
European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

About us



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



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ABOUT US

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for the ministries of education in our member countries.

Our work focuses on supporting our member countries to develop and implement inclusive education systems that ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This enhances learners' life chances and possibilities for actively participating in society.

The EASNIE member countries' shared ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers. Therefore, this vision is the focal point of all EASNIE work.

WHO WE ARE

We are the only European body maintained by our member countries with the specific mission of helping them improve the quality and effectiveness of their inclusive provision for all learners.

Our permanent network of ministerial representatives decides on the specific priorities for our annual and multi-annual work programmes. This ensures that our work aligns with the priorities of the ministries of education in our member countries.

All our work is in line with and directly supports all international and European Union (EU) policy initiatives on education. We aim to ensure equity, equal opportunities and rights for all learners, particularly those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion.

Member countries

At present, EASNIE is made up of the following 31 member countries: Austria, Belgium (Flemish, French and German communities), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland,





France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

Country-specific information is available on the EASNIE website under **Country Information**. Here you will find information on national contacts, legislation and policy on inclusive education, as well as country-specific news.

Information on our member countries' involvement in EASNIE activities is available on the respective **web areas**.

Funding

EASNIE is co-funded by the ministries of education in its member countries and by the European Commission via an operating grant within the EU **Erasmus+ education programme**.

EASNIE also conducts specific activities funded via additional grants from the European Commission or other sources, such as international organisations or individual member countries. These additional activities enable EASNIE to undertake work that complements and reinforces the activities agreed by member countries within the framework of its multi-annual work programmes.

Articles of Association

Our **Articles of Association** describe EASNIE's overall aims, objectives and board procedures.

EASNIE position on inclusive education systems

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

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

For this vision to be enacted, the **legislation** directing inclusive education systems must be underpinned by the fundamental commitment to





ensuring every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities.

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

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

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

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

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





The essential features of inclusive education systems outlined here are based on a wider European and international policy and practice context.

Everybody working for EASNIE shares its position on inclusive education systems. EASNIE expects all team members to work within and towards this position.

The **position on inclusive education systems** is available as a flyer in all EASNIE languages.

History

EASNIE was established in 1996 as an initiative of the Danish Government, endorsed by the member countries' Education Ministers, at the end of the European Commission's Helios II programme. Its establishment reflected the need for a permanent and systematic structure for European collaboration in the field of special needs and inclusive education.

In 1999, following a three-year trial period funded by the Danish education authorities, EASNIE was transferred to the member countries. This formally established EASNIE as a European organisation with the mandate to act as its member countries' platform for collaboration in the field of special needs and inclusive education.

The organisation's original name was European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. The current name formally came into effect on 1 January 2014 to better reflect EASNIE's present and future activities.

WHAT WE DO

EASNIE's main aim is to help member countries improve their inclusive policy and practice in the field of education.

Our work focuses on supporting our member countries to develop and implement inclusive education systems, aiming to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This enhances learners' life chances and possibilities for actively participating in society.

We provide member countries and stakeholders at the European level with evidence-based information and guidance on implementing inclusive education systems.

While recognising that there are differences in countries' policies, practices and educational contexts, EASNIE has the following strategic objectives:

- to promote quality in the field of inclusive education by maintaining a long-term framework for extended European collaboration;
- to facilitate effective exchange of knowledge and experience among, as well as within, member countries;





- to identify key factors that hinder or support progress and provide countries with information and guidance;
- to analyse and review policy developments in countries in order to support the development of sustainable and effective inclusive education systems.

Work programmes

The **annual work programmes** set out EASNIE's short-term priorities.

The **2021–2027 Multi-Annual Work Programme** presents EASNIE's long-term priorities. It describes the activities that will be implemented to meet EASNIE member countries' agreed requests while directly supporting EU-level policy goals and initiatives.

Annual reports

The annual reports contain summaries of EASNIE's activities during the previous year.

The most recent **annual report** is available on our website.

International and European key documents and statements

We have a mandate from our member countries to facilitate collaboration regarding country priorities that are in line with the EU's priorities for education and training, as identified in the **European Education Area**.

Our activities take into consideration key international statements on inclusive education, such as the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4**, the **Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4**, the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989), the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (2006), the **Salamanca Statement** (1994) and the **Cali commitment to equity and inclusion in education** (2019).

HOW WE WORK

Through our country networks and expert participation in activities, we uniquely combine the perspectives of policy, practice and research. This enables us to assess, monitor and identify links between these three perspectives and develop comprehensive recommendations for policy and practice.

We give countries guidance on how to implement inclusive education, in line with the EU policies set out in the **European Education Area strategic framework** and with the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (2006), from a rights and quality perspective.

We provide information to support evidence-based policy-making aimed at improving the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of inclusive education systems.

Our work centres on the following key activities:

- **Country Policy Development Support**, which supports reflection on country policy development and implementation issues for



inclusive education and is based on the **Country Policy Review and Analysis** activity, which provided information for member countries on their progress and developments in key areas relating to inclusive education

- **Thematic activities** focusing on priority topics identified by member countries and involving national experts from all member countries
- **Data collection** and provision of statistics and indicators informing inclusive education
- External consultancy work, such as country audits and technical support to countries in the framework of the **European Commission's Technical Support Instrument**
- **Conferences, thematic seminars, workshops and political events** to raise awareness, share information on priority areas and facilitate networking for participants
- **Disseminating information** through a broad range of activities.

Information on our activities is available on the **EASNIE website** in various formats, such as reports, literature reviews and policy briefs. Main outcomes and findings are available in up to 25 languages and all the information on the website is available in up

to 100 languages, thanks to an automatic translation tool. All our materials are free to download from the **Publications section** of the website.

CO-OPERATION WITH KEY ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

We co-operate with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, as well as with key international bodies and organisations. These include: Cedefop, Eurostat, Eurydice, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Representative Board is our governing body. It is responsible for strategic decision-making relating to our operations, including approving multi-annual and annual work programmes and budgets, thematic work areas and activities. The member countries' ministries of education appoint the Representative Board members.

The Representative Board elects the Management Board from its members on a rotating basis. The Management Board ensures that plans and decisions are implemented efficiently and effectively.





EUROPEAN AGENCY

Organisational Structure

Representative Board
A Representative
Board member from
each member country
and the Chair

Management Board
5 Representative Board
members and the Chair

EASNIE Team
Led by the Director

National Networks
Maintained by
Representative Board
members and National
Co-ordinators

The Representative Board and the Management Board are chaired by the EASNIE Chair.

The EASNIE team, led by the Director, implements our work programmes and carries out the day-to-day management and co-ordination of our work. The EASNIE team consists of employees and consultants, who work in close collaboration.

At the operational level, the national ministry representatives develop and maintain national networks and co-ordinate the flow of information to and from member countries.

EASNIE's organisational structure diagram shows how the Representative Board, Management Board, EASNIE team and national networks relate to each other.

EASNIE OFFICES

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