
Annual Report 2018



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



FACT SHEET FOR 2018

THE AGENCY

Full legal name	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
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Website	www.european-agency.org
Chair	Ms Ana Magraner
Director	Mr Cor J.W. Meijer
Established	1996
Member countries	The Agency currently has 31 full member countries: Austria, Belgium (Flemish and French 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, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).
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Preface

2018 saw many positive developments.

We welcomed Serbia as our 31st member country.

The European Commission invited the Agency to act as a technical body for countries that have successfully applied for support from the new European Union (EU) Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP).

This work aims to assist individual countries with the planning and implementation of reforms to improve their systems for inclusive education. We started in Cyprus and Poland in 2018. This activity will continue in 2019, when we will begin work with the Czech Republic and Greece.

The SRSP work represents an important step towards achieving the goal of acting as an agent for change and helping member countries to implement their inclusive education policies.

Based on a survey of member countries, we agreed the priorities for the remaining two years of the Agency's Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAWP) 2014–2020. Activities will include new projects on the key priorities of preventing school failure and preparing all teachers to effectively include all learners in mainstream classrooms.

We also looked further ahead! In November, we met with all our member country representatives to reflect collectively on the Agency's future role and activities.

In this seminar, country representatives presented their suggestions for how the Agency can best support their work in the future. These discussions should be seen in light of the *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common*

values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (2018/C 195/01). In the Recommendation, the Council of the EU encourages Member States to 'promote inclusive education for all learners' and to 'make effective use of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, on a voluntary basis, to implement and monitor successful inclusive approaches in their education systems'.

In this report, you will find information about our work with thematic projects, data collection and policy review and analysis. We hope you will find the information useful. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all country representatives, experts and staff for their efforts and contributions to our work in the areas of policy, practice and research during 2018.



Image 1. Ana Magraner, Chair



Image 2. Cor J.W. Meijer, Director



Board meetings

During the year, the Management Board met four times to discuss key issues and prepare the Representative Board meetings. The Representative Board members (RBs) and the National Co-ordinators (NCs) met twice at bi-annual meetings, in April (Switzerland) and October (Austria), to review the work on current themes and projects, and discuss and decide on plans for future work. At the October meeting, the Representative Board elected two new members of the Management Board for the three-year period 2019–2021. Furthermore, the Representative Board met in Brussels in November to discuss the Agency's future role and work.



Image 3. Experience exchange session at the bi-annual meeting in April (Switzerland)

Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA) work

The Agency's CPRA work provides countries with a reflection on their current policy frameworks for inclusive education. Furthermore, it offers each country specific recommendations regarding priorities to be addressed.

The work builds on recommendations from Agency projects, the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) strategic objectives and the Council Country-

Specific Recommendations addressed to countries, as well as country priorities regarding inclusive education.

In this work, the Agency uses a peer learning methodology to help country policy-makers to learn directly from each other, share information and facilitate policy change.

The CPRA activities are continuous and on-going within the MAWP 2014–2020. Fifteen countries were involved in phase 1 and 2 activities and seven countries are currently involved in phase 3.

In early 2018, the CPRA activities focused on policy analysis activities with phase 2 countries and applying the analysis grid that has been developed to the different policy contexts, depending on countries' individual situation and needs. The phase 2 analysis grids were completed and made available on the [CPRA web area](#), where further information and results from the first two phases of CPRA can also be found.

At a meeting linked to the spring bi-annual meeting, phase 3 activities were initiated and the work with the countries involved in this phase continued throughout 2018.

In June 2018, the Agency organised a full review meeting with all countries involved in all three phases to identify developments and improvements to the CPRA processes and outcomes. Based on the outcomes of this meeting and further discussions involving all Agency RBs, a second complete cycle of CPRA activities will be planned in 2019.

The [Country Policy Review and Analysis: Methodology Report](#) was updated and published at the end of 2018.



European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE)

The Agency's biennial data collection exercise – known as EASIE – aims to provide clearly focused data that informs the European Commission's ET 2020 strategic objectives and the implementation of Article 24 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006).

In 2018, the 2016 dataset (covering the 2014/2015 school year) was fully analysed and individual country reports, as well as the [Cross-Country Report](#), were produced. Based upon the analysis of the 2014 (covering the 2012/2013 school year) and 2016 datasets, a [Key Messages and Findings report](#) was made available in late autumn 2018.

The EASIE data collection was extended to focus on two additional International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level programmes: pre-primary (ISCED 02) and upper-secondary (ISCED 3). The 2018 EASIE data collection was launched with fully revised data collection tools and procedures. In line with these developments, the [EASIE Methodology Report](#) was fully revised and updated.

The annual data experts' workshop took place in October. The main aim was to fine-tune the country data and country background information. Data collection on out-of-school children within the framework of inclusive education was discussed and it was agreed to examine this topic further.

The [Data section](#) of the Agency website presents all available quantitative and qualitative country data in an accessible and interactive way.

Thematic project work

All Agency projects directly or indirectly support the agreed EU priorities for education and training, including the following Europe 2020 targets: 75% of the population aged 20–64 should be employed; the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree; 20 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty.

Below are short descriptions of the main project activities that took place in 2018.



Image 4. Young learners

Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education

This three-year thematic project targeted decision-makers at national, regional and local levels. It focused on increasing schools' capacity to raise achievement by providing high-quality education for all learners. The project worked with learning communities in Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom (Scotland). The project participants (researchers and school leaders from Agency member countries) explored different pedagogical approaches and leadership strategies, providing support to the learning communities and exchanging ideas via an online forum. All project outputs can be found on the [project area](#) on the Agency website.



Main 2018 activities

The [country reports on practice to raise achievement](#) and [Key Actions for Raising Achievement: Guidance for Teachers and Leaders](#) were published. In late 2018, a follow-up study was initiated to assess the project's longer-term impact. It will be finalised in 2019.

Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion

This project presented a [review of the literature](#) which examines:

- the link between inclusive education and social inclusion;
- what current research says about inclusive education's potential as a tool for promoting social inclusion.

According to the review, there is evidence to suggest that there is a link between inclusive education and social inclusion in the areas of education, employment and living in the community. At the same time, the review identified other factors that promote or hinder social inclusion, such as quality of inclusive practice, social policy, social structures and attitudes, individual life course, etc.

Main 2018 activities

The [literature review](#) was published and the findings were presented at the 2018 spring bi-annual meeting.

The [final summary report](#) (available in all Agency languages) was published in spring 2018.

The Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education

This project focuses on the re-organisation of specialist, separate provision (schools and classes) and the perceived shift in the role of such

provision to support the right to inclusive education for all learners.

Phase 1 of the project involves a detailed mapping exercise on past and current trends and situations in countries in relation to specialist provision, as well as on perceived future trends.

Based on the main outcomes of phase 1, phase 2 will focus on peer learning activities with groups of countries. These will consider different aspects and stages of policy reform and development for specialist provision to support inclusive education.

The intention is to work with policy-makers from the Agency member countries and learn from each other about the changing role of specialist provision and policy development to support this changing role.

Main 2018 activities

Information was collected via desk research. The information was analysed and is being used to prepare a synthesis report and a summary report, which will both be published in 2019.

At the autumn bi-annual meeting, working group discussions were organised with Agency country representatives. The aim was to clarify issues to prioritise in phase 2 and collect input for the project's next steps.

Supporting Inclusive School Leadership

The Supporting Inclusive School Leadership (SISL) project investigates how to effectively develop and promote inclusive school-level leadership through national-, regional- and local-level policy frameworks and support mechanisms. The main target group for the project outcomes will be national-level policy-makers responsible for implementing inclusive education in schools. The project



began in 2017; it will potentially run until 2020 and be divided into two phases.

The outcomes of the project's first phase will indicate further activities in this area. Proposals for phase 2 activities will be discussed at the 2019 spring bi-annual meeting.

Main 2018 activities

The first phase of the project focused on preparing a [policy review](#) and a [literature review](#), published in late 2018. Building on the two reviews, a country survey was conducted in Agency member countries in the autumn. The project was discussed at the Agency's autumn bi-annual meeting.

In June, the project was presented in a keynote speech at a [conference on improving leadership skills, opportunities and relationships](#) in Ireland.

An article linking the SISL project with outcomes from the Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education project was prepared and submitted to the *Journal of Educational Administration* (JEA) late in the year.

Preventing School Failure: Examining the Potential of Inclusive Education Policies in Relation to the System and Individuals

This project started in 2018 and project activities will continue in 2019. The project examines the evidence to suggest that inclusive education policies have the potential to prevent school failure – both in relation to individuals and the overall system.

Its initial phase focuses on collecting and analysing information on school failure.

A synthesis report will summarise all project information into a comprehensive policy review, which will conclude by recommending preventative policy approaches to school failure.

Main 2018 activities

The main project activities started in September 2018 and include two parallel strands of desk research. The first strand focuses on existing country policy measures for preventing school failure. The second strand reviews and analyses European and international research literature regarding the prevention of school failure in relation to inclusive education. A project survey has been prepared and will be sent to Agency member countries in early 2019.

Preparing All Teachers to Effectively Include All Learners

Preparing all teachers to work with all learners in mainstream classrooms is a main priority for all Agency member countries. It is also a high policy priority identified within EU work.

This new project's overall goal is to identify the policy elements and framework that are needed to prepare all teachers to include all learners. The project will consider all policy frameworks covering all teacher professional development opportunities.

The project will focus on desk-based research. Based on the outcomes of the initial phase of work, the possibility of a phase 2 will be considered.

Main 2018 activities

The project plan was approved at the autumn bi-annual meeting. The preparatory desk research and work on a literature review began.

Additionally funded activities

The Agency conducts a number of activities funded via additional grants from the EU and other sources to complement the work included in the



main work programme. These additional activities enable the Agency to undertake work which reinforces the activities agreed by member countries within the framework of the MAWP 2014–2020.

Below are short descriptions of the main additionally funded activities that took place in 2018.

Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems

Through work with policy-makers from six Agency member countries and detailed case studies, the Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems (FPIES) project examined different approaches to educational financing.

The project ran from 2016 to 2018 and was co-funded by the European Commission’s Erasmus+ Key Action 3 ‘Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects’ framework.

The main outputs include a [synthesis report](#) and a [Policy Guidance Framework](#). The Policy Guidance Framework provides a practical [Financing Policy Self-Review Tool](#) for policy-makers to consider their financing policies and identify areas of strength and areas for development.

Main 2018 activities

Country thematic reports and country study visit reports were published on the [FPIES area](#) of the Agency website.

The synthesis report was finalised and launched at the [validation meeting](#) in Greece. The Policy Guidance Framework, a [summary report](#) and the [Project Conceptual Framework](#) were published later in the year. The self-review tool, which is part of the Policy Guidance Framework, was published separately in all Agency languages.



Image 5. FPIES validation meeting

Linked to the validation meeting, the FPIES project was presented at a seminar involving the project partner representatives, representatives from the Greek Ministry of Education and several Greek stakeholders. Together, they reflected on issues of financing inclusive education in their countries and exchanged views on the challenges faced in this regard.

A [dissemination event](#) was organised as part of the ‘[Towards a European Education Area – Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education](#)’ conference under the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The FPIES project served as an example of how the Agency can support countries in their work.

Furthermore, a number of articles based on the project findings were prepared for publication in different academic journals.

Structural Reform Support Service

The Agency is providing technical support for two activities approved within the framework of the EU SRSP. Both activities, requested by the Ministries of Education in Cyprus and Poland, are fully funded by the Commission and concern legislative changes regarding inclusive education.

The Agency’s role is to assist the respective Ministries of Education in on-



going work towards inclusive education and to help reform their special education provision to make it more efficient and inclusive and in line with European and international priorities.

The activities started in May and June, respectively, and will finish in spring 2019.

Inclusive Education in Action resource base

In 2018, the Agency took forward a joint initiative with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Inclusive Education in Action (IEA) to develop an online resource and knowledge base presenting information from around the globe on inclusive approaches to policy and practice, benefiting both policy-makers and practitioners.

The activities started in April and were completed in October 2018, with the launch of the [new IEA website](#). This work involved redeveloping the content and technical infrastructure of the previous IEA websites, as well as collecting and adding new content.



Image 6. Screenshot of the Inclusive Education in Action website

This resource base directly aligns with UNESCO's key publication *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education* (2017) and contributes to the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education.

Resources and case studies are constantly being added to the website. Countries are invited to contribute to the resource base by sending information on case studies and/or resources to the email address iea@european-agency.org

Special events and thematic seminars

In June, the Agency co-organised the conference entitled '[Towards a European Education Area – Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education](#)', under the aegis of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The conference aimed to promote the topic of inclusive education in line with the [Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching](#), adopted by EU education ministers. In the Recommendation, the Council of the EU encourages Member States to draw on the Agency's expertise as they strive for 'effective equal access to quality inclusive education for all learners'.



Image 7. Denitsa Sacheva, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Bulgaria, speaking at the 'Towards a European Education Area – Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education' conference



At the 2018 bi-annual meetings, the Agency held experience exchange sessions on topics suggested by Agency country representatives.

At the spring bi-annual meeting in Zurich, Switzerland, the sessions focused on inclusive education and migrant children, classroom practices, the role of support services, governance, professional development, the inclusion of learners with mental health issues, Article 24 of the CRPD and special classes/special schools, and policy implementation of inclusive education.

At the autumn bi-annual meeting in Vienna, Austria, the following four topics were discussed: post-compulsory provision and evaluation of services; meeting a wider range of learning needs in mainstream schools; inter-sectoral co-operation; supporting schools to be more inclusive.

Information provision

Web development

The website re-development work was finalised in 2018 and the new Agency website was launched on 5 March 2018.

The new website has an updated design and many new features. For an overview, please refer to the [news item about the new Agency website](#).

The website was further updated and developed throughout 2018. New project web areas were added and the [Easy-to-Read section](#) was updated and redesigned.

The [Agency InfoDesk](#) – a closed web area for staff, country representatives and experts – was regularly updated with information about projects, events and the bi-annual meetings. It can now be

accessed from the footer of the Agency website.

During 2018, the Agency also intensified the development work on a new platform for internal information-sharing. Based on the results of the survey of country representatives and staff in 2017, the future intranet, MyAgency, will essentially be a modern internal community website. It will enable effective, accessible and secure information-sharing for Agency staff, country representatives and experts.

Information dissemination via digital and printed media

During 2018, the Agency's online presence was promoted through [news items](#) from member countries, as well as updates on Agency events, publications and projects. The [eBulletin](#) newsletter, [YouTube](#), [SlideShare](#) and [Wikipedia](#) were additional tools for disseminating information about the Agency's activities.

A new [animation video](#) about the Agency's role and the member countries' vision for inclusive education systems was created.

Publications

In addition to the publications listed in the previous sections, the Agency produced the following publications in 2018:

- An [Analysis Framework for Mapping Inclusive Education Policies](#)
- [Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education: Reflections and Messages](#)
- The updated [Articles of Association](#).



Co-operative relationships and participation in key events

Throughout 2018, the Agency maintained co-operative relationships with the EU institutions, particularly with the European Commission, with members of the committees of the European Parliament and with Agency member countries' permanent representations in Brussels. These relationships are important to ensure visibility of and support for the Agency's work for member countries in relation to the European stated priorities for education and training.

As far as the European Commission is concerned, the Agency has been actively involved in one of its ET 2020 Working Groups (Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education). The main purpose is to analyse and compare different policy options and help prepare a new policy framework at EU level. Activities include Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) for individual countries. Peer counselling together with the Unit dealing with country analysis at the Directorate-General for Education and Culture is another form of collaborative activity.

Furthermore, the Agency has continued acting as an external body in the working group that has been set up by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion to examine issues of inclusive education in the European Schools (based in Belgium, Luxembourg and a few more countries). The working group was set up in response to criticism from the UN Committee responsible for following up on the implementation of the CRPD.

The Agency has also continued co-operating with the EU Presidencies. Thus, the Agency co-organised the conference entitled '[Towards a European Education Area – Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education](#)' under the aegis of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. This co-operation helps to raise awareness about the important issues the Agency is addressing on behalf of its member countries.



Image 8. Cor J.W. Meijer moderating the second panel of the 'Towards a European Education Area – Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education' conference

The Agency also maintained close ties with other organisations and bodies in the field of education, such as UNESCO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Thus, for instance, the new IEA website was a joint initiative with UNESCO. The director of the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) unit participated in the FPIES validation meeting to provide feedback on the Policy Guidance Framework and to collect input for the 2020 GEMR on inclusion and education.

Co-operation with these organisations adds important facets to the Agency's work and ensures that activities are mutually supportive and beneficial for member countries. This is also economically sound for countries which,



for the most part, financially support all these organisations in one way or another. The co-operative relationships also provide opportunities for sharing information about work in Agency member countries with a wider audience, as well as gaining relevant information that can be shared in member countries.

Furthermore, the Agency Chair, Director and staff participated in a range of national, European and international events to share the outcomes of the Agency's work.

Operational surveys

At regular intervals, Agency member countries are asked for their input on priorities for future Agency projects and activities. In March 2018, a survey on country priorities was circulated to RBs to get member country input for the remainder of the current MAWP running throughout 2018–2020.

The survey results were presented at the spring bi-annual meeting and priorities for new projects and activities in the MAWP were identified.

Financial review

In 2018, the Agency's basic operations were funded by the countries' membership fees and by an operating grant within the EU Erasmus+ education programme (2014–2020). The Agency received additional funding from the European Commission in support of the three-year FPIES project and two Structural Reform Support Service activities in Cyprus and Poland. Furthermore, the Agency conducted a supplementary assignment for UNESCO.

Financially, each of these organisations covered its respective assignment in full.

The Annual Accounts contain financial details for 2018.

Outlook

During 2019, the Agency will:

- finalise phase 3 of the CPRA activities, disseminate agreed country information via the [CPRA web area](#), identify countries for phase 4, begin a second complete cycle of CPRA activities and finalise the Cross-Country Analysis based on information from all countries involved in all four phases;
- complete the EASIE 2018 dataset and produce an analysis report with detailed country breakdowns of the available data;
- take forward the two new projects focusing on Preparing All Teachers to Effectively Include All Learners and Preventing School Failure: Examining the Potential of Inclusive Education Policies in Relation to the System and Individuals;
- complete the first phases of the two thematic projects focusing on Supporting Inclusive School Leadership and The Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education and make proposals for extended project work;
- publish the [FPIES final summary report](#) in all Agency languages and complete the final project reporting to the European Commission;



- provide technical support to the Ministries of Education in Cyprus and Poland within the SRSP framework, assisting them in on-going work towards inclusive education, and help them reform their special education provision to increase efficiency, inclusiveness and alignment with European and international priorities. The Agency will also begin work with the Czech Republic and Greece within the SRSP framework;
- take forward the work on an internal platform that will enable effective, accessible and secure information-sharing for Agency staff, country representatives and experts;
- work with member countries to agree how best to take forward the proposals they presented and discussed at the reflections meeting on the Agency's future role and work. This meeting was organised in response to the *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching* that encourages Member States to draw on the Agency's expertise as they strive for 'effective equal access to quality inclusive education for all learners'.



Image 9. Young people

