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ABOUT US

We are an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for the ministries of education in our member countries.

Our work focuses on improving all learners' achievement at all levels of inclusive lifelong learning. This enhances learners' life chances and opportunities for actively participating in society.

The Agency 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 Agency work.

Our main aim is to help member countries improve their educational policy and practice. We do this by combining the perspectives of policy, practice and research in order to provide member countries and stakeholders at the European level with evidence-based information and guidance on implementing inclusive education.

Read about [the Agency's position on inclusive education systems here](#).

The Agency [presentation flyer](#) is available as a PDF in 23 languages.

The entire 'About Us' information is available for download as an accessible [PDF](#).

WHO WE ARE

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education is an independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for its member countries, working towards ensuring more inclusive education systems.

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 upon 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, in particular those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion, such as students with disabilities and/or special educational needs.



The Agency is funded by the member countries' ministries of education and supported by the EU institutions. We receive an operating grant via the Jean Monnet initiative of the [EU Erasmus+ education programme \(2014–2020\)](#).

The Agency's 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 the Agency 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. The Agency 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 through 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 the capacity of all stakeholders 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. [Read more about this context in this annex.](#)

Download the [Agency Position flyer in any of the 23 official Agency languages.](#)

Member countries

At present, we have 29 member countries: [Austria](#), Belgium ([Flemish](#) and [French](#) speaking communities), [Croatia](#), [Cyprus](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Greece](#), [Hungary](#), [Iceland](#), [Ireland](#), [Italy](#), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Malta](#), [Netherlands](#), [Norway](#), [Poland](#), [Portugal](#), [Slovak Republic](#), [Slovenia](#), [Spain](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#) and United Kingdom ([England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#)).

The [country information pages](#) contain national contacts, legislation and policy on special needs and inclusive education for our member countries, as well as country-specific news.



The respective [project web areas](#) provide information on our member countries' involvement in Agency projects.

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 projects. 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.

The Agency Staff, under the direction of the Agency Director, carry out the day-to-day management and co-ordination of our work.

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.

History

The Agency was established in 1996 as an initiative of the Danish Ministry of Education, at the end of the European Commission's Helios II programme. Representatives from the ministries of education of the 15 EU member countries at that time, as well as Norway and Iceland, supported the initiative as a means of furthering their co-operation in the field of special needs and inclusive education.

The establishment of the Agency reflected the increasing collaboration that had evolved among the European countries in the field of education. This work showed there was a need for a permanent and systematic structure for European collaboration in the field, facilitating extended exchange of information and experience among and within countries with a view to promoting quality provision for all learners.

Following a three-year trial period, which was largely funded by the Danish education authorities, the member countries formally took collective financial responsibility for the Agency in 1999. Following the successive EU enlargements, the initial number of 17 member countries had grown to 29 by 2015.



Articles of Association

Our [Articles of Association](#) describe the Agency's overall aims, objectives and board procedures.

WHAT WE DO

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

Our work focuses on meaningfully improving all learners' achievement at all levels of inclusive lifelong learning. This enhances learners' life chances and opportunities 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, the Agency has the following strategic objectives:

- to promote quality in the field of special needs and 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 the Agency's short-term priorities. The [Work Programme 2016](#) is available for download.

The Agency's long-term priorities are presented in the seven-year multi-annual work programmes. The [2014–2020 Multi-Annual Work Programme](#) is available for download.

The [Work Programme 2016 in Brief](#) gives a quick overview of the priorities set out in the annual work programme.



Annual reports

The annual reports contain summaries of the Agency's activities during the previous year. The most recent [Agency Annual Report 2014](#) can be downloaded as a PDF.

International key documents and statements

We have a mandate from our member countries to facilitate collaboration regarding country priorities that are in line with the Council of the European Union's priorities for education and training, as identified in the [Education & Training 2020 strategy](#).

Our activities take into consideration key international statements on inclusive education, such as the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (2006), the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989) and the [Salamanca Statement](#) (1994).

HOW WE WORK

Through our country networks and expert participation in projects, 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 [Education & Training 2020 programme](#) as well as 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 review and analysis to provide information for member countries on their progress and developments in key areas relating to inclusive education
- Thematic projects focusing on priority topics identified by member countries involving national experts from all member countries
- Data collection and provision of statistics and indicators informing inclusive education
- European hearings, 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 this website and in printed form in various formats, such as reports, literature reviews and policy briefs. Main project outcomes and findings are available in up to 23 languages. All our materials are free to download from the [Publications section](#) of this 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.

Links to some of the organisations we maintain co-operative relationships with can be found below:

[Council of the European Union](#)

[European Parliament](#)

[European Commission](#)

[European Training Foundation](#)

[Eurostat](#)

[Eurydice](#)

[Cedefop](#)

[International Labour Organization](#) (ILO)

[Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD)

[OECD Indicators of Education Systems](#) (INES)

[United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO)

[UNESCO International Bureau of Education](#) (IBE)

[UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education](#) (IITE)

[United Nations Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF)

[World Bank](#)

EASY TO READ INFORMATION

Follow the link in the title to access this information.



CONTACT US

Our member countries' representatives can provide information on the inclusive education system in your country. All contact details are available on our [country information pages](#).

For questions about the Agency, please contact the Secretariat:

secretariat@european-agency.org / +45 64 41 00 20

or the Brussels Office:

brussels.office@european-agency.org / +32 2 213 62 80

The Agency Chair, Per Ch Gunnvall, can be contacted via secretariat@european-agency.org



The Agency Director, Cor J.W. Meijer, can be contacted via secretariat@european-agency.org

