



ORGANISATION OF PROVISION TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

SYNTHESIS OF COUNTRY INFORMATION

The Organisation of Provision (OoP) project, conducted by the Agency from 2011-2013 has examined a range of issues relating to provision made in mainstream settings for learners considered to have disabilities (under the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) 2006). In Autumn 2013 five thematic seminars will be held in:

- Ljubljana, Slovenia - to look at the developing role of special schools to provide a resource to mainstream schools;
- Flensburg, Germany - to investigate collaboration and networking to support the needs of learners with disabilities;
- Valetta, Malta - to study school support and roles of personnel in schools and communities;
- Gothenburg, Sweden - to explore ways to strengthen the capacity of mainstream schools;
- Vienna, Austria - to look at collaborative approaches to quality management.

The seminars will give participants the opportunity to reflect on examples of practice and examine project findings, together with colleagues.

This paper provides a summary of information about policy and practice in member countries drawn from project country surveys and study visits. It highlights key issues for a number of areas of policy and practice and will be used, in whole or in part, to stimulate discussion and frame relevant questions, examples of which are included at the end of each numbered section.

1. Introduction

The conceptual framework for the Organisation of Provision (OoP) project recognises that in order to make progress towards a rights-based approach to learners with disabilities countries need to move from organising provision in terms of individual support (often based on a medical diagnosis) to analysing how systems are organised to support mainstream schools to meet the needs - and fulfil the rights - of all learners. The inclusion process therefore focuses on building the capacity of mainstream schools to cater for learner diversity rather than distributing additional resources to meet the needs of selected groups. According to the Index for Inclusion (2002): 'Support is considered as those activities which increase the capacity of a school to respond to student diversity' (p9). All support should be provided in a single framework and seen from the perspective of learners and their development rather than in terms of school or local authority/municipality administrative structures.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) is providing a stimulus for change and at EU level, Article 26 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) provides a guiding principle for EU legislative and policy measures to support the full inclusion of children with disabilities. This is reflected in the Disability Strategy (2010-2020) that states clearly that children with disabilities need to be integrated into the general education system and provided with individual support. The



Disability Strategy commits the EU to support, through the Educational and Training 2020 programme, the efforts of the Member States to remove legal and organisational barriers to people with disabilities entering the general education and lifelong learning systems and to guarantee them inclusive education and personalised training at all levels of education. A focus by Member States on the ET 2020 strategic objectives 2 and 3 - improving the quality and efficiency of education and training and promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship - should also help to ensure the engagement and full participation of vulnerable learners in the education process.

In considering what changes are needed to develop such inclusive provision, the Agency work on Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education (2009a) sets out 6 inter-connected areas needed to widen participation and increase educational opportunity for all learners: education and training in inclusive education for all teachers; organisational culture and ethos that promotes inclusion along with support structures, flexible resource systems and policies and legislation.

Regarding inclusive practice, later Agency work (2011) set out the need to: respond to learners' voices; encourage active participation and develop positive teacher attitudes, effective teacher skills, visionary leadership and coherent interdisciplinary services.

The Organisation of Provision project has explored a number of these issues paying particular attention to systems of support for learners considered to have disabilities (using the UNCRPD definition). The sections below provide a synthesis of relevant country information gathered through project activities.

2. Legislation and policy

Out of 29 Agency member countries participating in the OoP project over half have undergone significant changes in recent years. The majority of countries place increasing emphasis on the legal entitlement of all learners to attend mainstream school, while a smaller number give parents the right to choose schools for their children with special educational needs /disabilities. Other countries such as Cyprus, Germany and Ireland refer to education being provided in the 'most appropriate setting' or to learners receiving education 'appropriate to their needs and abilities'.

Legislation regarding the education of learners with SEN/disability has generally been developed separately from mainstream legislation. It may, however be part of general legislation and in some countries, equality legislation (e.g. Belgium, Flemish Community, France, Iceland, Ireland, UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and developments occurring in response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 (UNCRPD) are beginning to bring about a change in thinking. In other countries, such as Sweden, more emphasis is placed on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Overall, legislation in countries is often not consistent with these two conventions. This can result in fragmented or overlapping legislation which may be poorly co-ordinated and 'sectoral' so that laws directed at the rights of people with disabilities do not sufficiently address needs of children and those addressed to children do not adequately cover disability.

Only a minority of countries have made reference to the UNCRPD (or the UNCRC) in the OoP project questionnaire. Those that do, appear to be moving towards a rights-based approach, setting out the learners' right to support (for example Czech Republic, Estonia).



In a growing number of countries, the emphasis is placed on early intervention. In Poland, the new systemic changes from 2010 focus on early intervention with support provided as close to learners and as early as possible. It is now the duty of every teacher to identify needs and to work together with specialists.

In Finland, general support is seen as part of the mainstream system. A 'continuum' of support moves from general to intensified, then special. Austria is moving to a similar three level system of support and in Denmark, in recognition of the diversity that exists as a part of any classroom, 9 hours of support can be provided before learners are considered to need 'special education'.

Other countries, such as Ireland, emphasise 'providing for diversity' and set out duties and responsibilities of local education administrations, schools etc., sometimes stating that special needs education should be provided by all compulsory schools/programmes. Norway requires 'education of equal quality, adapted to the circumstances and abilities of each child'. In Sweden, schools are open to all and the Särskola (a programme for learners with intellectual disabilities) is increasingly incorporated into the mainstream school, although it may take the form of separate provision.

In Italy, all education legislation aims to take account of and protect the rights of the full range of learners, reducing the need for separate or bolt on measures to address the education –and rights - of learners with SEN and disability.

In the UK (England), equality legislation focuses on the duty not to discriminate and also the need to provide auxiliary aids and services as part of 'reasonable adjustments'. The law requires local authorities and schools to plan strategically to improve access to buildings and curriculum and information.

Reyes (2011) sees education as a second generation human right requiring support, assistant personnel and resources. However, it is widely recognised that enshrining the right to support services in any legal framework remains a challenge. During the project visit to Slovenia, one parent, talking about the right to choose a mainstream schools said : 'this is not the right right'. What is needed, she felt is the implementation of the right to support and to resources - a focus on quality of support rather than the quantity.

Positive steps being taken by countries to facilitate such an approach include:

- Retaining specialist skills and knowledge and providing support to mainstream schools through resource centres (often former special schools) and centres of expertise;
- Recognising the support needs of many learners in mainstream education (without focusing on impairment/SEN) to provide early intervention and overcome any temporary barriers to learning. This allows resources to be used more effectively to provide on-going support for learners with more complex support needs.
- Educating all learners on one site – aiming to create flexible learning communities with the capacity to meet a range of support needs (and linking with a range of local services);
- Educating teachers and school leaders to develop competence to work in inclusive settings;
- Working with parents to re-assure them regarding the quality of support in mainstream (as opposed to specialist) settings and the benefits of mainstream education;
- Ensuring that support continues through the transition from school into further/higher education, training and employment.



In summary, both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 23(3), 28 and 29 (1a)) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24) should be considered to ensure that both age and disability dimensions are considered as countries move on from debating the meaning of inclusion to a focus on a whole education system that leads to a more equitable and just society.

Discussion points

- ***Is the right to mainstream education the ‘right’ right or should more attention be paid to the right to support to enable participation (for example through an appropriate curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, school organisation and resources)?***
- ***How can other parts of the Conventions (for example non-discrimination; respect for the best interests of the child; the right to participate in the community/society; the right to express a view and the right to assistance) be used to develop quality systems of support?***

3. The changing role of special schools

In a number of countries (12 out of 29), there have been moves towards developing the role of special schools into resource centres. This includes Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, some German Länder, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden. In a further group of countries (Belgium Flemish Community, Cyprus, France, Poland, UK (England, Northern Ireland and Wales) special schools are developing closer links with mainstream schools. Other countries for example Estonia and Ireland are now making plans to reform their special schools. However, most countries continue to invest a significant amount of resources in special schools.

A number of countries (Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden) are developing networks of regional centres of expertise. In Latvia, an European Social Fund project has supported the development of a support system for learners with disabilities through 8 regional support centres. Here, specialists provide individual and institutional support, co-ordinate work with parents, support teachers, for example in the development of IEPs and provide assessments and recommendations. The project continues until 2020. In the Slovak Republic, special schools have been also developed into special education counselling centres and resource centres.

In Slovenia, a specialist Institute for the Blind visited as part of the project has been developed into a resource centre, providing outreach services to support learners in mainstream schools and also supplying adapted resources and retaining specialist provision for learners with more complex needs.

In 2008, Portugal established a national network of 74 Resource Centres for Inclusion (CRI) through a formal accreditation process. These centres provide specialised resources to mainstream schools, following the recognition that a parallel system of education often leads to social exclusion. Around 45 special schools have closed and a recent evaluation that looked at the impact of support, quality of education, student grades and the process of preparing for life after school was positive. These developments, although in line with



the UNCRPD required awareness raising for some parents and educators to ensure support for the changes.

As evidenced in the project visit reports, in Vienna, Austria, a special school became a mainstream school, popular for its learner centred practice and the development of a 'learning space for all'. In Flensburg, Germany, learners in regular school are supported through effective collaboration between a group of schools.

In UK (Northern Ireland), a project supported mainstream and special schools to work together on specific curriculum projects and showed that this can be effective in changing attitudes and sharing expertise – also giving learners from special schools access to wider curriculum areas and specialist resources as well as peer support and social experiences.

Malta has also moved to change special schools to resource centres. As special school numbers decreased some challenges became evident: special schools had to cater for a wide range of ages and levels across a small number of pupils, putting a strain on specialisation in the curriculum. Such schools also failed to provide appropriate experience for different phases of education, as some learners attended the same school from primary through to secondary and possibly beyond. Maintaining special schools while placing increasing numbers of learners in mainstream schools also required replication of resources and lead to insufficient opportunities for staff to share practice. Special schools in Malta have therefore been developed into resource centres to provide a range of services, including support to mainstream schools.

Overall, the number of special schools appears to be decreasing in most countries, although in a few, the number of learners attending special schools is increasing (often for particular groups of learners such as those with social, emotional and behavioural needs and very complex disabilities). In a small number of countries the number of special schools is rising due to increased demand and the need for support from additional services (in particular social services) in times of austerity.

There are, therefore many examples of special schools becoming part of a local area inclusion 'process', working along the range of flexible continua to help create better opportunities more closely linked to the mainstream sector as suggested by Norwich and Gray (2007). In the current financial climate, allocating funding to parallel systems, even in the short term is an unlikely option. Skilling up teachers through collaborative working, with input from voluntary organisations and other agencies in the local community can be more cost effective, with the added benefit of greater coherence of services around learners and families. (See information on funding in section 6 of this report).

Discussion points

- ***What are the first steps in moving towards a resource centre model? What steps may be necessary to bring teachers and parents 'on board?'***
- ***How can resource centres/centres of expertise best work to empower and develop the capacity of mainstream schools?***
- ***What professional development is needed for former special (school) teachers moving to a new role?***
- ***How can expertise be retained (e.g. for learners with more complex support needs) while resources are increasingly used for mainstream support?***



4. Organisation of Provision in mainstream settings

The Organisation of Provision project considers that 'provision' includes teaching approaches, curriculum, assessment, organisation and management and resources. The first three of these are presented in this section.

Teaching approaches

The types of support for learning provided to learners with disabilities in mainstream settings are similar across the majority of member countries. These include additional teaching time, small group/individual coaching and teaching/support from a learning support assistant. Team teaching or co-teaching (pairing a mainstream subject teacher with a teacher who has a SEN specialism) has been introduced in a number of countries and this strategy appears to provide a number of benefits. In Essunga, Sweden for example, teachers interviewed on the project visit found this approach invaluable as a form of professional development and recognised that *'having two teachers in the classroom forces you to improve and think about what you are doing.'* Co-teaching has helped to change teacher attitudes and learners too expressed favourable opinions as they felt that everyone was able to benefit from the additional input and support.

Similarly in Flensburg and other examples from Germany, team teaching and partner classes are used to good effect with an emphasis on reflection, teamwork and communication. Staff teams accept that they are responsible for all learners in the class. In the Czech Republic, efforts have been made to increase the number of specialist teachers and psychologists working in mainstream schools and in Greece, despite a lack of resources, kindergarten staff in some areas have managed through collaborative approaches, to create rich learning environments for learners with and without disabilities.

Collaborative approaches within the schools visited extend beyond teaching staff to professionals from a range of disciplines working together, for example special education teachers, counsellors, coaches, health professionals and social workers who form a 'network' around any learners in need of support. Such systems increase the likelihood of the need for support being identified - and addressed - as early as possible.

Other forms of support for learners include communication support (for example sign, Braille, symbols) often together with specialist aids/equipment and input from specialist/mobile teachers. Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are also used in many countries. The visit to Malta showed that the deployment of assistants requires careful management. Here, LSAs are provided with training and also do not support individuals for longer than 2 years to avoid learners becoming dependent. Increasingly, LSAs see their role as part of a team, working to support all learners in the classroom, not exclusively learners with disabilities. It is important that this resource is used flexibly. In Belgium (French Community) such support is arranged for learners for 'short periods of crisis'.

In the majority of countries, some form of individual education/support/learning plan is in place and although the names given to these vary, the function is broadly the same. Countries may make reference to pedagogical support, personalisation and attention to the learning environment and the co-ordination of all services involved with the learner. Such plans are considered to be of particular importance at times of transition between phases of education. Careful management is required to ensure that individual plans do



not lead to an emphasis on 'individual' teaching or a narrower curriculum and that they support an effective use of resources by guiding support which is an integral part of classroom life. As Norwich and Lewis (2001) state, they should not imply that learners require a 'different educational diet'.

As schools strive to improve the basic education that they offer, a certain level of support is considered the norm for all learners at different times during their education. In Sweden and Germany for example, structure is used to enhance the use of time and ensure that all learners understand what is expected of them. In Vienna, the school visited provided coaching in study methods and supported learners to engage in more active learning - a method was also found to benefit all learners. In Estonia, 18 study counselling centres have been set up to support pupils, teachers and parents in organising the education of learners with special educational needs.

In Hungary, the importance of maintaining high expectations is noted with effective practice seen as giving each student what he or she needs - not reducing the learning objectives. Here, individualised attention can help to consolidate the learning process.

However, when learners require a higher level of support and maybe differentiated resources and tasks, the following quote from the RA4AL synthesis report should be kept in mind: *The process of differentiation may also be associated with individualisation and personalisation and seen as a way to meet more specific individual or group needs. However, it often remains teacher-centred rather than learner-led.* (p.25). As the OoP project literature review points out, differentiation can be seen as an attempt to fit the learners into an existing system rather than contributing to the transformation of settings and routines.

Discussion points

- How are learning support assistants best deployed to provide in-class support? What training is required?
- What professional development needs should be considered when introducing co-teaching, combining subject and special education specialisms?

Curriculum

One adjustment made in a number of countries is to provide some flexibility to adapt the curriculum or reduce requirements. In Cyprus, for example, the new curriculum framework includes extra time for Embedosi (consolidation). Both country information and visits show that a focus primarily on academic achievement/national standards may present a barrier to inclusion. In countries where the curriculum is under-going reform, there is an emphasis on access to the framework of the curriculum - but also an acknowledgement that, for some learners, in particular those with intellectual disabilities, there will be a need to adapt content or even to use the curriculum areas as contexts for learning where the knowledge is not considered relevant/appropriate.

The new curriculum framework in Iceland contains 6 pillars - literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy, human rights and equality and creativity in line with the focus beyond academic skills . Curricular revisions are also underway in several other countries, aiming to increase flexibility (e.g. Belgium Flemish Community, Finland).



In some cases, time pressures created by a heavily prescribed curriculum may create further difficulties for schools as teachers may feel the need to adhere to 'traditional' methods of teaching and assessment which may not be learner-centred. In the UK (England and Wales) the National Curriculum includes an access statement that encourages teachers to draw on materials from any part of the curriculum framework to plan learning appropriate to the age and requirements of learners.

Assessment

While a number of countries are beginning to move away from using categories of need relating to different disabilities (e.g. Belgium Flemish Community, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden) this practice is still prevalent. Florian and colleagues (2006) point out that while systems of classification may vary a great deal between different countries, a medical model of disability usually underpins them and, more recently, the NESSE report (2012) notes that country systems of classification are underpinned by different conceptualisations of difference and normality. On one hand, the labelling process justifies the allocation of extra resources and ensures that reasonable adjustments are made; on the other hand, labelling may lead to 'social segregation and the development of a spoiled identity' (NESSE, 2012, p. 20). The links between classification and funding are further discussed in section 6 of this report.

In recognition of this dilemma, a range of policies are emerging. In Lithuania, the OECD (2005) cross-national categories A - Disabilities, B - Difficulties and C - Disadvantages are being introduced and some Länder in Germany now focus on needs relating to motor, perception, cognition, motivation, communication, interaction, emotion and creativity. In Italy, following a pilot of the International Classification of Functioning, this system is to be introduced into all schools.

Other countries, such as Finland, focus on individual needs along a continuum of support. In an attempt to reduce the bureaucracy surrounding a lengthy, multi-agency assessment, some countries are introducing an integrated assessment and planning process involving all agencies in the production of a co-ordinated support plan, in particular for learners with more complex needs (for example UK (Scotland and Wales). In Belgium (Flemish Community) recent research has focused on the use of Unified Plans for Support with learners with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools.

Assessment is usually by a multi-disciplinary team/specialist centre, often working with the school (and parents) in the assessment process. Such centres/teams (often working on a regional basis) provide support in terms of pedagogical advice and resources and in some countries also make placement decisions.

Assessment can often be requested by schools or by parents, who are increasingly involved in decision-making. Some countries have a staged process (Austria, Malta, U.K. (England, N.Ireland, Wales) and issue a decision or statement following a full assessment. This process can take a long time and may also include a provision for parents to appeal if they do not agree with the decision or placement recommended.

At school level, an assessment framework that informs teaching and learning and involves learners themselves (as recommended by Agency work on inclusive Assessment, 2009b) is more likely to support inclusive practice. In Vienna, the school visit report notes that the emphasis is on what learners can do, listening to learner feedback and providing comment on their work/performance rather than giving grades. Providing learners with access to a



flexible assessment framework with a common structure and principles is needed rather than a detailed or prescriptive framework that assumes that one size fits all.

For national tests and examinations, most countries operate a system of special arrangements that allows learners with disabilities to access standard papers through adapted materials (e.g. Braille/large print, use of signers, scribes etc.).

Discussion point

- How can flexibility in curriculum frameworks be introduced while maintaining high standards for all? What adaptations work well for learners (in particular those with intellectual disabilities?)
- What can be learnt from recent pilot work on new assessment systems? What action can be taken to streamline and co-ordinate assessment at national and local levels?

5. Organisation and management

This section will address in particular, leadership and the role of the local community in the organisation of support.

Leadership

Leadership is a critical factor in the provision of quality support for learners. All project visits demonstrate the importance of leadership in developing a positive school culture, respect for learners and flexible responses to diversity. In all visits, team work, distributed or 'shared' leadership and strong relationships were further success factors, together with close collaboration with parents.

Successful schools also have leaders who support professional development, for example through the use of research summaries to develop thinking and practice in Essunga, Sweden. It is important that teachers feel supported. As one Austrian teacher remarked: *"it is very important to know that there is always a person I can ask questions. I feel safe. At the same time I have learned that this school provides the space for learning for all learners."*

Effective provision for all learners also requires a clear focus on learning, recognition of all achievement (not only academic success) and, in particular systems that allow learners to express their views and influence decisions both in school and in their own learning. The creative use of resources such as through the development of networks is a further feature of inclusive leadership, noted during the project visits.

Other approaches to organising/managing provision include: making use of flexible and diverse learner groupings, extending the school day or school terms; allowing flexibility around the amount of time spent in the regular classroom and adapting the classroom environment.

Finally, there is a need for leaders to engage in self-review to be accountable to parents, learners and the local community - but not necessarily by a prescribed framework if this does not support inclusive practice. The use of data to sustain a process of on-going improvement requires the use of qualitative and quantitative information, with a focus on measuring what is really valued in terms of inclusive processes and outcomes. These issues are further explored in a separate paper on the development of project indicators.



Community level support

The Organisation of Provision project visits showed the importance to schools of receiving support from local politicians and education administrations. In Iceland, recent legislation promotes schools as 'professional organisations that can solve challenges'.

In all project visits, key personnel in the local community showed a genuine commitment to the well being of learners. The roles played by these people include questioning some assumptions about the way things had been done in the past and trusting school leaders to make decisions even if there was an element of risk involved. Strong relationships between different stakeholders in the community have led to strong networks of support around the school that have been key in bringing about change.

In Ireland, the Special Education Support Service works with schools using varied models of support. Whilst some work relies on short inputs, in-school support, accreditation pathways and projects take long-term approach to continuing professional development with a view to embedding change processes in individual schools.

Increasingly, the value of partnerships with voluntary groups who can work with schools to support learners and families is recognised. In Vienna, community resources such as drama groups and animal therapists supplement school activities and in Sweden, activities in the school leisure centre can provide additional support and extend the school day for some learners.

Multi agency services in the community need to work closely with schools - and with parents - so that support is consistent between settings. Personnel who know the child and family can provide support in education and community settings. To support a move away from a 'medical' model, services traditionally provided under health maybe based in schools or in local community centres both for ease of access and to improve communication among professionals from different disciplines. In any model, the child must be 'at the centre' of co-ordinated services who should have a role in supporting both schools and families. This was reflected in a statement made by a municipality inspector during the visit to Flensburg:

... the child with disabilities becomes the centre of the organisation of support and the services are the satellites that rotate around the learner. All the actors of the community collaborate in a continuum and meet on a regular basis to provide the best support for the children with disabilities.

In France, co-operation between medical and social services, health and education has recently been increased to share professional practice and provide greater flexibility for learners with psychological or behavioural difficulties who are provided with personalised schooling. This may involve reducing time spent in school and providing a range of other support services.

In the Netherlands school boards of all types of schools - primary, secondary, vocational and special - co-operate at a regional level to arrange educational provision for every child taking into account special educational needs. Schools also cooperate with other organisations responsible for the care and well-being of children (e.g. health, youth care, etc.) and require the participation of all stakeholders (school board, management, teachers and parents). Currently, the first pilots are underway and, depending on the outcomes and experiences within the pilots, legislation may be adapted in 2014.



Discussion point

- In what ways can school and system leaders make use of collaborative approaches in providing quality systems of support?

6. Governance and funding

Most countries receive funding for the education of learners with disabilities from central government (e.g. Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia).

In some countries, funding is devolved to local authorities or municipalities (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, UK). In others (e.g. Finland), there is a mix of central and local funding. Regarding special education, in most countries central funds are provided for additional staff, specialist equipment and transport (e.g. Austria, Sweden, Belgium (Flemish Community), Cyprus).

In the UK (England), each local authority distributes funding, in consultation with a local Schools Forum, using its locally agreed formula and school governing bodies then decide how to spend their available resources, including spending on SEN. Some money is retained centrally for support services. Schools receive additional funding for learners from lower social economic groups who receive free school meals. This 'pupil premium' is also paid for learners who are/have been looked after by local authority. In Belgium (Flemish Community) the mother's level of education is the criterion used to provide additional resources to address possible disadvantage.

For learners with disabilities, funding is usually linked to the assessment of learners and in most countries a statement or formal decision is written by a specialist/multi agency team or resource centre in order to secure additional funds.

Following assessment, most countries allocate a number of additional 'SEN hours' or Learning Support Assistant (LSA) time (e.g. Belgium (French and Flemish Communities, Cyprus, Czech Republic.) Ireland allocates a number of hours to all schools in line with teacher/pupil numbers but additional support time and LSAs may be applied for.

In Denmark, 9 hours additional support is now included in regular provision. Similarly in Finland, pedagogical assessment takes place and support is allocated as part of the regular system. To increase the 'permeability' between mainstream and special in Portugal, special funding is only for learners with autism, who are deaf/blind or who have multiple disabilities. In Sweden, an amount is allocated to schools for special education to be used at the schools discretion. In many countries, additional funding may be provided by the Municipality for aids, equipment or additional staff (LSAs). In order to support inclusion, a small number of countries reduce pupil numbers in classes where there are learners with disabilities (Estonia, Hungary, Italy).

Latvia and Lithuania, among others operate a backpack or 'pupil basket' system via municipalities. Here, funding follows learners. The country report from Austria notes that in this type 'pupil bound' system, only those with identified difficulties who meet the SEN criteria can access additional resources while others who may be in need, are unable to access support. The Netherlands who formerly had such a system in place, are now making changes with funding to regional cooperatives of schools/special centres. This system of delegation may provide greater flexibility.



A recent study conducted in Austria points out that input-oriented support - at a flat rate to schools based on the number of learners recognised as having SEN - is not sufficiently responsive as needs vary among pupils and over time. An output model is also seen as problematic as resources are withdrawn if a programme is successful. There is a need to move from a system that rewards such lack of success to a model of early support and prevention.

A further consideration is that support given to individual learners does not improve the capacity of the school system. If schools focus on the quantity rather than the quality of resources, they are unlikely to make the necessary changes to the way that mainstream systems and school staff respond to learners (Frattura and Capper, 2007).

Schools, rather than struggling with the limited 'additional' resources available for them, could develop cost-effective networks of support and professional development involving collaboration between local stakeholders and local schools/support centres (Ainscow, Muijs et al., 2006; Benoit, 2012; Ebersold, 2012). Examples of such practice were seen during the project visits as the following quotes show:

It is possible to change a school with the resources available. Chief Executive (Head of Education and Social Services, Essunga)

... it was not an issue of providing more resources to the school but to use the ones we had already got in a different way (School Principal, Flensburg).

The Agency are planning further work on this topic in 2014.

7. Concluding remarks

To quote Ebersold et al. (2011): 'Efforts towards inclusion in mainstream are mainly made for those who 'fit' within the system as it stands.' (p10) The target group for this project - learners with disabilities - may require significant support to 'fit' existing systems. However, as has been shown by the examples studied in this project, education systems and mainstream schools can be 'transformed' to meet the support needs of this group - and benefit all learners.

The benefits of inclusive practice for all learners have recently been documented in the Agency work on Raising Achievement for all Learners (See: <http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/ra4al>) and are also discussed in the OoP project literature review. It is clear that a focus on the common needs of all learners - for belonging, participation and achievement among other things - may serve as an appropriate starting point to address some of the dilemmas raised above and move forward towards a quality, inclusive education system. As one parent in Malta noted: *Society is inclusive in the sense that we are all different and we have learnt to respect each other, so it is better for children at an early age to learn to respect diversity. Inclusive classes are the best way to learn it.*

Despite most countries and the EU itself being signatories to the UNCRPD and promoting inclusive education, learners with more complex support needs, in particular those with intellectual disabilities often remain in special schools (WHO/World Bank, 2011). While parallel systems are in place, however, few systemic changes are likely and although 'ad hoc' responses to individual learners based on good will may provide examples of inclusive practice, these are unlikely to be sustainable. As stated in the visit report from Ljubljana, the right to choose a mainstream setting is not enough - learners may still be isolated and may not receive the quality support they require.



During the project visits examples of provision were seen that emphasised support for learning - for everyone. In particular these examples showed that, in schools that provide opportunities for them to participate on an equal basis, learners with disabilities can 'learn without limits' (Hart et al., 2006). As one of the itinerant teachers in Slovenia explained: 'We are working for life – not for one lesson'.

It is hoped that the discussions held at the OoP project thematic seminars will contribute to the final project report, further sharing ideas and supporting developments across member countries.

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Further information

Further information about the Organisation of Provision project can be found at:

<http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/organisation-of-provision>

This includes the project Literature Review and reports on the five site visits undertaken in spring 2013. Reports on the 5 thematic seminars will be added to the site in early 2014, followed by the project synthesis report and a practical management tool, during 2014.