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# Annual Report 2019



**EUROPEAN AGENCY**  
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

**European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education**



## FACT SHEET FOR 2019

### THE AGENCY

Full legal name	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Head Office	Østre Stationsvej 33 5000 Odense C, Denmark Tel.: +45 64 41 00 20 <a href="mailto:secretariat@european-agency.org">secretariat@european-agency.org</a>
Brussels Office (Centre of activities)	21 Rue Montoyer 1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel.: +32 2 213 62 80 <a href="mailto:brussels.office@european-agency.org">brussels.office@european-agency.org</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.european-agency.org">www.european-agency.org</a>
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).
Main sources of finance	Member country contributions European Union Institutions



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## Preface

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For the Agency, 2019 was a milestone year with significant developments that will shape its work over the next decade.

We prepared to begin a second cycle of the Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA) work. This provides countries with a reflection on their policy frameworks for inclusive education. We also prepared to move from biennial to annual data collection for the European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE). The member countries approved phase 2 activities for the thematic projects on Supporting Inclusive School Leadership (SISL) and the Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education (CROSP).

We also took forward Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) activities in four member countries. With SRSP funding, the Agency provided technical support to help the ministries of education to design reforms that make their education policy and provision more equitable and inclusive. In some countries, this involves developing new laws and the regulations for implementing them. This is another important step towards the Agency achieving its goal of being an agent for change and helping its member countries to implement their inclusive education policies.

In the autumn, we held a second reflections seminar with the Representative Board to discuss the Agency's future role and work. One of the agreements reached was to re-visit the Agency's Key Principles work as a basis for planning longer-term work. All Agency projects and outputs since the last Key Principles publication will be mapped. This will help to identify recurring

messages and find 'gaps' in recent work's overall coverage of the inclusive education system. Recurring messages will help to identify new key principles or validate existing ones. Gaps will serve as the basis for identifying possible content areas for new activities in the next Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAWP), running from 2021 to 2027.

In this report, you will find information about our work in 2019 and our plans for 2020. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all country representatives, experts and staff for their contributions to our work in the areas of policy, practice and research during 2019.

There is no doubt that the corona crisis will affect our plans for 2020. We will demonstrate the highest possible degree of flexibility and do everything in our power to show consideration for everybody involved in our activities.



**Image 1. Ana Magraner, Chair**



**Image 2. Cor J.W. Meijer, Director**



## Board meetings

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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 National Co-ordinators (NCs) met twice at bi-annual meetings, in May (Sweden) and November (Hungary), to review the work on current themes and projects, and discuss and decide on plans for future work. At the November meeting, the Representative Board elected three new Management Board members for 2020–2022.



Image 3. [Opening speech by Anna Ekström, Swedish Minister for Education, to spring bi-annual meeting participants in Sweden](#)

## Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA)

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

The CPRA work builds on:

- general recommendations developed in Agency projects and how they apply to European policy

goals for Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) work;

- how these general recommendations are being applied within individual country situations.

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](#).

The phase 3 country grids were finalised in 2019. The finalised grids from phases 1, 2 and 3 are available on the [CPRA web area](#).

Phase 4 is the last of cycle one and has three participating countries: Belgium (Flemish community), Netherlands and Germany covering the Land of Hessen. It began at the spring bi-annual meeting in May 2019 and will be completed in 2020.

## European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE)

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The Agency's biennial data collection exercise, EASIE, aims to provide clearly focused data that informs policy developments for inclusive education, in line with the European Commission's ET 2020 strategic objectives and the implementation of Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD – 2006).

At the bi-annual meeting in May 2019, it was agreed to undertake annual EASIE data collection from 2020 onwards. Since then, the work has focused on initial preparations for the new ways of working and on finalising the 2018 dataset



outputs. Furthermore, as a result of the 2018 workshop with the nominated country data experts, the team conducted background desk research exploring data availability on learners who are out of education. In autumn 2019, a survey was circulated to countries to look at this issue.

In June, the [EASIE 2018](#) data tables and country background information for the 2016/2017 school year were published on the Agency website.

Preparation for the 2020 data collection took place at the EASIE data experts' workshop in autumn 2019.

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

## Thematic project work

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All Agency projects directly or indirectly support the agreed European Union (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 2019.

### **Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education**

The three-year Raising Achievement 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.

#### *Main 2019 activities*

The project ended in 2017. In early 2019, a [follow-up study](#) was completed. It assessed the longer-term impact on the three learning communities – in Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom (Scotland) – that were involved in the project. All project outputs can be found on the [Raising Achievement web area](#).

### **Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education (CROSP)**

The [CROSP project](#) focuses on the re-organisation of specialist provision to support the right to inclusive education for all learners. The project started in 2017 and has two phases.

Phase 1 covered 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. It identified four main issues related to funding policies, governance, capacity building and quality assurance mechanisms, that are considered vital to improve specialist provision's role as a resource for supporting mainstream education.

Phase 2 focuses on these four issues, and on identifying critical factors and key drivers, using a peer learning approach. It aims to enable member countries to develop more effective strategies for improving the role of specialist provision for inclusive education.

The phase 2 activities started in mid-2019 and will run until mid-2021.

#### *Main 2019 activities*

The outcome of phase 1 is the [CROSP synthesis report](#), which was published in late 2019. It describes the situation and trends in Agency member countries in relation to specialist provision. The report



findings provide the basis for further analysis during phase 2.

In a scoping meeting linked to the autumn 2019 bi-annual meeting, Agency member countries agreed the phase 2 aims and methodology.



Image 4. CROSP synthesis report cover

### Supporting Inclusive School Leadership (SISL)

The [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 is policy-makers responsible for implementing inclusive education in schools.

The project has two phases. Phase 1 began in 2017 and phase 2 began in late 2019.

#### *Main 2019 activities*

Phase 2 of the project was approved at the spring 2019 bi-annual meeting. The [SISL synthesis report](#), which forms the basis for phase 2 project activities, was published in late 2019. It investigates how to develop and promote inclusive school-level leadership through national-, regional- and local-level policy frameworks and support mechanisms.

In summer 2019, an article for a special issue of the *Journal of Educational Administration* (JEA) was submitted. The issue will be published in early 2020.

### Preventing School Failure: Examining the Potential of Inclusive Education Policies at System and Individual Levels (PSF)

The [PSF project](#) started in 2018 and project activities will continue into early 2020. 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.

The main target group for the project outcomes is national- and regional-level education policy-makers.

#### *Main 2019 activities*

The [PSF literature review](#) was completed. It gives an overview of European and international research on preventing school failure in relation to inclusive education. It identifies ways that inclusive education can prevent school failure.

The [PSF synthesis report](#) was completed in late 2019. It summarises all project information (wider policy framework, findings from the literature review and country information) into a comprehensive policy review. The report concludes by recommending key policy actions to prevent school failure.

The emerging project findings were presented at the autumn 2019 bi-annual meeting.

### Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion (TPL4I)

The [TPL4I project](#), started in autumn 2018. The project aims to identify the policy elements and framework needed to prepare all teachers to include all learners. It focuses on teacher



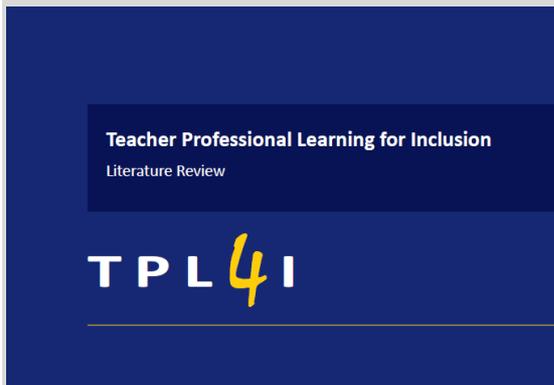
professional learning (TPL) policies, covering initial teacher education (ITE), induction, continuing professional development (CPD) and teacher educators' learning.

The project will:

- examine policy priorities for TPL at international, EU, national and regional levels;
- systematically map country policies for teacher education (ITE and CPD);
- identify policy priorities for teacher education that should be considered at national and European levels.

#### *Main 2019 activities*

The [TPL4I literature review](#) and [policy self-review tool](#) were published in autumn 2019.



**Image 5. TPL4I literature review cover**

The literature review identified key areas. These key areas were the basis for developing the policy self-review tool. The tool was used to collect information on Agency member countries' policies for TPL.

Policy-makers can use the self-review tool to review policy on teacher professional learning for inclusion.

The project's initial findings were presented at the autumn bi-annual meeting.

#### **Mapping analysis and Key Principles**

This activity will build upon previous Key Principles work. All Agency projects and outputs since the last Key Principles publication ([Key Principles for Practice, 2011](#)) will be mapped. This will help to identify recurring messages and find 'gaps' in recent work's overall coverage of the inclusive education system. Recurring messages will help to identify new key principles or validate existing ones. Gaps will serve to identify possible content areas for new activities in the MAWP 2021–2027.

#### *Main 2019 activities*

Preparations for the initial mapping work started in autumn 2019, based on the discussions at the RB reflections seminar in November 2019. Initial findings will be presented to country representatives in 2020.

#### **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 that 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 2019.



## Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems (FPIES)

The [FPIES project](#) ran from 2016 to 2018, with a reporting phase in the first four months of 2019. It was co-funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ Key Action 3 'Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects' framework.

Through work with policy-makers from six Agency member countries and detailed case studies, the project examined different approaches to educational financing. The main outputs include the [FPIES synthesis report](#) and a [Policy Guidance Framework](#). The outputs aim to guide further policy developments for inclusive education in European countries. All project outputs are available on the [FPIES web area](#).

### Main 2019 activities

In 2019, additional academic papers were published:

- A paper on financing special needs education and inclusive education was published in the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (special edition for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Salamanca Statement).
- A chapter on financing inclusive education systems for a SAGE handbook was published. It is based on findings from both FPIES and the [Mapping Country Systems for Inclusive Education](#) project.

The final administrative report, including the compulsory audit results to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), was submitted in late April 2019.

The final project evaluation was received, with very positive remarks from the evaluators. They stress that the FPIES

project outputs have the potential to be useful to policy-makers across Europe.

## Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP)

The Agency is currently engaged in SRSP activities in four countries: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece and Poland. The activities are fully funded by the SRSP. The Agency acts as a technical provider to help the ministries of education to design reforms that make their education policy and provisions more equitable and inclusive. The Agency has set up special teams for this work, which is demand-based and tailor-made for the individual countries.

The work with Cyprus and Poland started in 2018. Phase 1 activities were completed in summer and spring 2019, respectively. Phase 2 activities began in summer 2019 and will run into 2021.

In Cyprus, the main task is to assist the Ministry of Education in preparing a new law and its regulations to support the implementation of a reform on inclusive education. The new law was drafted with the Agency's support during phase 1. Phase 2 has included a kick-off meeting in Cyprus and study visits to Portugal.

In Poland, the objective is to work with the Ministry of Education and its stakeholders to develop the conceptual framework – assumptions – for a new legislative framework for inclusive education. Phase 2 began with mapping and analysis activities carried out throughout autumn 2019.

The work with the Czech Republic and Greece started in summer 2019 and will run into 2021.

In the Czech Republic, the focus is on addressing regional disparities in the education system. The Agency will



support the implementation of measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in two regions that have high disparities in educational outcomes for learners compared to the rest of the country. Activities included a kick-off meeting in late August and the identification and agreement of standards that will be used for the analysis work.

In Greece, the main objective is to help develop and implement a new law introduced in 2018. The new law centres on the role of the support structures and their co-operation with mainstream schools. The action started in late June 2019. There was a kick-off meeting in July and workshops with relevant stakeholders in Athens in September and in Thessaloniki in October. Both workshops served to inform stakeholders and discuss the required changes for implementing the new law.

### **Global Education Monitoring Report**

The [Global Education Monitoring \(GEM\) Report](#) is an editorially independent, evidence-based annual report hosted and published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The annual GEM Reports assess progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on education and its 10 targets, as well as related education targets in the SDG agenda.

The [2020 GEM Report](#) will focus on inclusion and education. To accompany the global report, a number of regional reports are being commissioned.

During summer 2019, the Agency was represented in the UNESCO expert group on the 2020 GEM Report. The Agency has been contracted to work on one of the regional reports in partnership with

UNESCO-GEMR and the [Network of Education Policy Centers](#). This report will cover the UNESCO region of Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The activities started in autumn 2019. They involve collecting background information from the 11 Agency member countries covered in the regional report, analysing the information and drafting analytical papers (report chapters) on key topics for inclusive education for all 31 countries included in the regional report. The analytical papers will serve as the basis for preparing the final report, due for publication in late 2020.

### **Special events and thematic seminars**

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At the spring 2019 bi-annual meeting in Sweden, the Agency held experience exchange sessions on topics suggested by Agency country representatives. The sessions focused on recent policy developments in inclusive education, inclusive education in practice, mainstream and special provision, accountability, monitoring and intersectoral co-operation, moving from segregated provision to an inclusive school system, inclusion and various categories (autism, gifted, moderate and severe disabilities, refugee children) and co-operation between mainstream schools (school clusters).

Linked to the autumn bi-annual meeting in Hungary, a scoping meeting for the CROSP project was held. The Agency member countries discussed the aims and methodology for phase 2 of the project.



**Image 6. The Agency Director and the CROSP team presenting at the autumn bi-annual meeting in Hungary**

Furthermore, the Agency met the NCs to explore how they can collaborate with countries to improve overall information dissemination in member countries.

## Information provision

### News and social media

The [News section](#) is the most frequently updated area of the Agency website. It serves to promote Agency work in general and share specific updates about developments in member countries, events, publications and projects. In 2019, the Agency published 47 news items.

Thanks to a more dynamic website, the number of overall visits to the Agency website grew considerably in 2019, reaching an all-time high.

As an extension of the News section, the Agency [eBulletin](#) delivered Agency and country updates to subscribers. Four issues of the eBulletin were sent during 2019 to over 1,800 recipients. Over 90 people subscribed to it over the year.

The Agency's first [animation video](#), which presents its vision for inclusive education systems, has had over 3,300 views on YouTube since its initial release.

The Agency created a second animation video in 2019, entitled '[Fostering Collaboration for Inclusive Education](#)'. It offers insight into the Agency's role as a platform for collaboration and peer learning in the field of inclusive education. Subtitles for both animation videos are available in all 25 Agency languages.



**Image 7. Animation video: 'Fostering Collaboration for Inclusive Education'**

A video of the [Agency Director's speech](#) at the [UNESCO International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education](#) is available on the Agency website. A video of the [Swedish Minister for Education's opening speech](#) at the spring 2019 bi-annual meeting was also added to the website.

The Agency's [Wikipedia article](#) is continuously updated and links to Agency activities. This helps to grow the Agency's online presence.

### Website and MyAgency

In 2019, the Agency selected a new Accessibility and Translation tool to enhance its website. This tool, called Recite Me, replaces the existing accessibility toolbar. It includes new features, such as the ability to play and download text-to-speech audio and read with a ruler or screen mask. Recite Me's real-time translation function



automatically translates website content, including PDFs, into many languages. A pop-up disclaimer warns users about possible inaccuracies in automated translations.

The [Agency website](#) was further updated and developed during 2019, with a special focus on Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). Four new [project web areas](#) were added, as well as a new [publications listing](#). This listing enables search engines to discover Agency materials more easily. It also makes publications more visible to a wider audience on platforms like Google Scholar.

In 2019, the Agency launched a new platform for internal information-sharing, [MyAgency](#), which has now replaced the InfoDesk. Based on the results of the survey of country representatives and staff in 2017, this new intranet was designed as a modern internal community website. It enables effective, accessible and secure information-sharing for Agency staff, country representatives and experts.

A final accessibility test with external users with special needs was conducted in September 2019. Improvements to MyAgency's accessibility and usability were made based on the generally positive feedback.

In September, RBs and NCs were invited to access a specific part of MyAgency for the first time. This area contained information on the autumn bi-annual meeting in Hungary. At the meeting, MyAgency was formally launched for country representatives and they were invited to access the entire platform. Since then, MyAgency has been updated regularly with resources and information about projects, publications and meetings.

## Publications

This is the full list of Agency publications from 2019:

- [Inclusive School Leadership: Exploring Policies across Europe](#)
- [Preventing School Failure: Examining the Potential of Inclusive Education Policies at System and Individual Levels](#)
- [Preventing School Failure: A Review of the Literature](#)
- [Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education: Mapping Specialist Provision Approaches in European Countries](#)
- [Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion: Literature Review](#)
- [Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion: Policy Self-Review Tool](#)
- [Legislation Updates 2019](#)
- [Raising the Achievement of All Learners in Inclusive Education: Follow-up Study](#)
- [Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems: Final Evaluation Report](#)
- [CPRA phase 3 country grids](#)
- EASIE 2018 individual country reports.

Also during 2019, the [Publications Order Form](#) was updated and over 50 new terms and operational definitions were added to the [glossary of key terms](#) on the Agency website.

Finally, the Agency developed a new digital infographic, entitled '[Inclusive Education Across Europe](#)' (see image 9). It summarises how and why legislation, practice and policy contribute to the Agency's vision for inclusive education



systems. It is available to view and to download as an accessible PDF on the Agency website.

## **Co-operative relationships and participation in key events**

Throughout 2019, 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 Common Values and Inclusive Education). The main purpose is to analyse and exchange different policy options. 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 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 United Nations Committee responsible for following up on the implementation of the UNCRPD.

The Agency also maintained close ties with other organisations and bodies in the field of education, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO. The Agency's work on the 2020 GEM Report and the regional report covering the UNESCO region of Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia is one example of its close co-operation with UNESCO.

Co-operation with these organisations adds important facets to the Agency's work. It 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 provide opportunities for sharing information about work in Agency member countries with a wider audience, and for 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.



**Image 8. Cor J.W. Meijer, Agency Director, speaking at the UNESCO International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education, in Cali, Colombia**



## Financial review

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In 2019, 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's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support for four SRSP activities – in Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece and Poland. Furthermore, the Agency conducted a supplementary assignment for UNESCO. Each organisation financed its respective assignment in full.

Furthermore, in 2019, the Agency finalised the accounts for its two additionally funded projects, FPIES and ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning (ICT4IAL).

The Annual Accounts contain financial details for 2019.

## Outlook

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During 2020, the Agency will:

- Finalise phase 4 of CPRA, disseminate agreed country information via the dedicated [CPRA web area](#), finalise the cross-country analysis covering all 23 participating countries and prepare for a second complete cycle of CPRA.
- Move to annual [EASIE](#) data collection and publish desk research findings on the issue of data on learners who are out of education.
- Take forward [CROSP](#) phase 2 activities using a peer learning approach that will include thematic workshops with policy-makers from Agency member countries.
- Take forward [SISL](#) phase 2 activities to develop a policy framework, which will support inclusive school leadership, and a self-review tool, which will be piloted within the participating country cluster.
- Develop a final summary report for the [PSF project](#) that will include recommendations for preventive policy approaches to school failure.
- Analyse the information provided in the country grids developed in 2019 for the [TPL4I project](#), prepare the project outputs, present the main findings to country representatives and decide on a possible phase 2 and its potential focus.



- Provide technical support to the ministries of education in Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece and Poland within the framework of the European Commission's SRSP. The support is demand-based and tailor-made for the individual countries. The European Commission fully funds the activities.
- Continue work on the regional report accompanying the UNESCO GEM Report. This involves collecting background information from the 11 Agency member countries covered in the regional report, and preparing analytical papers on key topics for inclusive education that will serve as the basis for preparing the final report. UNESCO is funding the work in full.
- Establish a working group of RBs and staff to prepare the next Key Principles publication.
- Prepare the framework for the Agency's next seven-year Multi-Annual Work Programme, running from 2021 to 2027, on the basis of the Agency mapping activity.



Image 9. 'Inclusive Education Across Europe' infographic



