Annex 1: Synthesis of feedback on the draft recommendations

This document presents the synthesis of feedback collected through Activity 2.3 Feedback on the Draft Recommendations (as described in Deliverable 5). The notes on feedback have been collated across the 4 consultation meetings and the online survey. From this collation key issues were synthesised.

These key issues are presented as general comments on structure and content and then per recommendation. Each draft recommendation is presented in full for reference.

This synthesised feedback on the recommendations was the basis for revising the Draft Recommendations (as presented in Deliverable 6) into the Final Recommendations (as present in this Deliverable, number 7).

Overall, the feedback on the draft recommendations were positive and stakeholders were in agreement with the ideas behind the recommendations. They also provided constructive feedback on how to improve the recommendations and make them clearer. There were a minority of critical comments, these have also been included in the synthesis and the number of such comments included.

It should be noted that many of the suggestions and issues raised are extremely detailed and some were beyond the remit of the final recommendations report. As far as possible, all issues have been accounted for and integrated within the final report. It is considered that many of these issues raised should be returned to and examined within future stakeholder dialogue activities.

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General comments

**Feedback on structure of the recommendations:**

1. An inclusive approach with the regions needs to be taken. Recommendations need to be general in a way that they address inclusive education across the Czech Republic but at the same time specific recommendations and support needs to be targeted at regions and struggling schools. This however should not lead to labelling of regions and schools.
2. All recommendations should clarify who they are aimed at (national, regional or school level as well as specific stakeholders) and who should be involved in related actions taken.
3. There is large support for the general (nationwide) relevance of the recommendations. However, where possible recommendations should include specifics for the two regions which they can action.
4. Priority Action – can this be cross-linked to how this supports the recommendations. If yes, it could maybe also be linked to the proposal for a mid-level-governance mechanism (see point 2 in the following section).
5. For each recommendation the underlying issue needs to be explained and the ideas need to be explained clearer.
6. National and international examples addressing issues in the recommendation should be included.

Feedback on content of the recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Education and key policy-makers need to be vocal advocates of inclusive education. This includes clear statements of what the goal of inclusive education is for the Czech Republic as well as taking a stand against discrimination and stereotyping of any kind. The recommendations need to be clearer in this as well as addressing the reality of segregation.
2. A organising body is needed that acts as the middle link between national policy and local implementation. This body needs to focus on governance issues and give guidance for implementation, support as well as monitor implementation. Such an organisation would aim to counteract the decentralisation and fragmentation in the Czech system which makes the implementation of inclusive education a challenge.
3. There is a need to stress that the actions should not be one-off projects, but long-term strategies.

Recommendation 1

The vision for inclusive education outlined in Czech legislation and policy takes a rights-based approach and aims to ensure that every learner has access to high-quality inclusive education and social inclusion. However, policy implementation in the Czech Republic must ensure that vision is clearly and consistently communicated to all stakeholders across all system levels (national, regional, local and school)

Issues raised through feedback

* Ministry(ies) must vocal be advocates for inclusion and against discrimination and stereotypes.
* Address that politics are instrumentalised, meaning that being against or for inclusion becomes a political instrument.
* Address how to communicate the understanding of inclusion to regions, stakeholders and wider public.
* Clarity of the direction in which the state is heading. Stress inclusion as quality education for ALL, where all benefit and that support is not limited to certain vulnerable learners but to all learners in need of support. It is about individualised approach to each pupil in order for them to reach their educational potential.
* Address that inclusion was introduced without prior preparation of stakeholders.

Recommendation 2

There should be a comprehensive and long-term programme of awareness raising within wider society linked to stakeholder dialogue activities across systems levels that ensures the vision and goals for inclusive education are clearly communicated and understood by national, regional, local and school level stakeholders

Issues raised through feedback

* Recommendations should be communicated to school level.
* Emphasise that all teachers/staff have a shared responsibility for all learners.
* Emphasise that the support for some only gives them a similar starting line, but doesn’t mean others are not left behind.
* Emphasise the need for information for parents.
* Clarity on what is meant by vulnerable learners.
* Emphasise the need for a society wide agreement against discrimination and segregation. „We must talk about including Roma into society and treat them as citizens.“ This goal needs to be visibly communicated from the national level.
* Address the need for backup and support for teachers, school staff and school leaders to position themselves for inclusive education to strengthen them against political forces against inclusion and explain themselves to parents and families.
* Share examples from other countries on campaigns or activities to fight discrimination and stereotypes and fight for the inclusive vision.
* Extend the stakeholder group to include public, private and non-profit sectors.
* Stress that inclusive education is not just a ‘wish’ from national level but a process that must permeate all of society. This must include early childhood education, support for families and the social sector must be on board.

Recommendation 3

National and regional level dialogue activities should lead to the development of agreed operational definitions around key concepts such as access, participation, engagement and achievement in schools.

Issues raised through feedback

* Add examples of how this was successfully implemented in other systems.
* Emphasise need for multi-sectoral approach also in the regions.
* Address loss of labour force/power if not all learners complete their education successfully.
* Emphasise the need for intensified stakeholder discussions (include other essential actors: pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, school management, municipality social services and employers).
* Add concrete proposals for an operational definition.

Recommendation 4

In order to embed the concept of inclusive education in practice as an approach for all learners, these operational definitions should also be used as the basis for identifying the competences and skills that all school teams (leaders, teachers, support professionals) require to successfully implement inclusive education

Issues raised through feedback

* Address the condition that the operational definitions need to be addressed first. It first needs to be understood what inclusive education is.
* Address the condition of school capacity as only competences and skills of school teams is not enough for implementation of inclusive education.
* Compulsory subject of special needs and inclusive education in professional training (overlap to other recommendations).
* Address benefits of experience exchange and school visits and exchanges to actually see inclusive education in practice.
* Address the need of a mixed team of teachers and specialists needed at schools
* Address school capacity and issue of classrooms of 20/30+ pupils.
* Address the need to focus on support instead of disparities to achieve de-stigmatisation of learners and regions.

Recommendation 5

There should be a move away from multiple, often short-term, programme or project-based funding streams to more streamlined, coherent and sustainable funding mechanisms that support schools to develop and implement long-term strategies and plans for inclusive education.

Issues raised through feedback

* Acknowledge and address that there are many civic organisations which are involved in funding in different ways especially when it comes to support services.
* Feedback supports the acknowledgment of the fragmentation of funding as well as moving funding from being tied to a diagnosis to go directly to schools.
* Address that money should be targeted to vulnerable locations/schools.
* Include practical examples and possible steps through which this could be achieved.
* A mid-level governance body could address the fragmentation.
* Suggest to centrally allocate job positions for specialists for schools including for example social pedagogue, psychologist, special educators and teaching assistants.
* Suggest to reduce the reliance on funding through projects instead of central funds.
* Explain ways to move from short-term project based funding to long-term funding mechanisms.

Recommendation 6

All funding mechanisms must be underpinned by the goal of supporting early intervention and prevention support strategies, rather than relying on compensatory funding models that reinforce learner segregation within the system.

Issues raised through feedback

* Stress the necessity of involving the Ministry of Finance as they have power over the allocation of central funds. They may not assign funds as needed or cut budget for inclusive education leading to fragmentation of funds.
* There needs to be a strong collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance. Without the support of the Ministry of Finance funding of inclusive education is not possible.
* Provide funding that can be used flexibly at the discretion of school leadership teams in a way that prevents problems and allows immediate action when support needs are identified.

Recommendation 7

The roles and responsibilities of decision-makers and educators at all system levels and across all sectors involved in the education system must be clearly delineated in order to ensure that everyone takes responsibility and is accountable for the achievement of ALL learners.

Issues raised through feedback

* Recommendation is perceived as to general or is suggested to be omitted (2 out of 10 replies from survey).
* Ministry of social Affairs acknowledges that this recommendation is crucial. However, it needs to be acknowledged that an overall agreement on a shared responsibility of the institutional level, communities and state before agreeing roles and responsibilities.

Recommendation 8

Cross sectoral, cross system level work should be undertaken to develop a quality assurance and accountability framework that is fully aligned with the national vision and goals for inclusive education.

Issues raised through feedback

* Acknowledge that currently the Czech Inspectorate only evaluates based on OECD criteria.
* Suggest that socio-economic and local criteria should be included as variables in the evaluation.
* Suggest how schools can develop self-evaluation criteria.
* Acknowledge that local level school organising bodies are currently very independent in promoting either inclusion or segregation.
* Address the need for a middle link to monitor quality of education and promote changes in school environment. This middle link could evaluate action plans for inclusion from schools.
* Address how governance mechanisms and financing can set standards and tie funding to the reaching/adherence to these standards. This system could intervene where localities or schools are promoting segregation.
* Self-assessment should not only be tied to inclusion but generally address quality education.

Recommendation 9

All relevant policies at national (covering different ministries) and organisational (covering different service providers) levels within the Czech Republic must align all initial and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for all teachers and other educational professionals with policy, the vision and goals of high-quality inclusive education for all learners.

Issues raised through feedback

* Address how to improve teacher attitudes.
* Acknowledge that teachers are the key to achieving inclusive education and therefore their training and development is essential.
* Acknowledge that teacher willingness to work with heterogeneous groups is influenced by classrooms of 20+ students.
* Stress professional teacher development is a priority.
* Acknowledge the need of stakeholder discussions also with teachers
* Address the role of accreditation.
* Omit this recommendation as it is controversial (1 of 10 survey responses)

Recommendation 10

Minimum levels of service provision in line with the national policy goals for inclusive education should be introduced to guide the work of all training providers involved in initial and CPD programme development and outcomes for all system stakeholders.

Issues raised through feedback

* Acknowledge work taking place on standards for minimum service provision. Czech Inspectorate has developed standards but these are not considered successful.
* Clarify who should be involved in the developing of standards for minimum service provision. Should this be only the Ministry of Education?
* Suggest the broad involvement of different stakeholders in the discussion of minimum provision. Schools as well as teachers should be involved.
* Address that it is recognised that school staff needs to be supported.
* Suggest increased training on special educational needs in initial teacher training, increasing the number of graduates with this knowledge.
* Suggest joint training of employees under the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs – exchange of practice.
* Clarify a minimum level of obligation of education and support services.
* Consider if this is a specific recommendation for teacher training institutions.

Recommendation 11

National, regional, local and school level policies and action plans for inclusive education at all levels must be aligned and coherent in their aim to support the active participation and engagement of all learners and their families in order to maximise individual learning opportunities.

Issues raised through feedback

* Action plans are not new but they do not work systemwide.
* Identify barriers which prevent the implementation of action plans
* Recommendations are formulated for a centralised system (how the Ministry of Education has the capacity to pass on the vision to other levels and schools) and are impossible to implement in a decentralised system.
* Suggest how to bridge the gap between central level and the school.
* Address the need for continuous positive campaigns and efforts to persuade people of inclusion and why it is important.
* Stress the need for stakeholders to be involved in the process.
* Include the need to establish a unit or group of people from the Ministry (for example) who would be available when someone needs support in this process.
* Address that a mechanism is needed to enforce cooperation from pedagogical and school areas. Without enforcement or accountability measures the recommendations cannot be implemented.
* Acknowledge the two regions are different and that they need specific approaches.

Recommendation 12

At all system levels, policy must outline strategies to increase the voices of learners (in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and their parents/families.

Issues raised through feedback

* Address the need to involve parents in the development of the learners’ individual development plans.

Recommendation 13

All school stakeholders must be supported to develop competences in identifying barriers to learning and participation and providing support and early intervention strategies to overcome these barriers.

Issues raised through feedback

* Suggest to build this into the training of teachers and other specialists.
* Suggest to organise joint trainings, conferences and meetings for exchange for all above mentioned stakeholders.
* Address the need for accountability as relying on goodwill will not bring change alone.

Recommendation 14

At regional and local levels all school stakeholders must be supported to develop strategies relevant to local situations and contexts that engage all parents and develop partnerships that aim at fostering the well-being and achievement of all learners.

Issues raised through feedback

* Stress that a holistic approach needs to be taken to discuss reasons inclusion is not taking place and then discuss solutions.
* Address need to have discussions with parents who drive out of the catchment areas to schools with less Roma or parents with learners’ in need of support who don’t use services as they are not informed on inclusion.
* Stress that working with families is not just limited to schools but also social services.
* Explain which stakeholders should be involved and responsible.
* Stress that the positions of officials must be strengthened to ensure implementation.

Recommendation 15

There should be cross-sectoral, national level support for the development of regional and/or local level self-review frameworks based on self-review indicators that set out a vision for high-quality inclusive education for all learners in their local schools.

Issues raised through feedback

* Stress need for multi-stakeholder approach. For example, including employers due to the issue of dropouts.
* Suggest that the OECD criteria could be used for self-evaluation for schools. Czech Inspectorate inspections build on these but do not include the socio-economic specifics of the individual schools.
* Warn that this should not become an administrative burden without follow-up or impact.