



# FINANCING POLICIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

## Country Report: Slovenia



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## INTRODUCTION

A milestone in inclusive education in Slovenia was the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2000), hereafter referred to as the Placement Act, that was put in place in 2000. Before this, Slovenia had a segregated, two-trailed education system. The institutional education and care for children with special educational needs (SEN) started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and grew into a highly professional special education model. The department of special pedagogy at the University of Ljubljana's Academy of Education, established in 1949, was responsible for the initial training of special education teachers. The most extensive segregation effect was registered between 1975 and 1977, when as many as 6–8% of the whole school population was educated in special schools and institutions (Galeša, 2003; Opara et al., 2010). There was a special school for children with learning disabilities in almost every municipality, treatment schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, three institutions for deaf children and children with hearing and speech disabilities, two for blind and partially-sighted children and two for children with physical disabilities.

The first document to put forward a conceptual framework for a change towards more inclusive education was the White Paper on Education (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 1995). Combined with the Placement Act in 2000, the way to mainstream education was formally opened to children with SEN. Without exception, and in accordance with the Placement Act, all educational legislation at all education levels, from pre-primary to university, had to include provisions for children and adolescents with SEN. The concept of a two-track school system started to give way to the establishment of a more just and comprehensive school system.

## ORGANISATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND FUNDING IN EDUCATION

The education system in Slovenia comprises:

- Pre-primary education. This is an integral part of the education system, but is not mandatory. It is available to all children from the age of one to the start of compulsory education at age six. Pre-primary programmes in kindergartens are fee-based. The fees owed by parents are calculated based on the cost of the programme in which the child is enrolled. Parents are required to pay up to 80% of the full programme cost, depending on their financial situation. The difference is financed by the municipalities. Fees for parents are determined by the social work centre, based on the national scale which ranks parents by pay grade, according to the family's income and wealth.
- Basic school education. This is compulsory and consists of a single structure, nine-year system, attended by children aged six to fourteen. Basic education is provided by public and private schools. Less than 1% of learners (1,169) were enrolled in six private schools in 2015–2016. In the same period, 1% of learners (1,946) were enrolled in 57 special schools and almost 1% (1,318) in special educational programmes (Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia (SORS)). Basic school is financed by the national budget and the municipality (which is a co-founder), as well as from donations, sponsorships and other sources. Education for children in public and private schools with a concession is free. Public and private schools with a concession cannot charge learners, except for items specified by the relevant law, including the material costs of organising schooling away from home, contributions towards the cost of meals and fees related to other services that are not compulsory or are higher than the prescribed criteria and standards (above-standard programmes). Payments on behalf of learners who are unable to pay due to their social situation are made by the government, in accordance with uniform rules determined by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Private schools receive 85% of finances from the budget. Private schools may charge school fees, but they cannot be higher than 15% of the programme cost.
- Upper-secondary education. This is not compulsory and is provided by public upper-secondary schools that offer one or more programmes, by upper-secondary school centres and *gimnazijas* (high schools). Upper-secondary learners can choose between two education programmes:

general education (*gimnazija* programmes and *matura* examination course) and vocational-technical education (short upper-secondary vocational education, vocational education or technical education, as well as vocational-technical education and vocational courses). Learners do not pay tuition fees.

- Tertiary education. This includes short-cycle higher vocational education and higher education studies.

Education for children and young people with special needs is provided as a public service, but may also be provided in private kindergartens and schools without concessions or in private institutions or as home education. There are many parallel forms (inclusive, integrated form or separate classes and specialised institutions) which meet different needs. All educational programmes for learners with SEN have to follow the main curricular aims that are established by the Ministry in Article 9 of the Organization and Financing of Education Act (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 1996).

According to current legislation, learners with SEN are placed into a continuum of educational programmes, which all are part of the integral school system. The Placement Act defines all the necessary procedures for the placement of learners with SEN in all types of education, from pre-primary to upper-secondary. Depending on the learner's psychological and physical status, the Placement Act enables inclusion in the most appropriate educational programme, based on the assumption that additional professional help and adapted implementation of programmes will help a learner to achieve a comparable standard of knowledge.

If a learner's special needs are severe or complex and it is not possible to provide a suitable environment in a mainstream kindergarten or school, the learner is placed in an adapted programme at a specialised institution. This allows learners to reach a standard of knowledge equal to that of their peers in mainstream schools. Furthermore, some institutions implement an adapted basic school programme with a lower educational standard and a special curriculum for learners with an intellectual disability in addition to the primary disability. If learners live at a distance and daily commuting to and from an institution is not an option, they may reside in the institution free of charge.

## Funding in education

The financing system for pre-primary, basic, upper-secondary and tertiary education is prescribed in detail at a national level. The Organization and Financing of Education Act specifies the sources of funding by purpose, duty and

responsibility and lays down the terms and conditions of financing and supervision. Funding sources include:

- public funds;
- funds contributed by the institution's founder;
- contributions from industry associations and chambers (for upper-secondary education);
- direct contributions from employers for the provision of work experience (for upper-secondary education);
- payments and fees from learners, apprentices and adults (for upper-secondary education);
- payments from parents for pre-primary education services;
- funds from sales of services and products;
- donations, sponsorships and other sources.

The scope of financing is determined using two methods:

- standardisation of activities and monitoring actual costs in kindergartens and basic schools;
- lump sum (integral) financing in upper-secondary and tertiary education.

Kindergartens and basic schools are funded on the basis of their programmes and in accordance with criteria and standards issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Finances for upper-secondary schools and higher vocational colleges are calculated on the basis of allocated funds per learner, that is, on the basis of the Rules on financing and organisation of education and the criteria and standards issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The actual scope of funding is specified in a financing agreement signed by the Ministry and the school for each budget year. This agreement determines the scope of funding on the basis of full-time enrolments and graduates.

Salaries for staff employed in education are determined in accordance with the law regulating public servant salaries (salary system), collective agreements (amounts and benefits) and by taking account of actual employment relations regulated by school legislations (titles, positions, bonuses). The Regulation on methods to calculate and pay salaries in the public sector ensures a uniform salary system for all public servants.

### ***The spectrum and proportion of public financing in education***

In 2015, EUR 2.114 billion was spent on educational institutions. The share of public expenditure for formal education is 4.9% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is the lowest for eight years (in 2014 it was 5.3% and in 2012, 5.7%) (SORS, no date).

**Table 1. Public expenditure for formal basic education**

Year	Total (EUR)	% of total expenditure on education	% of GDP
2014	862,761,000	43.3	2.3
2015	829,240,000	43.5	2.1

Source: SORS

Public expenditure accounted for 86% of expenditure for educational institutions, 13% was private expenditure and almost 1% was funds from international sources. Compared to 2014, total expenditure on educational institutions decreased in nominal terms by 4.2% and in real terms by 3.7%. Calculated per participant, expenditure in 2015 was slightly higher in tertiary education (EUR 5,842 in 2014, EUR 6,029 in 2015) and lower in pre-primary education (EUR 5,733 in 2014, EUR 5,163 in 2015) and basic education (EUR 5,733 in 2014, EUR 5,400 in 2015). Expenditure per participant in upper-secondary education remained about the same (EUR 4,331 in 2014, EUR 4,383 in 2015).

**Table 2. Expenditure for educational institutions in euros, 2015\***

Education level	Total (EUR)	Public expenditure (EUR)	Private expenditure (EUR)	Funds from international agencies (EUR)
Basic	915,059,000	829,227,000	85,279,000	552,000

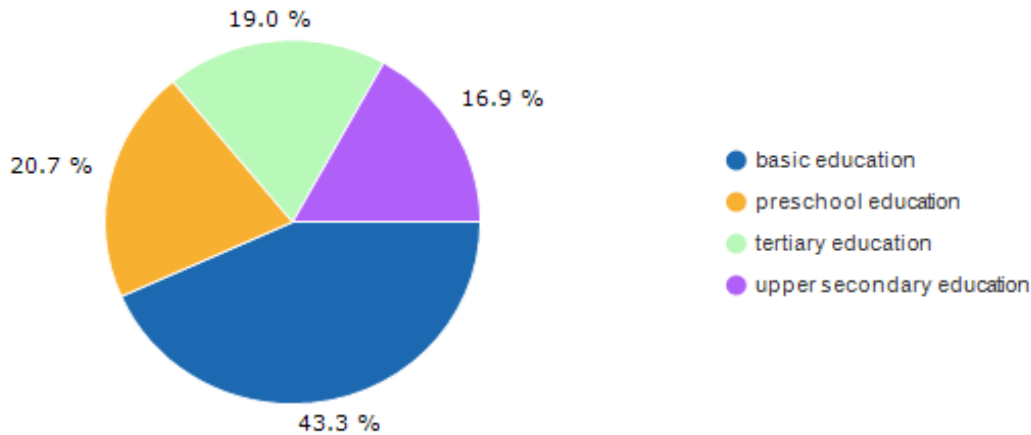
\*All educational programmes at basic educational level plus all institutions that support education (e.g. NEIS, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, etc.) are included in these expenditures.

Source: SORS

In the structure of total expenditure for educational institutions, expenditure on pre-primary education (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> age period in kindergarten) represents 21%, basic education is 43%, upper-secondary education is 17%, and tertiary education



is 19% (of which 1% is for higher vocational education and 18% for professional higher education).



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**Figure 1. Structure of total expenditure for Slovenian educational institutions by education level, 2015**

### ***Funding of basic education***

Basic education is financed by the municipality and the national budget, from donations, sponsorships and other sources.

The government provides funds for the provision of the compulsory programme (lessons and classroom housekeeping lessons) and the after-hours programme (supplementary and remedial lessons, individual and group support for learners, extra-curricular activities, outdoor learning away from home in the natural environment, after-school classes and morning care).

Salaries for staff in basic education are financed by the national budget. The level of funding for salaries is determined by job classifications and the number of occupied positions in a school; they must comply with relevant regulations, such as laws, criteria and standards and collective agreements.

The government provides funding for the material costs of the programme, namely for teaching aids, trips, and the care and education of learners with special needs. The government also funds:

- developmental and supporting activities, such as research, development, information and experimental activities in schools;
- in-service teacher training;
- ICT and other means of instruction;

- international activities;
- the running of school libraries;
- textbook and literature subsidies;
- meals subsidies;
- competitions and work with talented learners;
- out-of-school activities;
- the education of Roma learners;
- Slovenian language lessons and mother-tongue lessons for foreigners in basic schools;
- research and innovative learner activities;
- transportation of learners, etc.

Municipalities provide basic schools with funding for capital investments, to pay maintenance and material costs for buildings and equipment, for the so-called above-standard programme, and transportation and care for children who need it. The above-standard programme may include the presence of a second teacher in all lessons, additional sports classes, a foreign language from year one, among other things. Kindergartens and schools can apply for funding for above-standard programmes at national competitions and by participating in national projects.

The level of funding allocated to a basic school is calculated according to the Rules on the criteria and standards for the implementation of the basic school programme. The Rules are issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, based on prior consultations with the Council of Experts for General Education and unions. The criteria and standards cover the responsibilities of teaching staff, the criteria for the provision of the counselling service, libraries, administrative, account-keeping and technical services and the classroom and grouping criteria.

### ***Financial support for families of learners with special educational needs***

Families and learners with SEN are entitled to special financial support from the government. The government provides funding for the placement of learners with SEN for the following:

- aids, equipment and adjustments to classrooms to accommodate learners' needs;
- carers who accompany learners with physical disabilities;

- boarding fees in dormitories;
- specialised textbooks;
- transportation of parents and their children during holidays;
- a higher proportion of partial funding for after-hours programmes and for an improved learner to teacher ratio.

The Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia ensures the provision of medical-technical aids to learners with SEN. Technical aids are prescribed by an authorised medical doctor. The insurance company regulations specify which aids and standard support tools are provided to learners. The Institute of Rehabilitation of the Republic of Slovenia supports the adjustment to more complex medical-technical tools that require an inter-disciplinary approach and the parents and learners to familiarise themselves with their use (e.g. complex wheelchairs, communicators, etc.).

Learners with special needs must be offered free transportation to and from school, if this is stated in their guidance order (Basic School Act). The refund of relevant costs is the responsibility of the local community (Source: Eurydice Slovenia).

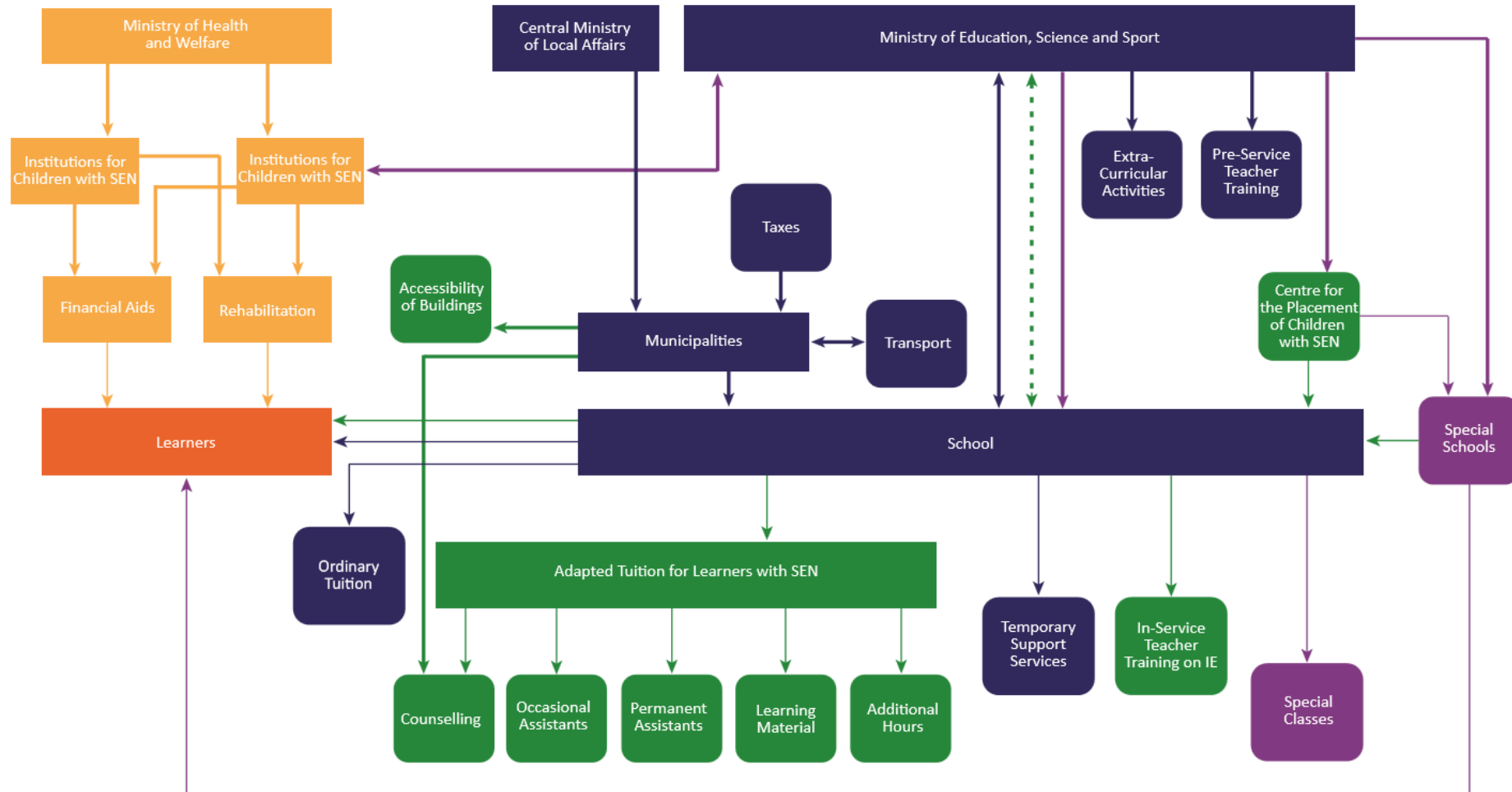


Figure 2. Schematic overview for Slovenia (Financing project)

## Development of policy framework that supports and empowers inclusive education

The White Paper on Education in Slovenia (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 1995; 2011b) included 'equal opportunities and non-discrimination' under the principles on which the public education system is based. Since then, several provisions affecting education, healthcare, the alleviation of barriers and obstacles in the environment, financial social assistance, employment and social integration have been adopted.

Policy and systems conditions for more equal opportunities for learners with SEN in mainstream education are still building up gradually. Along with the primary legislative acts, the secondary regulations that govern the field of education at the operative level, which are issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, are also significant. The most important are as follows:

- Regulations for the organisation and work of the commissions ([Official Gazette No. 88/13](#)). These regulations lay down the Criteria for the assessment of the type and degree of disadvantage, impairments and disabilities of learners with SEN (NEIS, 2015a), as well as the guidelines for operation of the Commissions for Guidance of Children with SEN (NEIS, 2015b);
- Regulations on additional professional and physical assistance for learners with SEN ([Official Gazette No. 88/13](#)). These regulations lay down the scope, form and requirements for the provision of additional professional assistance;
- Regulations on basic school education for learners with SEN provided at home, laying down the requirements for education at home and the criteria for funding ([Official Gazette No. 22/16](#));
- Regulations on the norms and standards for the provision of education programmes for learners with SEN ([Official Gazette No. 47/17](#));
- Regulations on the implementation of the Matura examinations for candidates with SEN ([Official Gazette No. 82/14](#)).

### ***Main aims and principles in the education of learners with SEN***

The concept of an inclusive school system strives towards assuring equal rights and opportunities in education for all, regardless of gender, nationality, social and cultural origin, religion, political or other convictions, education, social status, disabilities or any other personal circumstances, as guaranteed by the

Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. It supports, promotes and develops learners' active participation, co-operation between home and school and the co-creation of learning and teaching by allowing learners to express their thoughts and ideas, their creativity, giftedness and strengths. The twelve key aims and principles are highlighted in Article 4 of the Placement Act (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2000; 2011b) and guide educational institutions towards assuring:

1. The best benefit for the learner;
2. Consistency and complexity of education;
3. Equal opportunities, while taking into account learners' diversity;
4. Parent or guardian involvement in the process of guidance and further education and all forms of assistance;
5. An individualised approach;
6. Inter-disciplinarity;
7. Maintaining the balance between the different areas of a learner's physical and mental development;
8. Guidance to the most suitable education programme as soon as possible;
9. Immediate and continuous support and professional assistance in educational programmes;
10. Vertical permeability and connectivity of programmes;
11. Organisation of education and training as close to the place of residence as possible;
12. Providing adequate conditions that allow optimal development of each learner.

By ensuring the achievement of the above objectives and principles, the renewed system of education began to become a more qualitative and inclusive learning environment for all learners. Inclusion is thus a reciprocal process that enriches and promotes personal development, as it requires the empathic vigilance of the individual and of the society. With a tendency towards social cohesion, mutual care, looking for common good and removing obstacles, it promotes diverse and multisensory learning, creativity and progress both in education and in society in general.

## Groups of learners with SEN that are defined in the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act

In the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2000), the classification of learners based solely on specific disabilities was suspended. The emphasis was placed rather on the learners' needs and this formed the concept of the integration model of education. It redefined learners who need adaptations and/or assistance in the education process.

If the assistance and adaptations cannot be provided by mainstream kindergartens or schools, the learner's needs are identified in the placement procedure and the learner is placed into a suitably adapted programme. These programmes are in special schools or institutions for the education of learners with special needs, or in classes or groups established for this purpose within mainstream kindergartens and schools.

The latest Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2011b) defines nine groups of learners with SEN who need more provisions and resources to support their learning as follows:

1. Learners with intellectual disabilities;
2. Blind learners and learners with visual impairments;
3. Deaf learners and learners with hearing impairments;
4. Learners with speech problems;
5. Learners with physical disabilities;
6. Learners with long-term illnesses;
7. Learners with Deficits in Individual Learning Areas;
8. Learners with emotional and behavioural disorders;
9. Learners with autistic disorders.

Learners are recognised as having SEN when they get an official decision by the National Education Institute Slovenia (NEIS). Parents usually request the introduction of official guidance procedures for learners with SEN, but schools or learners themselves (from 15 years old) can also request it.

The Commission for Guidance of Children with SEN, founded by NEIS, are responsible for the placement. They are working according to the Regulations for the organisation and work of the commissions for guidance of children with SEN

([Official Gazette No. 88/13](#)), and Criteria for the assessment of the type and degree of disadvantage, impairments and disabilities of learners with SEN (NEIS, 2015a). The Commission is appointed depending on the type of disability and consists of at least three members: a special pedagogue in the appropriate field, a psychologist, and a specialist paediatrician. Based on existing and received documentation, interviews and, if needed, an examination, each member of the Commission is responsible for writing an expert opinion on the learner's SEN. A written report by the learner's teacher and the institution where the learner is enrolled is a mandatory and important piece of professional documentation. It proves the learner has been provided with the guaranteed continuum of professional assistance that is available in mainstream educational settings. The Commission can be extended with additional specialists (such as a teacher, psychiatrist, optometrist, audiologist, professional staff of Centres for Social Work, etc.) if more specific information is needed.

The Commission delivers an Expert Opinion, which encompasses basic information about the learner, synthesis of opinions of all members, the type and degree of disability, they also establish the placement proposal into the most appropriate programme and school or institution. If necessary, the commission specifies the extent, type and professionals for additional professional support (APS), the adjustments of rooms and equipment, assistants for physically impaired learners, aids and other learner's rights according to the law, etc. Based on the Expert Opinion, NEIS issues the official decision on the placement of the learner with SEN into the most appropriate educational programme, considering a continuum of provided adjustments, help, and APS. Prior to issuing a decision, the NEIS consults parents about the expert opinion and ensures that the school or institution fulfils the admission conditions. The parents may appeal against the decision.

The dynamics of work of the Commission for Guidance and the number of learners with SEN that got their Official Placement decisions issued by the NEIS from 2005 to 2014 are presented in Table 3. Learners are grouped by the type of disability, unrelated to the educational programme of placement.

The largest number of placement decisions was issued to learners with deficits in individual learning areas (36.5%). This group is followed by learners with multiple disabilities (28.7%), learners with long-term illness (10.4%), learners with intellectual disabilities (8.5%), learners with speech and language impairments (7.3%), and learners with limited intellectual capacity (2.5%). This last group has decreased remarkably, as it was excluded as an autonomous group within the



Placement Act (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2000). The groups of learners with physical disabilities, deaf learners and learners with hearing impairments have the same average share (2.3%). Blind and partially-sighted learners and learners with emotional and behaviour disabilities are the smallest groups of learners with SEN, with an average share of less than 1%. Official decisions for children with autism are not yet evident, since they were only recognised as an autonomous group in the Placement Act of 2013. Before this, their official decision was usually issued to them as learners with long-term illness or speech and language impairments.

**Table 3. Data on official decisions issued by the NEIS from 2005 to 2014, according to the type of disability**

Type of disability	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total	%
Learners with intellectual disabilities	731	631	325	727	646	549	403	394	345	344	<b>5,095</b>	<b>8.5</b>
Learners with limited intellectual abilities	671	373	128	151	88	42	19	3	0	0	<b>1,475</b>	<b>2.5</b>
Blind learners and learners with visual impairments	72	48	40	54	45	40	38	34	30	38	<b>439</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Deaf learners and learners with hearing impairments	191	172	80	176	180	121	107	108	127	83	<b>1,345</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Learners with speech and language impairments	161	301	198	338	416	554	530	533	656	638	<b>4,325</b>	<b>7.3</b>
Learners with physical disabilities	205	182	99	173	153	136	124	115	98	75	<b>1,360</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Learners with long-term illnesses	296	383	353	676	786	730	752	795	792	620	<b>6,183</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Learners with deficits in individual learning areas	1,761	2,053	1,110	2,383	2,362	2,601	2,444	2,676	2,273	2,111	<b>21,774</b>	<b>36.5</b>
Learners with emotional and behavioural disorders	39	26	17	38	43	54	59	65	71	80	<b>492</b>	<b>0.8</b>
Learners with multiple disabilities	1,066	1,129	825	1,859	1,970	2,239	2,029	2,098	1,978	1,942	<b>17,135</b>	<b>28.7</b>
Learners with autism*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,193</b>	<b>5,298</b>	<b>3,175</b>	<b>6,575</b>	<b>6,689</b>	<b>7,066</b>	<b>6,505</b>	<b>6,821</b>	<b>6,370</b>	<b>5,931</b>	<b>59,623</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Evidence PUOPP Oracle; NEIS 2016

## **Work of the Commission for Guidance of Children with SEN from the financial perspective**

Funds for the operation of the Commission for Guidance of Children with SEN (Commission) is provided in the first instance by the NEIS. The scope of funds for the implementation of NEIS tasks and operations is stipulated in the NEIS annual operations plan. As a budget user, NEIS therefore obtains funds for the operation of the Commission from public funds. The NEIS makes a request for funding to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport at specific points of time (usually a trimester).

### ***'Scoreboard' and the definition of individual items***

The Instructions for the Work of the Commission on the First Level (hereinafter the Instructions), adopted by the Director of the NEIS in agreement with the Ministry, regulate and define the following:

- the detailed organisation and operation method of the Commission in the first instance;
- the tasks and responsibilities of all participants and the procedure of drawing up expert opinions;
- remuneration for the work carried out by the participants.

The director of the NEIS undertakes to complete contracts with the participants which regulate mutual rights and obligations. The President of the Commission may complete a contract of employment or a service contract, whereas the members of the Commission sign a copyright contract. Norms for the payment of work performed by chairpersons and members of the Commission are determined and evaluated by points with respect to the services rendered.

The funds are granted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport within the scope of its annual action plan for this purpose. Each year, the value of a point is adopted by the NEIS Council at the proposal of the NEIS Director, within the context of the annual financial action plan. The current value of a point stands at EUR 5.79.

The Instructions stipulate that the value of the whole procedure of the preparation of an expert opinion must not exceed EUR 217.13 gross, except in cases of learners with more complex disabilities. In those cases where the Commission cannot provide the expert opinion based on the available documentation, examinations and interviews and has to include specialists in their

field (medical or teaching profession) who are of key importance for determining a learner’s special needs, the value of the preparation of an expert opinion may increase.

**Table 4. The commitment of funds in the budget earmarked for the operation of the Commission (EUR)**

Year	Financial Plan	Actual Amount
2012	2,094,492	2,071,317
2013	1,843,150	1,950,196
2014	1,843,150	1,926,002
2015	1,613,168	1,408,437
2016	1,454,588	–

The table shows a gradual reduction in the commitment of funds in the budget which were earmarked for the operation of the Commission, in the period from 2012 to 2016. Due to austerity measures and the consequential reduction of funds for the Commission’s operation, the NEIS had to plan measures relating to a reduction in the value of points and a change of norms for the remuneration of work performed by Commission members.

In 2015, NEIS introduced changes to the placement process that did not require normative changes. The amendments aimed to shorten the time from submitting an application to a decision being made, better transparency of the system, computer support and e-services, which consequently brought about a reduction in administrative work and more efficient archiving of cases. The overall costs of the placement procedure were also reduced.

In Table 5 below, there are two cases of work costs for the Commission for Guidance. In Case 1 (EUR 205.55), the expert opinion is prepared on the basis of the obtained documentation and interviews with parents and teachers, with no evident need for examination of the learner. In Case 2 (EUR 217.13), there is a need for examination of the learner by all the members of the Commission.

**Table 5. Two case studies regarding costs of the Commission for Guidance per learner**

Service number and description of service	No. of points (1 point = EUR 5.79)	Service price (EUR)	Case 1 quantity	Case 1 cost per child (EUR)	Case 2 quantity	Case 2 cost per child (EUR)
1 Leading the Commission	4	23.16	1	23.16	1	23.16
2 Active participation of a member at the Commission meeting	1	5.79	3	17.37	3	17.37
3 Preparation of an expert report on the learner based on documents	6	34.74	3	104.22	0	0.00
4a Preparation of an expert report on the learner based on documents and overall psychological examination	11.5	66.59	0	0.00	1	66.59
4b Preparation of an expert report on the learner based on documents and a brief psychological examination	5	28.95	0	0.00	0	0.00
5 Preparation of an expert report on the learner based on documentation and special pedagogical review	8	46.32	0	0.00	1	46.32
6 Preparation of an expert report on the learner based on documentation and doctor's examination	6.5	37.64	0	0.00	1	37.64
7 Interview with parents and the learner and recording the summary of the interview	2	11.58	3	34.74	0	0.00
8 Consultation with professionals from external institutions and recording the summary of the consultation	1	5.79	3	17.37	3	17.37
9 Preparation of a report and consideration of observations regarding the expert opinion	1.5	8.69	1	8.69	1	8.69
<b>Total cost (EUR)</b>	–	–	–	<b>205.55</b>	–	<b>217.13</b>

## **The continuum of educational programmes in which learners with SEN can be placed**

According to learners' capabilities and needs and the best opportunities to provide optimal forms of support and assistance, the Commission for Guidance selects the optimal educational programme for the child. The programmes are spread over three levels, ranging from full inclusion in mainstream education to inclusion in programmes that are implemented in specialised schools and classes.

Most learners with SEN (nearly 98%) attend mainstream kindergartens and schools. The provision of education is adapted to their needs and they are entitled to additional support and assistance (APS) that is provided by teaching staff with specialised skills and special pedagogues (special and social pedagogues, inclusive pedagogues, speech therapists, psychologists, and pedagogues) for a maximum of five hours per week. The approaches and goals that the APS should achieve to enhance inclusive education are set out in the individualised education programmes. These are prepared by a multidisciplinary school team, consisting of teachers, special educators, other school staff involved in the learners' inclusion, the parents and the learners themselves. They specify the work practices, methods of professional or physical assistance, transfers between programmes and other adjustments necessary to organise, test and assess knowledge, progress through the programme and organise teaching time.

This continuum of help and support within educational programmes in which learners with SEN are placed according to current legislation is described in more detail below.

### ***The model of inclusion of children with SEN in pre-primary education***

Pre-primary aged children with SEN can be included in:

- Programmes for pre-primary aged children with adjusted implementation and APS. This is where most pre-primary aged children with SEN are placed. In order to assist and support pre-primary teachers who teach children with SEN, guidelines that describe most common adaptations for different groups of children with SEN have been prepared (Čas et al., 2003).

Pre-primary aged children receive up to three hours of APS per week to help overcome specific deficits. This additional help is financed by the municipality. In some cases (physical disability, autism, specific health needs), children can also receive the help of a full- or part-time assistant that is also financed by the municipality.

A growing number of children with additional needs are placed into this programme for their optimal development (see Table 6). Since early childhood intervention and high quality early childhood education and care are of huge importance for a child's further development and education, the support mentioned above might not be sufficient in many cases.

- Adapted programmes for pre-primary aged children. Children with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities or visual, hearing or motor impairments are placed into these programmes. There are usually three to six children in these so-called developmental units. A special pedagogue and pre-primary teaching assistant carry out the programme. The objectives are stated in a special curriculum and are completely individualised according to the needs of the individual child. They are focused on functional knowledge and skills and contain a lot of therapeutic and rehabilitation activities. These programmes can operate in the framework of specialised institutes, or within mainstream pre-primary institutions. The latter significantly increases the opportunities for joint and co-operative play, learning and work in a more inclusive manner. The programme is financed by the municipalities.

As is evident in Table 6, the share of children with SEN in the population of all children enrolled in public pre-primary schools has increased in recent years, from 1.2–1.3% in 2006–2011, up to 1.7% in 2015–2016. The inclusive trend is evident. As the number of children with SEN enrolled in the pre-primary programme with adjusted implementation and APS increases (from 0.92% to 1.40%), the share of children with SEN placed in developmental pre-primary units decreases (from 0.41% to 0.30%).

While in 2006–2007 the ratio of children with SEN in mainstream pre-primary classes and children with SEN in developmental pre-primary classes was 7:3, in 2015–2016 the ratio is significantly different, at 8.3:1.7.

**Table 6. The number and share (%) of children with SEN enrolled in Slovenian pre-primary schools by year**

Year	All children enrolled in public pre-primary schools	No. with SEN in public pre-primary schools	% in public pre-primary schools	No. with SEN in mainstream pre-primary classes	% in mainstream pre-primary classes	No. with SEN in developmental pre-primary classes	% in developmental pre-primary classes	% with SEN in mainstream pre-primary classes	% with SEN in developmental pre-primary classes
2006/07	57,152	759	1.33	523	0.92	236	0.41	68.91	31.09
2007/08*	60,148	636	1.06	474	0.79	162	0.27	74.53	25.47
2008/09	64,497	796	1.23	545	0.85	251	0.39	68.47	31.53
2009/10	69,357	857	1.24	639	0.92	218	0.31	74.56	25.44
2010/11	73,918	962	1.30	755	1.02	207	0.28	78.48	21.52
2011/12	78,742	1,083	1.38	853	1.08	230	0.29	78.76	21.24
2012/13	80,456	1,201	1.49	978	1.22	223	0.28	81.43	18.57
2013/14	80,626	1,246	1.55	1,038	1.29	208	0.26	83.31	16.69
2014/15	81,279	1,323	1.63	1,074	1.32	249	0.31	81.18	18.82
2015/16	81,146	1,379	1.70	1,138	1.40	241	0.30	82.52	17.48

Source: *Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia*

\* In 2007/08, the number of children placed is significantly lower than in other years. This is due to a period of a few months when the Commission was inactive due to the introduction of new regulations.



## ***The model of inclusion of children with SEN in basic and upper-secondary education***

In both basic and upper-secondary education, the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act governs the placement of learners with SEN within the education system and lays down the manner and form of education provision. There are four forms of education for learners with SEN which differ in intensity and the specialism of help and support:

**1. Educational programmes with adjusted implementation and additional professional support (APS), carried out within mainstream education.** According to the Placement Act, all groups of learners can be placed in these programmes except learners with intellectual disabilities, as the programmes' prescribed content and minimal knowledge standards cannot be adjusted.

It is possible to adjust the class organisation, testing (grading) and assessing methods, progression and timetables for learners with SEN. All the most common and important adjustments for each group of learners with SEN are described in the guidelines for teachers. According to current legislation, learners are entitled to a maximum of five hours of APS per week. This can be performed either in or outside the classroom, individually or in small groups. There are three purposes of APS:

- *learning assistance* provided by teachers, which allows additional explanation or serves to bridge any gaps after a learner's long-term absence due to illness;
- support for *overcoming specific barriers and disabilities*, which is provided by special pedagogues;
- a *counselling service*, which focuses on creating an inclusive environment and can be carried out either by teachers, school counsellors or by special pedagogues in various fields.

The counselling service is a special form of APS which is assigned to all learners that receive any of the forms of APS. The mandatory assigned APS hours were introduced with the New Placement Act (ZUOPP-1), which was accepted in 2011 and put into force in 2013. There is no additional charge as with other APS hours.

In 2015–2016 there were 452 public basic schools in Slovenia and six private schools. All are supposed to accept learners with SEN unless there is a reasonable justification (e.g. architectural barriers). The measures based on 2005's 'National Guidelines to Improve Accessibility of Built Environment, Information and

Communications for People with Disabilities' facilitate the easier integration of people with disabilities and other functional impairments. There is a network of 57 schools that are fully accessible for children with physical disabilities and another 28 schools that are accessible but with some limitations (e.g. non-adapted toilets).

Table 7 shows the shares of learners with SEN that were included in mainstream or special basic schools from 2005/06 to 2016/17. There is an increasing trend of including learners with SEN in mainstream basic schools – from 3.33% in 2005/06 to 6.51% in 2012/13. These learners were placed in the basic school programme with adjusted implementation and APS. The table shows that the total population of learners with SEN increases through the years, mostly due to an increasing number of official decisions. The share of learners with SEN included in specialised forms of education remains stable, at 1% of the total population of learners in basic school.

**Table 7. Comparison of numbers and shares (%) of the population of primary school learners and learners with SEN who are involved either in mainstream primary schools or in specialised schools and institutes in the period from 2005/06 to 2015/16**

Year	Total no. in basic schools	No. in mainstream basic schools	% in mainstream basic schools	No. in special schools / institutes	% in special schools / institutes	No. with SEN in mainstream basic schools	% with SEN in mainstream basic schools	Total no. with SEN	% with SEN in the population of basic school learners
2005/06	170,913	167,616	98.1	1,735	1.04	5,583	3.33	7,318	4.4
2006/07	168,136	164,991	98.1	1,650	1.00	6,345	3.85	7,995	4.8
2007/08	166,060	163,002	98.2	1,578	0.97	6,605	4.05	8,183	5.0
2008/09	164,811	161,695	98.1	1,589	0.98	7,771	4.81	9,360	5.8
2009/10	163,141	160,074	98.1	1,550	0.97	8,537	5.33	10,087	6.3
2010/11	162,500	159,514	98.2	1,617	1.01	9,160	5.74	10,777	6.8
2011/12	162,462	159,674	98.3	1,697	1.06	10,040	6.29	11,737	7.4
2012/13	163,624	160,857	98.3	1,759	1.09	10,472	6.51	12,231	7.6
2014/15	169,101	167,249	98.9	1,852	1.11	10,681	6.39	12,533	7.5
2015/16	172,013	170,067	99.2	1,946	1.14	10,091	5.91	12,037	7.1*
2016/17	–	175,176	–	–	–	10,072	5.75	–	–

Source: *Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport*

\* Due to the renovation of the information system, the Commission could not work from September to December.

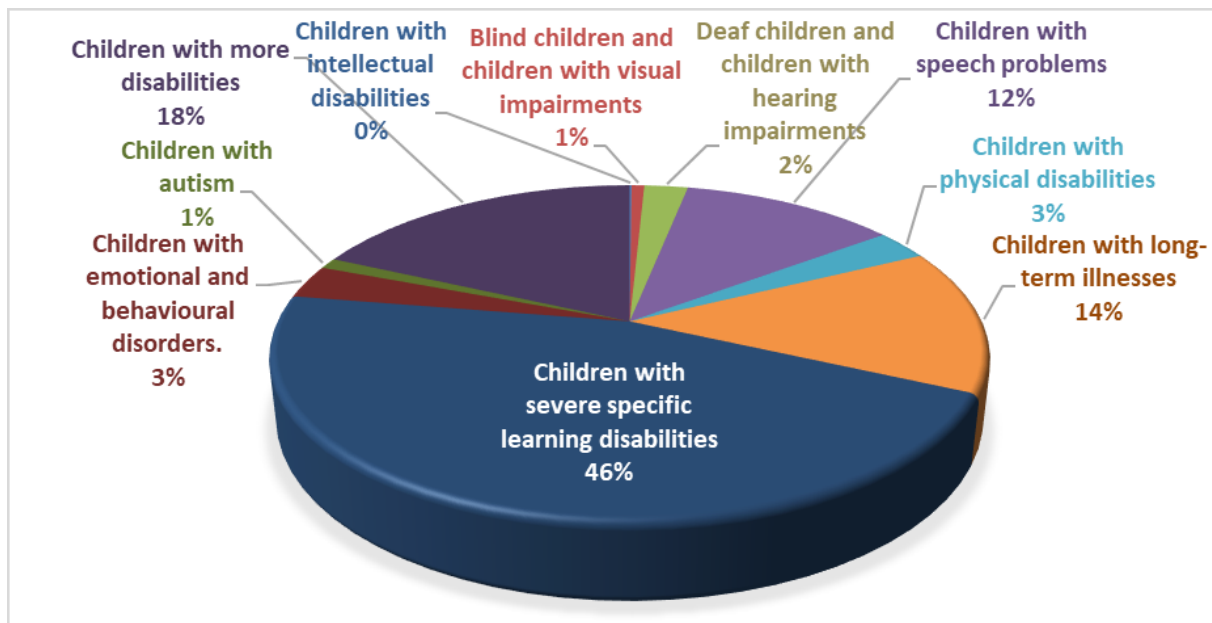


Figure 3. Shares of learners with SEN by specific type of disability included in mainstream schools in 2015/16

**2. Adapted educational programmes carried out in special schools.** Learners are placed in these programmes when the framework of mainstream schools cannot be sufficiently adjusted for the complexity of their disabilities. The adapted educational programmes provide additional subjects and activities such as orientation and mobility, communication and social skills, ICT. This empowers learners' autonomy and maximises their opportunities for whole life learning and independent participation in society. The programme is prepared in two levels:

- Adapted educational programmes with equal educational standard: learners who are blind or partially-sighted, deaf or hard of hearing and learners with speech and language disabilities, motor disabilities and autistic disorders may be placed into this programme. The programme runs at both the basic and upper-secondary levels. Specialised profiles of special pedagogues and teachers with supplementary special education qualification teach in this programme.

Within basic school education there are six special schools with 302 learners with SEN altogether. These are:

- three schools for hearing and speech disabilities with 223 learners with speech and language disabilities and 25 learners with hearing impairments;

- one school within the centre for the education and rehabilitation of learners with motor impairments or chronic illnesses which has 36 learners;
- one school within the centre for blind and visually impaired which has eight learners;
- one newly opened programme for learners with autism with 10 learners in its first class (Ministry of Education, 2016).
- Adapted educational programmes with lower educational standard for children with intellectual disabilities, which may be accompanied by other disabilities. Tuition is at the basic education level and is provided by special pedagogues. After the ninth grade of basic school, leavers from this programme can continue their educational path in the framework of lower-secondary vocational education, although this has uniform knowledge standards.

There were 28 special schools with lower educational standard in 2015/16, with 1,644 learners.

**3. Special educational programmes** are intended for learners with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities, aged 6 to 18 years. The programmes can be extended up to the age of 26. The instruction is carried out in special schools and institutions, as well as in social care institutions. The programmes are designed to:

- stimulate the development of learners' perception, their physical, emotional and intellectual abilities, and their communicative and social skills;
- train learners to become conscious of health issues and live independently;
- enable learners to attain basic knowledge and skills and allow them the most active and social inclusion possible in their environment.

The programme has no prescribed levels of acquired knowledge and is carried out by special pedagogues. The final goals are set individually for each learner.

In 2015/16, 1,318 learners were included in special educational programmes.

**4. Treatment programmes** are intended for minors with emotional and behavioural disorders who are at risk of being or have already been expelled from mainstream educational programmes due to their condition. Treatment programmes aim to be socially inclusive, preventive, compensational and corrective. They are mostly carried out by social pedagogues, in collaboration with

class teachers. If learners' development is endangered and they need more intensive support, they can be placed in residential treatment institutions. Many of these learners also have mental health issues (psychiatric disorders, self-harm, addictive behaviour, etc.). Social work centres determine the placement. Learners may attend schools within the institutions or mainstream schools. In Slovenia, there are 10 such institutions, with 690 learners in basic and secondary education in 2015/16. There is no separate data about the number of learners in basic education.

Overall, the number of learners who are enrolled and educated in mainstream classes with their non-disabled peers for at least 80% of the time is 10,091 (5.93%). The number of learners in adapted educational programmes in special schools with equal educational standard is 302 (0.18%). The number of learners in adapted educational programmes in special schools with lower educational standard is 1,644, which is 0.96% of the whole population (172,013). The number of learners in special educational programmes is 1,318. This group is not included in statistical data concerning learners enrolled in basic school education.

**Table 8. Special schools and institutions for learners with SEN**

<b>Institutions and special schools, learners and staff</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Number of institutions and special schools – Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>
for blind and visually impaired learners	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
for deaf and hearing impaired learners	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
for physically impaired learners	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
for learners with emotional and behavioural problems	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
for learners with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
for learners with mild intellectual disabilities	10	10	9	9	9	9	8
<b>Number of learners in institutions and special schools – Total</b>	<b>1,454</b>	<b>1,431</b>	<b>1,401</b>	<b>1,334</b>	<b>1,308</b>	<b>1,332</b>	<b>1,272</b>
for blind and visually impaired learners	24	22	22	19	17	18	19
for deaf and hearing impaired learners	43	42	48	49	49	45	49
for physically impaired learners	213	205	188	192	199	216	208
for learners with emotional and behavioural problems	397	401	398	379	397	410	382
for learners with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities	523	500	512	471	445	427	433
for learners with mild intellectual disabilities	254	261	233	224	201	216	181
<b>Number of staff in institutions and special schools – Total</b>	<b>1,264</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>1,290</b>	<b>1,268</b>	<b>1,248</b>	<b>1,291</b>	<b>1,231</b>
for blind and visually impaired learners	5	5	6	5	4	4	4
for deaf and hearing impaired learners	13	12	14	13	13	12	14
for physically impaired learners	172	173	176	162	161	162	158
for learners with emotional and behavioural problems	382	379	394	385	380	413	394
for learners with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities	560	580	574	587	577	586	556
for learners with mild intellectual disabilities	132	129	126	116	113	114	105

Source: SURS, Institutions, youth homes and other establishments for lodging, protection, education and training of children and youth with SEN

## DETAILS ON KEY FACTORS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE FPIES PROJECT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### **How are the country's financing systems for inclusive education co-ordinated and integrated?**

The Placement Act (2011) came into use on 1 September 2013. It represented a new step towards ensuring the realisation of the inclusive paradigm by imposing conditions for providing continuous support to learners with SEN in education. To assure the earlier identification and treatment of learning disabilities, a conceptual framework for the systemic comprehensive treatment of children with learning disabilities was developed in 2008 (Magajna, 2008).

Following the widely used three-tier Response to Intervention (RTI) model (Fuchs and Fuchs, 2006) and considering the specific capabilities of the Slovenian education system, a five-step model of continuity of assistance, help and support for learners who are facing learning difficulties was developed (Kiswarday, 2017). This approach promises the earlier identification of learners at risk of school failure and the provision of effective study assistance and support in collaboration with all participants (learners, their parents and education professionals). With the increasing intensity and specificity of individual learners' SEN, the education professionals who provide assistance are required to have increasingly specific knowledge. As such, various forms of assistance are to be organised in each of the five steps, in order to meet learners' individual needs. The new Placement Act also foresees the establishment of professional support centres to build new collaborations between special institutions and mainstream schools.

Based on data gathered by the Ministry of Education (Directorate for preschool and elementary school education) for the FPIES project, there were 452 basic education schools in 2015/16. There were 11,384 class and subject teachers teaching 170,067 learners, of which 10,091 (5.93%) had an official decision of SEN.

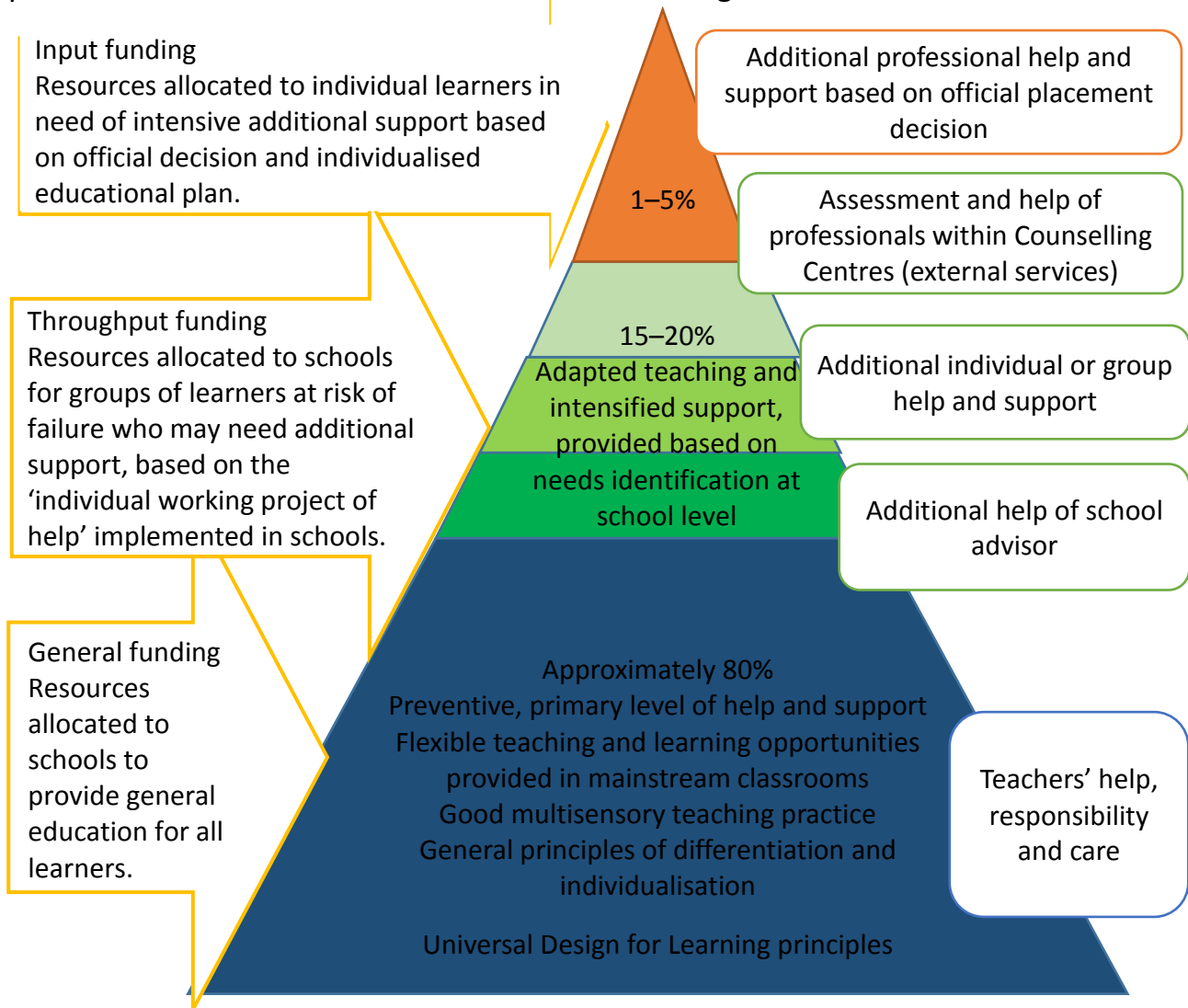
According to the same data from the Ministry of Education, the state spent a total of EUR 592,592,655 on basic school education in 2014 and EUR 594,555,610 in 2015.

### ***General funding***

At the first level, the preventive, primary level of help and support for all learners is carried out through multi-sensory teaching practice and general principles of differentiation and individualisation in mainstream classrooms. At this level, funding is



general and there are no special motivations for the teaching and identification of potential learners with SEN. The tuition lies with the general teacher.



**Figure 4. Resource allocation mechanisms for supporting learners in need, based on a five-step assistance model (five-step RTI approach)**

### ***Throughput funding***

At the second level, within the second and third steps of the five-step RTI assistance model, children with identified learning difficulties are invited to remedial education and/or individual and group support, and an adaptation of working methods and approaches is provided for them (Elementary School Act, Article 11, Paragraph 2). The resources are allocated to existing forms of help and support within schools. In 2015/16, EUR 24,184,312 was spent. Table 9 shows that the amount for remedial

education increased noticeably in 2015 in basic mainstream schools, although the individual and group support did not change in the observed years.

**Table 9. Resources allocated to mainstream basic schools for learners at risk of failure who need the help of school counsellors and advisers, remedial education, and individual/group support, between 2010 and 2015**

The estimate of the annual amount required is EUR 29,292.07 per working place.

Type of support for learners with SEN	Year	Number of working places	Estimate of amount for annual realisation (EUR)
Remedial Education	2010	111	3,240,875
	2011	111	3,249,076
	2012	110	3,220,370
	2013	110	3,225,057
	2014	111	3,272,217
	2015	194	5,672,896
Individual and Group Support	2010	192	5,611,189
	2011	190	5,570,180
	2012	189	5,542,353
	2013	188	5,519,212
	2014	190	5,568,715
	2015	191	5,602,987
School Counsellors and Advisers	2010	440	12,904,914
	2011	441	12,920,439
	2012	438	12,843,401
	2013	434	12,710,415
	2014	441	12,926,005
	2015	441	12,908,429
<b>Total in 2015</b>		<b>826</b>	<b>24,184,312</b>

Source: Jožica Iskra, Ministry of Education 2016

School advisors provide assistance, help and support and can create individual help plans in collaboration with learners, their teachers and parents. If the learner's needs are more severe and complex, external assessment and advisory help is provided in the fourth step, usually by Counselling Centres for children, young people and parents. These centres are financed by the Ministry of Health, the municipalities and from their own resources (excluding the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture).

When an external institution believes a child requires additional professional help and support (within the fifth step) the child is presented to the Commission for Guidance (more information on the work of Commission for Guidance can be found in the 'Groups of learners with SEN that are defined in the Placement of Children with Special

Needs Act’ (contextual) and ‘Work of the Commission for Guidance of Children with SEN from the financial perspective’ (financial) sections).

### ***Input funding***

At the third level, resources are allocated to individual learners who need intensive additional professional support (APS), based on an official decision and individual educational plan. APS has three different aims:

- 1) to provide learning assistance. This is provided by school teachers who have additional professional knowledge and skills for working with learners with SEN (see Table 10, first row);
- 2) to provide help to overcome disabilities, impairments and deficiencies. This is provided by education staff qualified in various disciplines (special and rehabilitation pedagogues, inclusive pedagogues, social pedagogues, tiflo-pedagogues, surdo-pedagogues, psychologists, and speech therapists). Some of the staff are already employed in mainstream schools (Table 10, second row) and some come from special schools or resource centres to provide APS as a mobile service (Table 10, third row);
- 3) to provide counselling help and support. This is mandatory for every learner that receives APS, for a minimum of one hour (out of the maximum five hours stated in the Placement Act 2013). It is designed to empower all stakeholders at school level to act inclusively and there is no longer an additional fee.

In 2015/16, EUR 38,987,369 was allocated to APS and assistants for physical help for learners with an official decision of SEN.

**Table 10. Resources allocated to individual learners in need of intensive additional support based on an official decision and individual educational plan in mainstream basic schools from 2010 to 2015**

The estimate of an annual amount per APS working place in school is EUR 29,292.07. For a mobile service, it is EUR 30,376.63 per working place and for assistants for physical help it is EUR 16,579.27 per working place.

Type of resource	Year	Number of working places	Estimate of amount for annual realisation (EUR)
APS: Class and subject teachers for learning help	2010	97.16	2,846,008
	2011	122.62	3,591,924
	2012	119.78	3,508,582
	2013	116.11	3,401,002
	2014	107.57	3,150,947

Type of resource	Year	Number of working places	Estimate of amount for annual realisation (EUR)
	2015	96.78	2,834,787
APS: Specialised pedagogues in school	2010	753.93	22,084,170
	2011	768.89	22,522,380
	2012	826.67	24,214,876
	2013	945.09	27,683,642
	2014	996.67	29,194,527
	2015	969.71	28,405,783
APS: Specialised pedagogues from special institutions – mobile service	2010	132.31	4,019,132
	2011	162.61	4,939,544
	2012	163.18	4,956,858
	2013	167.17	5,078,061
	2014	211.86	6,435,593
	2015	184.88	5,616,031
Assistants for physical help	2010	134.36	2,227,591
	2011	145.99	2,420,408
	2012	130.18	2,158,289
	2013	120.66	2,000,455
	2014	133.64	2,215,654
	2015	128.52	2,130,768
<b>Total for 2015/16</b>		<b>1,380</b>	<b>38,987,369</b>

Source: Jožica Iskra, Ministry of Education, 2016

**Table 11. Resource allocation mechanisms and amounts for supporting learners in need based on a three-level resourcing model in 2015/16**

Funding Type	Support Type	Total (EUR)	Total per funding type (EUR)
<b>Input funding</b>	Assistants for physical help	2,130,768	<b>38,987,369</b>
	APS: specialised pedagogues – mobile service	5,616,031	
	APS: specialised pedagogues in school	28,405,783	
	APS: learning help	2,834,787	
<b>Throughput funding</b>	Support of school advisors	12,908,429	<b>24,184,312</b>
	Individual and group support	5,602,987	
	Remedial education	5,672,896	
<b>General funding</b>	General education for all learners in mainstream basic education schools	–	<b>594,555,610</b>

In addition to funds provided by the Ministry of Education for educational programmes, the Ministry also funds the work of the Commission for Guidance of Learners with SEN

(NEIS). In 2014, these costs were EUR 1,926,002 and EUR 1,408,437 in 2015. The inclusion of learners with SEN is also supported by other external institutions (e.g. Counselling Centres) that are financed by other sources (such as municipalities and the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia).

### **What are the tracking mechanisms for funding? Is there a way to know where funds come from and where they go?**

Funding for basic education is based on the programme type and in accordance with criteria and standards issued by the Ministry.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport transfers the funds for salaries to the public institutions within its scope based on information provided by the 'Human resources – wage information system' application (hereinafter referred to as KPIS). The information is entered by authorised people within the institutions (e.g. headmasters, accountants, etc.). The data includes information on employees, contracts and allocation of job roles, as well as information associated with a specific workplace (systematisation of jobs). The calculation for normative systematisation is entered in the Organisational Report (OR), produced by schools based on the number of learners and the standards for implementation of the primary school programme.

When sending out requests, the authorised people in the institution sign to assume responsibility for the accuracy of the data. The deadlines set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport must also be taken into account.

The majority of the KPIS data impacts the calculation of salaries and other fees and benefits, which is reflected in the amount of funds disbursed.

The Ministry, as the financier, is committed to the rational and efficient use of budget funds. It is therefore obliged to carry out the annual programme for the exercise of control over the operations and targeted use of funds by public institutions.

Hours of ASP provided as a learning aid to learners with SEN are not an element in the systemisation of jobs and cannot be entered in the KPIS.

For one hour of additional expert assistance as a learning aid, the Ministry recognises the reimbursement of EUR 11.94, which includes employer's contributions.

The Ministry pays the funds for the implementation of learning support as an advance within the regular monthly wage payments. The 80% of amount that is paid in advance is determined by the number of hours of APS entered in the 'Learners with special needs' application by the institutions.

The data on actual hours of additional professional support implemented as a learning aid are captured from the application twice a year by the Ministry. (Source: Instructions for financing public service activities in the academic year 2016/17, October 2016)

### **Funds for material and other expenses for mainstream and special education primary schools**

The Ministry pays out the funds for the programme's material costs based on the scope of activities evident from the OR and the Ministry's valid price list which is set each financial year. Material costs include the purchase of supplies and expert literature, daily allowances, travel and accommodation, outsourced services, telecommunications, payment transaction fees and other programme-dependent costs.

The funds for September 2016 were paid based on data from the previous academic year. Adjustments in line with the new scope of activities for the academic year 2016–17 are expected to be made concurrent with the October 2016 transfer of funds for material costs.

In addition to the programme-dependent material funds, the Ministry also provides for other material costs for schools. These include funds for the purchase of teaching and learning aids, expert training, field trips, training for non-teaching staff and medical examinations of employees (this amounted to EUR 20,798,888.97 in 2015).

The accuracy of data relating to the systematisation of jobs and KPIS entries can be verified by the authorised staff who enter the data in the application 'Comparison KPIS – Systematisations'.

Budget users must provide the relevant Ministry and/or the mayor with their semi-annual reports, in accordance with the Law on the Implementation of the Budgets of the Republic of Slovenia for the Years 2016 and 2017. The purpose of the report is to monitor the operations and enable timely action, so that the funds are not exceeded by the end of the year. (Source: Decision on the criteria to provide funds to cover the material costs in primary schools, No. 410-24 / 2015 dated 10.03.2015)

### **How does the system for financing inclusive education enable stakeholders at territorial, local and school level to act inclusively?**

The system for financing inclusive education enables stakeholders to act inclusively through the implementation of individual children's rights deriving from an official decision. The Commission for Guidance proposes the appropriate programme, school or institution and specifies additional professional and physical assistance, adjustment

of room and equipment, aids and other rights of the child according to the law. The funding must be provided for the implementation of an official decision by the government.

The government finances the entire system of various types of assistance to learners with special needs in basic education. At the pre-primary level, the system for financing inclusive education is governed by the Ministry of Education and financed by municipalities. At the basic school level, the system for financing inclusive education is governed and financed by the Ministry of Education.

### **How are the capacity building mechanisms related to professional development funded? By who and for what? How does the funding for capacity building foster effective and equitable educational institutions?**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport allocates the financial means for covering the costs of teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD), as per the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI). It partially or entirely pays providers of priority and compulsory programmes. Staff are additionally motivated to undergo CPD training by the allocation of points for participating in programmes. These points are used when staff are considered for title promotion.

School principals propose an annual plan for the professional development of educational staff at the school level, which is then accepted by the teachers and the school council.

There are many opportunities for teachers to develop their inclusive skills and knowledge. Teachers can usually select the content of their professional development independently, based on their own pedagogical interests and needs. However, when they teach learners with SEN that need specific attention and care, teachers must obtain specific skills, which are outlined in the learners' official decisions.

### **What are the mechanisms for monitoring of spending? How are schools made accountable for spending?**

#### ***Financial autonomy and control***

Taking into account national regulations, the School Council decides its development plans, annual work plan and/or the introduction of above-standard and other programmes autonomously. Programme and financial plans are produced by the head teacher in compliance with relevant laws and regulations. The head teacher is responsible for school planning, management and leadership and must ensure that allocated funds are spent according to the detailed plans. Head teachers in basic

schools must draft school financial plans in accordance with the Ministry's criteria, standards and methodology for determining costing per learner.

Head teachers make decisions with financial consequences, such as on the categorisation of jobs, promotions and ranking of staff by pay classes. The criteria for the categorisation of jobs and the rules for promotion are prescribed by law.

The school founder manages buildings and grounds, with the support of school bodies. A school starts its own trust, which provides finances for above-standard programme activities that are not funded by public sources. The trust provides for purchases of above-standard equipment, above-standard lessons and other similar things. Finances in the trust come from kindergarten fees paid by parents, donations, inheritances and other sources. The trust management committee, which includes school and parent representatives, manages the finances.

Potential surpluses in schools may be offset or spent in accordance with decisions made by the funding body. The municipality and the government share the responsibility of settlements for damages arising from educational activities in basic school. (Source: Eurydice Slovenia)

### **What are the quality control mechanisms that inform financing decisions and monitoring of effectiveness?**

The quality control mechanisms that inform financing decisions and monitoring of effectiveness are:

- an internal audit of the school by the municipality;
- an external audit of the school by the Ministry of Education;
- a variety inspections (school, finance, work, etc.).

### **How do funding mechanisms enable specialist/separate provision to act as a resource for mainstream schools?**

This information is shown in the resource allocation mechanisms for supporting learners in need (based on a five-step model of assistance) in Figure 4 and Tables 9 and 10.



## DISCUSSION ABOUT SPECIFIC COUNTRY FUNDING ISSUES (POINTS WHICH WERE DISCUSSED DURING THE COUNTRY STUDY VISIT)

One of the characteristics of the Slovenian system of financing inclusive education and the inclusive system is centralisation. The education system is mainly organised as a public service rendered by public and private institutions. Basic school education (from age 6 to 15) is compulsory, schools are founded by municipalities and financed by the state. The financing system is prescribed in detail at the national level. The mechanisms for monitoring of spending are set in accordance with criteria and standards issued by the Ministry. Schools must report data on organisation and human resources and this data has an impact on salary calculation for all teachers.

Hours of APS (additional professional support teachers) aimed as an aid for learners with SEN are not an element for the systemisation of jobs – the Ministry funds the implementation of learning support as an advance within the scope of regular monthly wage payments. Completed hours of APS learning aid are logged by the Ministry from the application twice a year. The Ministry, as the financier, is committed to the rational and efficient use of budget funds based on an annual programme. The purpose is to monitor operations and enable timely action, so that the funds will not be exceeded by the end of the year.

The centralised system was viewed as a strength for monitoring finances. Existing governance and finance system monitoring mechanisms create a huge database, which should be analysed and used for further development and change. Improvements could be made by developing indicators which make the system more transparent regarding learners and the strengths and weaknesses of support systems. Data collection systems which focus on the enabling effect of support as well as on the cost-effectiveness of the allocated means could also be developed.

Governance and monitoring mechanisms that reinforce co-operation between all stakeholders and increase the accountability of stakeholders at territorial and school level should be developed. One of challenges that was suggested for improving the system was to give the school administration more autonomy to manoeuvre within their budget.

Regarding the implementation of inclusion, the high level of centralisation allows a clear definition of responsibilities, roles and procedures that may support changes within the system. The RTI model is very well incorporated in the educational system as the five-step model. It is well-known and used by professionals and may therefore support a whole school approach.

There is already a good expenditure tracking system that may enable stakeholders to analyse trends and progress and support further development of a more inclusive education system.

The current system of guidance for children with SEN, provided by NEIS, is very regulated and procedural. It is based on a medical approach, defining a learner's disabilities and translating them into the child's educational needs through IEP. The discussions showed that there are some advantages to this system, but it is too rigid and does not support equity. Schools reported that some learners would need IEP and APS (only available with an official decision) and some learners have the APS but may not need it all the time. The lack of flexibility in support allocation may hinder stakeholders to act according to learners' needs. The system may be improved by shifting from an input-based model, based on a medically legitimated official decision, to a throughput model, connected to educational needs and schools' abilities to meet diverse educational profiles.

Rather than focusing primarily on compensating the need for support based on an official decision, the system should support and promote a school development approach, building on inclusive design for learning. Enabling special schools and counselling centres to advise and support stakeholders of the schools between RTI steps 1 to 3 without a need for an official decision could assist this shift.

Discussions showed that head teachers can use the existing financing system in as flexible way as possible at school level. They also showed a possible solution to the gap between the theory and system in financing.

It was also suggested that empowering schools and teachers in their teaching capacity should be a dynamic process, allowing them to decide which learners need support and how. The decentralisation of the system through an increased commitment from teachers and schools could mean fewer costs for assessment.

The second day of presentations moved from a systemic view to different stakeholders' experiences and their efforts in implementing inclusion in everyday life, with a focus on financing. Since municipalities are the founders of educational institutions, their contribution and understanding of inclusive education are very important. As such, the municipality of Ljubljana presented its local model of financing inclusion. As a principal city and one of the biggest and well-placed municipalities, Ljubljana is a good model of collaboration with different stakeholders from educational and non-educational fields for the implementation of inclusion.

The Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL) finances the inclusion of children with special needs in society through various methods. These include:

- the provision of funds to kindergartens and schools through annual contracts;
- the allocation of resources to children with disabilities and their families through public tenders (in 2016, MOL co-financed 21 programmes, including therapy with dogs, moto-pedagogy, etc., at a total cost of almost EUR 55,000);
- financing and maintenance of investments in equipment for special schools and accessories for disabled people. This includes equipping schools with disability aids, such as elevators and stair lifts, wheelchair ramps, adaptation of toilet facilities (washbasins, toilets, etc.), installation of customised furniture and computers, etc. They also created calming rooms with multi-sensory spaces in some kindergartens and schools.

The MOL is the founder of 23 kindergartens, 47 public elementary schools, three private elementary schools and a Special Education Centre, Janez Levec. In 2016–2017, there were 390 learners in pre-primary education (out of 13,449) and 1,181 learners in basic education (out of 23,761) with special needs. Additionally, 405 learners with special needs attend the Janez Levec Centre. MOL provides approximately an additional EUR 1 million annually for professional assistance and escorts (material costs are not included in the programme cost, 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. PIKA aims to provide systematic training of teaching staff, following contemporary efforts to qualitatively include more learners with special needs in mainstream schools. The MOL gives strong financial support to this initiative through the remuneration of employees and refunds for material costs (books, teaching aids, stationery, etc.). In 2016, EUR 114,994 was allocated to PIKA.

Municipalities are also founders of Counselling Centres for Children, Adolescents and Parents. There are five of these centres in Slovenia, and they are responsible for supporting all learners and families with educational and learning difficulties. Centres collaborate closely with schools. The biggest centres are established in Ljubljana and Maribor. The annual budget of the Counselling Centre in Ljubljana for remuneration of employees (manager, staff at the psycho-socio-pedagogical unit, administrative and technical staff) is EUR 1,189,666. The MOL finances 41% of this. The Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia finances 55% and the remaining 4% comes from the Centre's own activities (educational courses, publications, projects, etc.).

The Counselling Centre of Maribor works with approximately 2,100 learners and their families every year. The reasons for families looking for advice and help are different, but they are usually to do with learning difficulties connected with:

- 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 learners with special needs (in contract with NEIS, approximately 250 cases per year), identification of gifted learners and assessment of school readiness. They also organise lectures and seminars for parents and teachers and workshops for children on a range of topics. Seminars include:

- parenting;
- learning;
- emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- learners with special needs;
- strategies for working with difficult learners;
- mediation;
- supervision;
- mindfulness for teachers.

The workshops for children and young people include:

- training to improve reading;
- learning to learn;
- anger management;
- learning assertive behaviour.

The annual budget of the Counselling Centre in Maribor is EUR 418,800, 62% of which is financed by the Maribor municipality.

The importance of the wide support that Counselling Centres provide to families and schools was emphasised in discussions. The staff are very skilled and approach all cases as a team. They are flexible and can give immediate response and provide action plans for acute problems in kindergartens and schools, in collaboration with all involved parties. However, the limitations of their support were also stressed during discussions. The centres usually consist of small groups of experts that cover a very large area. As a result, children often attend for treatment a maximum of once per month, which is unlikely to be enough to be effective. There is an obvious lack of support centres, especially in rural areas where families and schools often cannot get the support they need. Representatives from the centres also emphasised some problems from their point of view. The financing is not well-regulated and they work on annual contracts with municipalities. An important personnel issue for professionals is that there are currently no promotion possibilities for employees.

Since 2000, according to the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act, learners have a right to education in mainstream schools. Additionally, an official decision gives them the right to their own, personalised IEP and, depending on their needs, Additional Professional Support (APS). APS for overcoming learning difficulties can be provided by a special education teacher that is not necessarily a school employee. Inclusion encouraged a reorganisation of the work of special education teachers that are usually employed in special schools. Special schools became bases for mobile special educators that worked as APS teachers for learners with SEN in mainstream schools. For example, the Janez Levec Centre, which is transforming to a resource centre, employs 40 mobile special education teachers. During discussions, the advantages of mobile services were connected to the professional development of special education teachers. However, there is still scepticism around the paradox of special education teachers and schools providing capacity building for inclusive education. Instead, inclusive education should be reinvented. The capacity building at school level is needed, as well as monitoring to understand the quality effects.

One of most notable weaknesses of the mobile service is the disconnection with school life and the lack of opportunities to react to the needs of teachers and schools in relation to learners with SEN. Special education teachers work frequently in schools that have more learners with SEN, which allows them to be more connected with other mainstream teachers. Nevertheless, they usually work individually and are focused on an individual learner and not on a teacher and their class. This shift remains a challenge for the future. The discussions highlighted the need for system improvements to enable special schools and counselling centres to advise and support stakeholders of

schools between RTI steps one to three, without a need for an official decision, as previously mentioned.

The discussions determined that the financing system focuses on learners rather than school development. The labelling system is too rigid and too wide. For example, learners with reading and writing needs should not be labelled or need an official decision. This implies that the schools need development. Too much money is spent on deciding on support for learners rather than developing the schools and supporting innovative practices and inclusive teaching. More decentralised decision-making may give schools more freedom to work inclusively.

A head master in a mainstream school echoed this, and showed his commitment to supporting inclusive education and equal opportunities in a very diverse school (SEN, cultural, economic, religious, different mother languages, etc.). He showed strong knowledge of the financing system and capacity to work as flexibly as possible within the system. He also presented some good examples that showed inclusive work in school, including:

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

The participants in the discussions all showed strong engagement and the commitment of their school teams to work inclusively.

The participants' suggestion for the Ministry was that there should be a trial of more flexibility in some schools. There should be external monitoring and evaluation of local freedom to decide and empowerment in the schools, and their consequences. 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 adding up hours, it should be in the whole programme around them. The state needs to clearly state that financing is to support inclusive education practices.

A special education teacher representative, who is employed full-time in a mainstream school, presented how the five-step RTI model functions in practice. It was obvious that the model is very well-adopted in schools and enables professionals to collaborate to support learners with or at risk of SEN. The discussions highlighted the added value of the formalised approach to RTI, which supports a school development approach towards an inclusive design for learning. It was suggested that incentives rewarding schools for developing universal design learning environments and promoting inclusive practices on a daily basis could be developed.

The development of research could allow the identification of the gap between the theory of how the system is supposed to function and how it functions in practice.

The presentation of the educational needs of chronically ill learners showed the need for more flexibility in organising larger amounts of APS much more quickly than is possible through guidance procedures.

The principal of a hospital school in Ljubljana explained problems connected with the waiting time for an official decision about the placement. The wait can be considerably long. There are insufficient hours of learning help available, especially for learners who are unable to attend school due to health conditions, but are no longer in hospital. These learners currently depend on instruction from teachers from their own schools, who are assigned by the official decision and have a maximum of five hours of APS per week. A better solution for this transitional period, when learners with certain health conditions are unable to attend school and have to stay at home, would be the arrangement of temporary home schooling. This could be provided through a collaboration between the hospital school and the learner's own school. Due to financing restrictions (regarding the payment of travel expenses) and flexibility in the assignment of ASP, this solution is not currently possible. This causes learning achievement problems, particularly for secondary school learners who live a distance from their school. Consequently, the process of learning is too often left to learners themselves. Some of them are additionally supported by their families; e.g. parents take over the teaching of their own children, or they find private teachers and pay for extra lessons. Some schools offer so-called online lessons, but 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 proposed solutions is obvious. To take advantage of existing professional potential, hospital teachers should be better incorporated into the system of inclusive education for chronically ill learners in general. The Ministry pays for the hospital

schools but the system is too rigid to allow fast and efficient reactions to educational needs in inclusive settings.

This suggestion is again orientated towards more autonomy and flexibility in managing appropriate support for children 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 (special education teachers, inclusive pedagogues, surdo-pedagogues, speech therapists, tiflo-pedagogues, social pedagogues, etc.). Alternatively, they can request expert assistance for the implementation of APS at special institutions (special schools or resource centres), which sign individual contracts with each school for every learner. Expert support for learners is funded by the Ministry of Education. For example, the School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Ljubljana is supporting over 300 learners who are included in mainstream schools this year, offering over 400 hours of additional support per week in over 170 schools and kindergartens.

Recently many special schools and centres reorganised themselves into support (Resource) Centres and had to rethink their roles and areas of work. These are not only to do with children, but more to society and families confronting challenges and duties every day.

The principal of the Centre for Education, Rehabilitation, Inclusion and Counselling for the Blind and Partially-Sighted presented her experience. She underlined that successful inclusion is strongly connected to donations. The Centre is dedicated to developing the best support for educational opportunities for visually-impaired (VI) learners who mainly attend mainstream schools. Therefore, alongside assessment and official decisions, they are dedicated to providing individual or group support to learners, their parents and teachers all over Slovenia, as they are the only centre for VI learners.

A detailed look at the financial support that they receive from the state shows that the state covers the salaries of teachers who support VI learners in inclusive education and their travel costs when they implement APS in the learner's school. They also receive a small annual transfer for material costs. However, this transfer does not meet the need, especially regarding costs for special equipment that should be available in all schools attended by VI learners (computers, Braille machine, electronic magnifiers, adapted maps and other school materials and books).

Despite this situation, the Centre has breakthrough ideas and the vision to implement an Extended Core curriculum. It provides many programmes and activities which



support the educational and social inclusion of VI learners, which are only possible with the strong support of donations.

Again, this highlighted the need for a more flexible system of support, as well as the need to change the financial system for new support centres. These 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 VI learners (and learners with other types of SEN). Collaboration and local support is closely connected with inclusive practice, but there is a question around whether it is acceptable for quality education to depend on donations.

There are many challenges ahead in implementing inclusion in schools and society. The principal of the Centre for Children with Mobile Impairment demonstrated 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 additional professional support 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 also bring financial gains for inclusion, removing the need to wait for decision and consensus.

## ANALYSIS OF KEY FACTORS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE FPIES PROJECT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section will focus on analysis of the discussions in the Country Study Visit (CSV) regarding governance, accountability, quality assurance and monitoring issues and mechanisms as framed in the Project Conceptual Framework. Again, the issue 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 can 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 special needs 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 flexibly 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 that 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. In the example discussed in the previous chapter, the Ministry ensures salaries for teachers who support VI children 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 is a risk of reconnecting with a medical model, instead of shifting to a 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 is financed at state level.

## 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 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 academic needs and schools' abilities to meet diverse educational profiles. The challenge should be approached with stronger support from capacity building mechanisms by 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 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. There are currently two models of special education support – in-school special education 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 individual 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.

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.

On the official MIZŠ website, there is a platform for the systematic regulation of a holistic approach to learners with SEN within the framework of the European Structural Fund. There are policies on three important areas: the constitution of regulatory framework for early intervention, the resource centres network, and educational institutions for children with emotional and behavioural disorders.

The recent National Evaluation Study looked at different forms of additional professional support assigned to learners with special needs, according to the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (Vršnik Perše et al., 2016). The fundamental recommendation was to focus on the need to design a more flexible system of treatment for learners with special needs and of APS in this context. It also

recommends that experts are empowered to focus on learners' individual needs according to professional guidelines. Generally, it determined that, in the past twenty years, there have been several new system-level solutions concerning APS, but they were often insufficiently supported by the expert findings and practice. These should be the main foundations for the creation of further systemic solutions.

Consequently, the National Education Institute of Slovenia suggested some legislative changes to the placement of learners with SEN, as follows:

- Additional definitions of the aims of education for learners with SEN, followed by the design of a concept for the provision of education and training in an inclusive environment.
- APS that is carried out as additional learning help and provided by teachers should be at the suggestion of the school's professional services (without the need of an official decision). Counselling centres should provide teachers with capacity building and further assistance.
- It is important to good teaching practice to empower the teacher in the classroom by following existing didactical principles and implementing UDL principles. APS that is given as learning help should be carried out within the classroom and the teacher should be responsible for it. Exceptionally, for learners with more severe learning disabilities, APS learning help should be carried out in small groups or individually outside the class (second and third steps of the RTI).
- The criteria for the assessment of the type and degree of disadvantage, impairments and disabilities of learners with SEN (NEIS, 2015a) need to change. They must consider a learner's educational needs, not their disabilities. Diversity should be accepted as normal. The guidance process should only be needed for learners with more severe or complex SEN.
- The Commission for Guidance of Children with SEN should have a more flexible structure. It should also be renamed as 'The Professional Team to Establish the Special Education Needs of Learners'. A member of the professional team must also be the learner's teacher.
- The main point of a learner's IEP should be to provide an inclusive educational environment. The goals and strategies should not revolve around the learner's progress, but around modifications to the learning environment (physical, didactical, methodical and social) that should meet the learner's needs and appropriately support their progress.

Some concrete proposals for changes that are the subject of on-going discussions are presented in Table 12.

**Table 12. Proposals for legislative changes**

Existing description	Suggestion	Note
<b>Placement of Children with Special Needs Act</b>	The Guiding of Learners who Need Additional Support in Learning and/or Social Participation Act	The broader concept should cover all learners with SEN
<b>Commission for Guidance of Children with SEN</b>	The Professional Team to Establish the Special Educational Needs of Learners	The structure of the professional team is flexible and a teacher is actively involved
<b>Criteria for identifying deficits, obstacles or disruptions of children with SEN</b>	The criteria for determining a learner's educational needs, depending on the type and level of their disabilities	From the deficit in identifying educational needs (from the medical to pedagogical discourse)
<b>Expert Opinion</b>	Opinion about a learner's educational needs	From the deficit, obstacles or disruptions in identifying educational needs (from the medical to pedagogical discourse)



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