical, educational and psycho-social) needs to be accessible. Therefore, the state needs to establish that financing is to support inclusive education practices.

An effective model for co-operation between special/inclusive pedagogues and teachers in the sense of capacity building within schools is needed for the improvement of the existing system in Slovenia. There are currently two models of special education support – in-school specialist teachers and mobile services – both of which have strengths and weaknesses. The effectiveness of each should be monitored, but the focus should be on support within the class or group, not outside the class in individual settings. Co-teaching would be a fast, feasible service delivery option for providing inclusive support within the context of the general education classroom, instead of individually-delivered APS.

The financing system still focuses mostly on learners and not on school development. This makes it rigid and dependent on a labelling approach. Too much money is spent on deciding on support for learners, instead of investing in developing schools into inclusive, universal design learning environments. The financing system should also focus on whole-class development. Individual help and support which is currently focused on individual learners should be more available and spread to all the learners and teachers in the class.

There are already some good models for supporting schools (e.g. PIKA Educational Centre) that are funded by municipalities and should become nationwide. The state should empower municipalities, especially those which are distant from counselling,



support and resource centres, to develop a bottom-up approach to capacity building, in terms of training and resources.

