



# Overview of the inclusive education system in Switzerland

## Inclusive education system

### General education system structure

Switzerland is a federal and multilingual country. Its education system is decentralised. The 26 cantons (states) are primarily responsible for education.

Education is an obligation that can be fulfilled by attending public school, private school or through home schooling. Almost all cantons allow home schooling during compulsory education in their school legislation.

Compulsory schooling lasts eleven years – between the ages of 4 and 15. It consists of primary school (including kindergarten) and secondary school level 1. In all cantons, the school year begins in August.

Almost all secondary schools in Switzerland have different types of secondary education (pro-gymnasium, secondary school, *Realschule*, *Oberschule*) or offer a combination of different streams in different subjects.

Compulsory education for all learners is free of charge and is financed by the canton and the local community. Particular effort is put into integrating foreign learners into the Swiss education system.

## History of inclusive education

### Developing inclusion

The integration of learners with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream school and the development of an inclusive education system is gaining importance in Switzerland. Most cantons, and frequently also communities, have developed concepts, regulations and guidelines and offer corresponding provisions. On the federal level, the Law on Equal Rights for People with Disabilities recommends that the cantons promote integration.

### Federal Disability Insurance Law (IVG)



The Federal Disability Insurance Law (*Invalidenversicherungsgesetz* – IVG) of 1959, arises from Article 111 of the Constitution.

Until the end of 2007, the Federal Disability Insurance Law constituted the federal component of special needs education (SNE) by regulating the identification and co-financing of SNE for children and young people with low-incidence disabilities. Consequently, national disability insurance significantly influenced SNE, although education in general is a cantonal matter.

However, at the beginning of 2008, responsibility for funding special schools was transferred entirely to the cantons.

This change from federal to cantonal authority was considered a threat to the level of provision for SNE, but was also a chance to promote integration. Cantons have more flexibility to establish models of schooling that match their demographic and geographic structure and, therefore, to develop more integrative forms of SNE.

Learners with less severe SEN – learners in so-called ‘special classes’ – are more frequently integrated than those with more severe educational needs. Learners with learning problems are more frequently integrated than learners with behavioural problems. The integration of learners from special schools is still rare, but is constantly increasing. In line with other countries with more segregated school systems, parental pressure towards integration and inclusion is growing.

Generally, less densely populated areas (such as the canton of Valais) have, due to their geographical situation, more integrative and inclusive services than other parts of Switzerland. However, it is more difficult to provide those areas with specialists such as speech therapists. The canton of Ticino (Italian-speaking part of Switzerland) followed the Italian model of inclusion to some extent with *Sostegno pedagogico*, a model of teacher and learner support in mainstream school. As a result, learners with mild to moderate special needs are not segregated. This model of education is accessible for children from the age of three.

## **Legislative and policy framework**

### **International ratification**

#### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (*Übereinkommen über die Rechte des Kindes*) has been in force in Switzerland since 26 March 1997 ([UNO-KRK](#), 1989).

#### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (*Übereinkommen über die Rechte von Menschen mit Behinderung*) has been in force in



Switzerland since 15 May 2014 ([UNO-BRK](#), 2006).

## Level of decentralisation

The Swiss education system is highly decentralised – types and organisation of provision will vary considerably between cantons (states) and even between communities within a canton.

The Swiss education system is characterised by federalism. Primary responsibility for education lies with the cantons. They are responsible for compulsory education, except where the [Federal Constitution](#) declares the Swiss Confederation, or the Confederation and cantons together, to be competent (Article 3). In matters which require a joint solution, the cantons co-ordinate with each other.

In 2006, the Swiss electorate and all the cantons adopted the new articles on education in the Federal Constitution. The amended Federal Constitution obliges the Confederation and the cantons, within the scope of their responsibilities, to jointly ensure the high quality and permeability of the Swiss Education Area. Through the Inter-Cantonal Agreement on Harmonisation of Compulsory Education ([HarmoS Agreement](#)), the cantons are meeting their constitutional obligation to ensure harmonised national regulation of certain benchmarks in education. Cantons which have signed the HarmoS Agreement undertake to harmonise objectives and structures in compulsory education. This generally involves adapting the solutions already followed by most cantons.

Within the framework of the HarmoS Agreement, two years of pre-primary school attendance became mandatory from the 2015/2016 academic year. In the cantons which have signed the HarmoS Agreement, the requirement for 11 years of compulsory education covers two years of pre-primary, six years of primary and three years of lower-secondary school.

### Inter-cantonal agreements

The cantons can enter agreements with each other and jointly undertake regionally important tasks. They can also establish common organisations and institutions. Cantons must comply with inter-cantonal law ([Federal Constitution](#), Article 48).

## Current legislation and policies in place

### School education

Articles 61 and 62 of the [Federal Constitution](#) ([Bundesverfassung](#) – BV) state that:



- the cantons are responsible for the education system and for drafting federal legislation on school education;
- primary education must be adequate and provided to all children;
- adequate provision must be provided to all learners with special educational needs up to the age of 20.

A collection of all relevant laws is available in [German](#) and [French](#).

### **Vocational education and training**

In contrast to compulsory education, federal legislation regulates post-compulsory education (vocational education, higher education) (BV, Article 63.1). The Confederation must encourage the provision of a diverse and accessible range of courses in vocational training (BV, Article 63.2).

### **Inclusive education policies**

As part of the [HarmoS Agreement](#), the German-speaking cantons are implementing a common curriculum, '[Lehrplan 21](#)'. For the first time, this common curriculum explicitly states that it is a curriculum for all learners, including those with disabilities.

The [French-speaking cantons](#) developed their own curriculum ([Plan d'études romand](#)) and learning materials ([Moyens d'enseignement romands](#)). As the only Italian-speaking canton, Ticino has a cantonal curriculum in Italian ([Piano di studio](#)).

### **Special needs education**

The [Federal Constitution](#) ([Bundesverfassung](#) – BV) prohibits any discrimination on grounds of physical, mental or psychological disability (Article 8.2), provides for measures to eliminate inequalities affecting persons with disabilities (Article 8.4), guarantees an adequate and free primary school education (Article 19) and obliges the cantons to ensure that adequate special needs education is provided to all children and young people with disabilities up to the age of 20 (Article 62.3).

The Inter-Cantonal Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Special Needs Education ([Concordat on special needs education](#)) transfers the responsibility for special education from the federal social security (medical model) to the cantonal education system ('education for all'). It describes the basic special needs measures – such as early intervention, speech therapy, psychomotor therapy and specialised education – that support children with special needs in mainstream classes and extended measures provided in special schools.

### **Law on Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (BehiG)**



The Law on Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (*Bundesgesetz über die Beseitigung von Benachteiligungen behinderter Menschen, Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz – BehiG*), effective since 2004, brings Article 8.4 of the Constitution into effect. It states that:

- the cantons must ensure that children and young people receive compulsory education, which is adapted to their special needs (BehiG, Article 20.1)
- the cantons promote the integration into mainstream school with appropriate measures, as far as this is possible and serves the well-being of the child or the young person with disabilities (BehiG, Article 20.2).

### **Special needs education legislation**

#### [Overview of cantonal legislation](#)

*Bundesgesetz vom 13. Dezember 2002 über die Beseitigung von Benachteiligungen von Menschen mit Behinderungen (Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz, BehiG)*  
[Federal Act of 13 December 2002 on Equal Rights for People with Disabilities (Equal Rights Act)]

*Bundesgesetz vom 19. Juni 1959 über die Invalidenversicherung (IVG)* [Disability Insurance Act of 19 June 1959]

*Verordnung vom 17. Januar 1961 über die Invalidenversicherung (IVV)* [Ordinance on Disability Insurance of 17 January 1961]

*Interkantonale Vereinbarung über die Zusammenarbeit im Bereich der Sonderpädagogik vom 25. Oktober 2007 (Sonderpädagogik-Konkordat)* [Intercantonal Agreement on Cooperation in Special Education of 25 October 2007 (Concordat on special needs education)]

*Interkantonale Vereinbarung für soziale Einrichtungen (IVSE)* vom 13. Dezember 2002 [Intercantonal Agreement on Social Institutions of 13 December 2002]

## **Governance strategy**

### **System governance**

The Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research ([EAER](#)) deals with matters relating to economic affairs, research and education.

The [Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education](#) (EDK) nationally co-ordinates education and cultural policy. It aims to ensure high quality, equity, permeability and mobility within the Swiss education system.



The cantons hold the main responsibility for education and culture. The 26 cantonal ministers of education together form the EDK to co-ordinate and carry out their work at the national level. The Principality of Liechtenstein is also involved in the EDK.

The Confederation and the cantons jointly regulate, fund, manage and supervise the higher education and the professional education sectors. They grant considerable autonomy to higher education institutions.

The Confederation and the cantons jointly ensure the high quality and accessibility of the [Swiss Education Area](#) (Article 61a of the Swiss Federal Constitution).

Primary and lower-secondary level (i.e. compulsory education) and pre-school education fall under the authority of the cantons and communes. At upper-secondary level (post-compulsory education), there are two main sectors: vocational education and training (VET) and general education (baccalaureate schools and specialised schools).

The Confederation has full authority to regulate the vocational education and training sector (upper-secondary level) and the professional education sector (tertiary level). VET-related tasks are implemented in co-ordination with the cantons and the private sector. Professional organisations represent private sector interests and decide on the training content in their area of economic activity. Member companies of each professional organisation provide workplace training (i.e. apprenticeships or traineeships) for VET programmes.

The cantons are primarily responsible for regulating the general education sector (upper-secondary level). The Confederation and the cantons have an agreement to ensure of baccalaureates awarded by general education schools are recognised nationally.

## Organisation of systems of support

The cantons are responsible for organising special needs education, as they are for education in general. There are special forms of schooling for learners who cannot meet the usual school standards, or who need special educational programmes to do so. Compulsory education also applies to learners with visual impairments, hearing impairments, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, speech disorders and behavioural disorders.

Learning materials, such as equipment, assistive technology and pedagogical support/aids, are organised at school level for learners without an official decision of special educational needs (SEN). Transport and extra-curricular activities are mostly financed at cantonal level, whereas meals are partly paid by parents and by the communities. All school buildings are expected to be accessible for any learner.

Available resources are distributed according to global budgets for schools, based on the number of learners or the number of learners identified as having SEN, with and without an official decision. Equipment differs from one school to another. Some schools can cope with difficult situations, but others have few resources to do so.



Because of the decentralised system, provision is often unco-ordinated in Switzerland. Nonetheless, the system makes it is easier to combine flexibility of support and sustainability of provision. A very high percentage of private organisations offer special needs education.

Cantons use a framework for special educational support ([Sonderpädagogisches Konzept](#) or [Concept de pédagogie spécialisée](#)) which describes the organisation and delivery of additional support (including establishing eligibility).

Cantons also provide additional support beyond the population covered by the [Concordat on special needs education](#), such as for learners with learning difficulties (high-incidence disabilities) or with a first language different from the language of instruction. Providing additional support for high-incidence disabilities or learning difficulties is generally within the school's authority; there is no national definition for additional support. Resources are made available based on school-based funding for additional support needs.

### **Early childhood intervention**

Early childhood intervention in Switzerland is mostly family-based. Measures can start at birth or before the child starts school. Either early intervention specialists come to the child's home, or the parents bring the child to the early intervention service. Professionals sometimes work with small groups of children. In addition, children with more severe problems can receive temporary or longer-term residential care in a specialised institution (e.g. a boarding house).

Over 100 early intervention services ensure the whole country is covered. The services are mostly delivered by generalists experienced in dealing with different problems, but some specialise in certain impairments.

Early intervention services are in some cases privately managed (e.g. by parents' associations), while in other cases they are managed by public bodies (e.g. local authorities or cantons).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) for young children is based on voluntary services, such as child day-care facilities, day-care families and informal care services. As children start pre-school with different backgrounds, childcare establishments are increasingly being called upon to offer a stronger educational orientation. In urban centres, in particular, projects specifically promote ECEC for disadvantaged children or children with a migrant background. The Swiss Network on ECEC published an [orientation framework](#) on quality in service delivery in the field of ECEC.

### **Compulsory education: kindergarten/nursery school, primary and secondary school**

Specialised education is provided for children with special needs attending special schools and special classes linked to mainstream schools. Specialist provision takes different forms to support the integration of learners with SEN in the classroom (inclusive settings):



- Special units for one learner inside the classroom
- Special units for a group of learners inside the classroom
- Special units for one learner outside the classroom
- Special units for a group of learners outside the classroom
- Small (special) classes in mainstream schools

### **Special classes**

Special needs education is linked to mainstream schooling. The classes are in the same building as mainstream classes and under the same administration. There are:

- smaller classes at primary level (generally no more than 14 learners, adapted curriculum);
- practical classes at the lower-secondary level (practical activities, orientation, reduced curriculum).

Special classes consist of a substantial proportion of learners with behavioural issues, learners with learning difficulties and learners with migration backgrounds. Until 2004, the number of learners in special classes increased year on year. Since 2005, however, the number of learners in these classes has diminished considerably.

About a third of the learners in special classes are girls, while the proportion of learners from ethnic minorities is higher than those of Swiss nationality (See Lanners, [2021](#); [2024](#)).

### **Integrated schooling**

Learners with special needs who are integrated into mainstream education may be supervised by a support teacher in the class for a certain number of hours, depending on the learners' needs. In kindergarten, in certain cantons, children may continue to benefit from early intervention measures. In such cases, they are supervised by an early intervention specialist, who is mainly involved in the child's family environment but also makes occasional visits to the kindergarten.

Collaboration between the class teacher and support staff takes different forms, such as team teaching, regular meetings and shared educational plans. Integration into mainstream education is governed first and foremost by the legal provisions in force in a particular canton.

Integrated schooling is still rare for learners with severe disabilities. However, integration is preferred for learners with less severe disabilities, rather than attendance at a special school. In integrated schooling, the learner has either an individual education programme for all disciplines or for one or two disciplines only.

### *Individual measures*





Learners with SEN who are integrated into mainstream schools also benefit from individual special education provisions. These provisions are delivered by visiting services, mostly in integrative settings within mainstream schools. The most frequently used provisions are counselling and educational support (when a learner is first integrated), speech therapy, psycho-motor therapy and early intervention.

When locally available resources, i.e. ordinary individual measures, are insufficient, additional resources for training and education must be provided. These are known as enhanced individual measures. They differ from ordinary measures in that:

- they are of long duration;
- they are more intense;
- the teachers are more specialised;
- they have significant consequences for the learner's daily life, social environment and life path.

### **Special schools**

In Switzerland, there are special schools for:

- learners with intellectual disabilities;
- learners with physical disabilities;
- learners with severe behavioural disorders;
- learners with hearing, speech or visual impairments;
- chronically ill learners (hospital schools).

The number of learners in special schools has increased over the last 45 years (See Lanners, [2024](#)).

Read more in the [Changing Role of Specialist Provision](#) activity.

## **Collaboration and communication mechanisms**

### **Vertical collaboration (levels)**

In matters which require a joint solution, the cantons co-ordinate with each other. For some areas, the Federal Constitution obliges the cantons to co-ordinate (e.g. co-ordination of the cantons in the compulsory education sector, collaboration and co-operation between the Confederation and cantons in the higher education



sector).

The most important level is inter-cantonal collaboration and co-ordination at political and administrative levels. The [Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education](#) (EDK/CDIP) works out recommendations and inter-cantonal agreements/regulations on a subsidiary level.

## **Horizontal collaboration (sectors)**

Collaboration between teachers and other professionals, such as nurses, school/class assistants or social (school) workers, can take a wide range of forms. The provision depends on the learner's needs and the local and cantonal regulations.

## **Learners' and families' voices**

No information available.

## **Co-operation between schools, families and members of the community**

No information available.

## **Communication with local stakeholders, learners, families, local organisations, community, etc.**

No information available.

## **Funding mechanisms and strategies**

### **Financing of inclusive education**

The Federal Constitution (Article 62) guarantees compulsory education in state schools free of charge. The cantons and communes fund compulsory education in state schools, including compulsory pre-school. Attendance at optional public sector pre-school is also free of charge.

### **Specialist provision**



Early childhood intervention is defined as a special educational measure; as such, the canton and the community finance preparation for both special and mainstream education.

Education for learners with less severe SEN (e.g. learning problems) is provided in mainstream classes and, in some cantons, in special classes (*Kleinklassen*) in different integrative forms, through support teaching (*Stützunterricht*) and therapies. Usually, the community and the canton share the costs. The provisions and financing schemes are based on cantonal legislation, which results in different models in the 26 cantons.

Most vocational training financing for learners with SEN is covered by Disability Insurance (individual contributions; collective contributions to institutions offering basic vocational training), and the rest by the canton.

The 'Reorganisation of Financial Equalisation and Tasks between the Confederation and the Cantons' ([NFA](#)) came into force on 1 January 2008. Despite this, the Swiss federal Disability Insurance scheme remains responsible for distributing benefits and supplementary benefits for initial vocational training to qualifying young people with disabilities (*Bundesgesetz über die Invalidenversicherung – IVG*, Article 16).

## **Quality assurance and accountability frameworks**

### **Monitoring**

The most important challenge was implementing a new model of data collection to measure the integration of learners with SEN in mainstream schools and to monitor the cost of SEN provision. The data has been available since 2019 (see, for example, Lanners, [2024](#); BFS, [2025](#)).

Since 2006, the [Swiss Education Report](#) (SKBF-CSRE) has provided data and information from statistics, research and administration on the entire education system in Switzerland, from pre-school to continuing education.

The Swiss Centre for Special Needs Education ([SZH](#)) carries out tasks in the field of special needs education, such as collating documentation and information concerning special needs programmes and advising the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education and the cantons on all questions relating to specialised pedagogy. The [Federal Statistical Office](#) (FSO) collects a wide range of data on the Swiss education system.

### **Evaluation**

In 2016 and 2017, a nationwide review was carried out for the first time on behalf of the EDK to determine whether the national educational objectives were being achieved. The review was completed in 2023 and 2024 ([Nationale Bildungsziele](#)). These first national surveys were the start of the harmonisation of the Swiss education



system, in which national education objectives and language/region curricula were in place by 2014. However, learners who participated in the 2016 and 2017 surveys (representative samples from all cantons, not a full survey) had not yet been taught according to the new language/region curricula.

## **Accountability**

No information available.

## **Data and information collection**

### **System of collecting learner-specific information**

*Office fédéral de la statistique (OFS)* [[Federal Statistical Office](#)]

Annual survey in schools

### **European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education data tables**

[European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education data tables](#)

## **Continuum of professional learning**

### **Teacher education and professional development**

#### **Initial teacher training**

Access to initial teacher training programmes for pre-primary and/or primary level requires a university entry exam (baccalaureate). The training results in a bachelor's degree. A full-time course takes six semesters or three years (including teaching practice); at least 180 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System credits are necessary for graduation. Teacher training programmes for lower-secondary levels require a master's degree.

Graduates of the teacher training programme for the pre-primary and/or primary level receive a 'Teaching Certificate for the Pre-Primary and/or Primary Level' and the academic title of Bachelor of Arts in Pre-Primary and/or Primary Education.



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## Specialist training

The special needs education (SNE) programme allows students to acquire the knowledge, abilities and competences to qualify in:

- the field of early childhood intervention: preventive and instructional support for children whose development is endangered, disrupted or hindered, as well as appropriate familial intervention;
- the field of special education teaching: instruction and educational work with learners with special educational needs.

A full-time SNE course takes four semesters or two years (including teaching practice) and corresponds to a Master of Arts in Special Needs Education (in the field of either 'Early Childhood Intervention' or 'Special Education Teaching'). Graduates of the teacher training programme for special education teaching receive a 'Special Needs Teaching Certificate' and a reference to their chosen area of specialisation.

Specialist training for speech therapy and psychomotor therapy are provided at bachelor's degree level.

The minimum qualifications set by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) to be accepted into an SNE programme in the field of special education teaching are a teacher's certificate for mainstream classroom work or a bachelor's degree in speech and language therapy or psychomotor therapy, or a bachelor's degree in a related field of studies. Students who have received a bachelor's degree through an integrated course of studies for a secondary teacher's certificate may also be accepted for this programme. Different teacher education universities can include inclusive education skills in their curricula.

A few institutions offer study programmes in SNE. More information is available from the Swiss Centre for Special Needs Education ([SZH](#)).

## Continuing professional development (CPD)

The EDK defines CPD as a part of the teachers' professional mission. The cantonal education acts and regulations provide an obligation for teachers to undertake CPD and often set out an entitlement to CPD; the content of CPD is often not laid down.

## Other educational staff professional development

No information available.

## School leadership



There is no federal law on school leadership. Changes in compulsory education since 2000 have resulted in greater autonomy being granted to individual schools, and thus greater flexibility.

In conjunction with school autonomy, all cantons have now introduced school leaders to the compulsory education phase. Their responsibilities are not limited to administrative and organisational activities but extend to staff and pedagogical leadership and responsibility for school development ([Swiss Education Report, 2023](#)). The 26 cantons have their own legislation on school leadership. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education published an [overview of the cantonal school laws and regulations](#) in 2015.

The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education regulates the recognition of diplomas (initial training and continuing education and training) throughout Switzerland and controls training quality. Recognition of complementary training for teachers (Master of advanced studies, Diploma of advanced studies and Certificate of advanced studies – CAS) was released in 2004. The main regulation at federal level is the training curriculum for school leaders (CAS School Leader), defined in a profile released in 2009.

Read more in the [Supporting Inclusive School Leadership](#) activity.

## **Curriculum framework and personalised learning environment**

### **Assessment/identification of learners' needs**

Special agencies (including the school psychological services) can help the Swiss cantons to identify, diagnose, treat and advise on disabilities and special needs.

Identifying special educational needs (SEN) leads to the provision of individual special education measures. Ordinary individual measures are provided at local level, in the school context. When these resources are insufficient and additional resources for learners' education and training are needed, enhanced individual measures are deployed. Provision of these enhanced measures is based on a standard assessment procedure (SAP) to determine individual needs.

### **Phases of education**

#### **Early childhood education**

Medical doctors or early intervention specialists often identify young children's SEN. Early intervention is not mandatory in Switzerland, so parental agreement is required for initial assessment and possible intervention.



## **Compulsory education**

During compulsory education, any of the parties involved may identify a learner as having SEN and initiate a procedure. In most cantons, school psychologists play a central role.

Parents, teachers, SEN specialists, special school head teachers, the school administration board (i.e. the school commission at municipal level) and cantonal institutions (e.g. the cantonal board for compulsory schooling) also play an important role.

## **Transition period**

During this period, needs identification is mostly based on earlier educational identification procedures.

## **The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)**

Within the framework of inter-cantonal co-operation for special education, some teacher education universities and the Swiss Institute for Special Needs Education ([SZH](#)) developed a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP). The SAP is used if the locally available special education resources are inadequate and a learner needs additional resources. It serves the cantons primarily on a decision-making basis for arranging enhanced special needs measures.

The SAP determines learners' individual educational and developmental needs for early specialised education, mainstream education, reduced class size or special education. It is mandatory for all the cantons which have ratified the Inter-Cantonal Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Special Needs Education ([Concordat on special needs education](#)). However, cantons which have not ratified it can also use it, and often do.

The SAP aims to create optimal (but not maximal) conditions for child training and development, taking into account international and national directives and local circumstances.

The SAP makes it possible to gather the relevant information systematically and so determine individual needs. It therefore adopts a multi-dimensional approach: a single criterion (e.g. one deficiency) is not a sufficient basis to take measures. The aim is to determine what measures will be effective based on transparent developmental and training objectives. The SAP serves as a basis for targeted care in the place of care chosen for this purpose.

The SAP is based on the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health ([ICF](#)).

## **The SAP procedure**



Disability is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, so a multi-dimensional approach is needed to deal with it. As such, the SAP collects information of different kinds from different sources. There are two stages: a basic assessment and an assessment of special needs.

Basic assessment considers the learner's present condition and includes:

- Personal circumstances (of the learner and the persons exercising parental authority)
- Information on registration for the procedure and the issues raised
- Existing support network
- Family background
- Statement of functioning (brief list of activities, participation and bodily functions)
- Statement by category (principal and related diagnosis, description of problems).

Assessment of individual needs is geared to the learner's present circumstances and includes:

- An assessment of the learner's development and training objectives
- An assessment of the learner's needs (special education measures, counselling and support, care of the learner, medical measures)
- Recommendations (main care centre, measures).

Each canton has its own directives, so how the regulations are applied varies from canton to canton.

## Curriculum framework and personalised learning

Special schools do not have an official binding curriculum, but they are asked to apply the national curricula as far as possible. In special schools, the learning content is adapted to the learners' abilities, with particular attention paid to teaching basic skills – reading, writing, arithmetic, and the skills essential to the learner's development in terms of independence and social integration (motor skills, perception, language, emotional and social skills).

Learning objectives and requirements are tailored to learners' individual abilities and are increasingly enshrined in individual development plans. The learning objectives largely depend on the type of disability: a sensory or physical impairment does not necessarily mean limited cognitive learning. Special teaching materials and aids are available to meet the requirements and objectives of mainstream schools. When a learner's limited development and learning ability do not allow orientation to the mainstream curricula, the fixed learning objectives particularly focus on the greatest possible independence and the best possible social integration for the learner.

Switzerland has three different curricula for learners, one for each linguistic region: the French [\*Plan d'études romand\*](#), the German [\*Lehrplan 21\*](#) and the Italian [\*Piano di\*](#)





[studio](#). Early childhood curricula are built on the same bases and educational objectives as primary curricula. However, they emphasise holistic, interdisciplinary education geared towards the child's development. Read more about early childhood curricula in the [Inclusive Early Childhood Education](#) activity.

## **Inclusive school development and capacity building**

### **Developing specialist provision to support all learners and increase the capacity of mainstream schools**

No information available.

### **Inclusive school environment**

No information available.

## **Early childhood education**

### **Early childhood education**

Within the framework of the [HarmoS Agreement](#), two years of pre-primary school attendance became mandatory from the 2015/2016 academic year. In the cantons which have signed the HarmoS Agreement, the requirement for 11 years of compulsory education includes two years of pre-primary school.

Pre-primary education focuses on developing socio-emotional, psycho-motor and cognitive skills and competencies. Teaching basic skills (reading, writing and arithmetic) is reserved for the primary level curricula. At pre-primary level, however, corresponding skills are practised in preparation. The contents are drafted as binding learning objectives.

Depending on the curriculum, objectives are defined for subject areas (e.g. people and environment, exercise, language, crafts, music, basic mathematics, etc.) or drafted as interdisciplinary learning objectives (e.g. developing exercise options, distinguishing cognitive abilities, dealing with success and failure, identifying and discussing natural processes, identifying and using rules of everyday language, etc.).

The work at pre-primary level is primarily guided by the children's developmental stage and not by standards based on the age group. Differentiated teaching is promoted and should facilitate inclusion.

The curricula include the use of new technologies.



The curricula can be adapted to the needs of each child, for example in cases of:

- intellectual disability: adapted curriculum with individual support;
- physical or sensory disability: same curriculum with adjustments to compensate for disability-related disadvantages;
- migration background: adapted curriculum with additional support for the classroom language;
- giftedness: enriched curriculum.

Parents are informed of the adaptations and are involved in the elaboration of the individual education plan.

The Inter-Cantonal Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Special Needs Education ([Concordat on special needs education](#)) specifies that inclusive solutions are preferable to segregation, taking into account the child's welfare and development opportunities and the school environment and organisation.

Staff adapt curricula, teaching materials and class schedules to the children's specific additional needs to offer differentiated teaching.

Parents should be adequately informed and listened to. The teacher may involve them in assessing or describing their child's competences, but must include them in decision-making on important issues. In the case of special educational needs, the parents are involved in the process of assessing the child's strengths and difficulties and in evaluating the requested support in different contexts.

The child's individual needs, resources and interests are assessed to differentiate the teaching.

The two types of provision are:

- individual support inside or outside the classroom to meet a specific child's additional needs;
- support for groups of children with similar needs in inclusive or separated settings.

Read more in the [Inclusive Early Childhood Education](#) activity.

## **Transition between education phases**

### **Transition between education phases**

**Lower-secondary level**



The lower-secondary level follows the primary level and lasts for three years. A derogation is in place for the canton of Ticino, where the seven-year primary level is followed by the four-year *Scuola media* (lower-secondary level). Learners aged between 12 and 15 attend lessons at lower-secondary level in classes grouped by age. Teaching is in classes grouped by ability following different models.

Transition to a particular lower-secondary level school type or ability group is generally based on performance assessments, teachers' recommendations or admission examinations. In some cantons, learners are assigned to a particular type of school or ability group part way through the lower-secondary level.

On completion of general compulsory education, usually when learners turn 15, they make the transition to the upper-secondary level.

Most learners with SEN that attend higher education have physical disabilities. They are normally integrated into mainstream schools.

### **Transition period**

The legislation governing occupational training ([Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training, BBG](#)) allows young people encountering difficulties at school or in subsequent training to undertake two years of initial vocational training and receive a Swiss Federal Certificate in a number of trades.

Compared with special education at the primary and lower-secondary levels (International Standard Classification of Education levels 1 and 2), preparation for vocational activities and vocational training for young people with disabilities are less well developed. Opportunities for further training and employment depend very much on the nature of a person's disability.

There are other provisions for young people who are unable to meet the requirements of Swiss federal certification, such as practical training under the national association of institutions for people with disabilities ([INSOS](#)) regulations.

### **Careers/occupational guidance**

The cantonal agencies providing occupational guidance, and in certain cases the Swiss federal disability agencies for occupational advisories, provide the best resources for occupational guidance. The Swiss cantonal disability insurance offices (Federal Disability Insurance Law – IVG, Article 57d) provide occupational guidance for people with disabilities.