**ADDRESSING REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN THE CZECH EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**Supporting the implementation of measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in Karlovarský and Ústecký regions**

**Peer Learning Activity on Governance and Financing**

**Stimulus Discussion Paper**

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Overview and Introduction

Objective and purpose of the discussion stimulus paper

Stimulating discussions about education systems

Education systems in Europe are moving forward towards inclusive, fair, and quality education for all. Due to specific historic, social, economic, and political contexts, countries, regions, and municipalities are confronted with different challenges at different points during this process. While this fact makes simple comparisons or one-to-one adoption of other countries’ solutions difficult, it also creates a unique opportunity to learn from each other.

Starting points for discussions are the current strengths and challenges in the Czech Republic towards ensuring that all children and youth have access to high quality education across all regions, municipalities, and schools. They are described in the documentary analysis (Deliverable 3) and organised around 7 standards that have been agreed-upon with national stakeholders. These 7 standards are being used in this document to help structure discussions and to provide a linkage back to the policy documents and reports used to generate the evidence in the Documentary Analysis.

The 7 standards give a basic structure to this document and ensure the compatibility with previous discussions. It is hoped that this will assist stakeholders to further explore the current situation in the light of present and future policy developments (e.g., Strategy 2030+). This document seeks to provide background information to facilitate understanding and to enable dialogues around educational governance, funding schemes and financing mechanisms in support of inclusive education in the Czech Republic. Reducing inequality in education and increasing the participation of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds has been high on the agenda since 2015, most recently in the Strategy 2020 and the Strategy 2030+.

Although it is important to identify differences and similarities between countries, regions, and municipalities, internationally comparable indicators will not be used as an entry point for discussion. They can easily become barriers to understanding the complex dynamics and diverse factors contributing to differences between education systems. In addition, indicators provide a glance into the past, but may not reflect most recent developments. In addition, not all relevant evidence is easily quantifiable and therefore could be easily missed. Reforms must consider the past but ultimately need to be guided by a broad vision of the future, rather than a narrow concern to improve specific indicators. As a consequence, the discussion stimulus paper proposes a set of questions that arise from the evidence found through the documentary analysis (Deliverable 3) and the fieldwork (synthesis of the analysis work, presented in Deliverable 4).

The issues raised in this document seek to facilitate discussion and dialogue. Some may prove more important to the readers than others. Therefore, a thematic prioritisation, identification of information gaps and requests for further evidence may be important outcomes of continuing dialogue and reflection.

Contribution to an evolving discussion

A policy review and analysis of the Czech Republic was conducted by the EASNIE in 2019. In addition, a thorough analysis of legislation and available policy documents was carried out in 2020, providing a detailed account of the current situation related to the 7 agreed standards. This systematic analysis and documentation pulled relevant information from policy documents, reports and other evidence provided by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT). The emerging issues identified drew attention to the importance of educational governance, financing, and funding mechanisms to promote inclusive education.

The Stimulus Discussion Paper draws from all available evidence to identify key questions related to educational governance, financing, and funding mechanisms that promote inclusive education. The 7 agreed standards are used as a basic structure to highlight key issues related to governance and financing. For each of the 7 standards, some of the emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis (Deliverable 3) and the final analysis work (Deliverable 4) are picked up and explored in relation to *three topics relevant for governance and financing*. Each of these three topics is followed by a *key question to initiate discussion* as well as *examples* of how other countries or organisations have addressed the issue.

Discussing such complex issues as educational governance, financing and funding mechanisms is only constructive if it is seen a process, rather than understood as something that can be addressed once and solved. Consequently, the Stimulus Discussion Paper is meant to contribute to a broader, ongoing dialogue between stakeholders at European, national, regional, and local levels. A draft version of the paper was used to facilitate a peer learning activity (PLA) with Czech representatives in June 2021. Subsequently, three peer learning activities were conducted to present and discuss examples with policy makers from Germany, Ireland and Poland relating to on-going work in their countries. The examples provided are now incorporated in this document.

Building shared knowledge through dialogue

Policy development and implementation towards an inclusive education system require a process of developing a vision well-grounded in a shared understanding of strengths and challenges. The documentary analysis and the fieldwork in the Karlovarský and Ústecký regions provided the evidence for developing draft recommendations and identify priority actions (deliverable 6) to align the overall system for inclusive education with the framework of standards. The recommendations are highly inter-related and addressing them will require close collaboration across all levels of the education system as well as between education, social and health sectors. Consequently, the priority action identified in deliverable 6 is a structured, inter-connected dialogue with a range of stakeholders from across all sectors and systems levels.

This Stimulus Discussion Paper seeks to contribute towards this priority action. It was used as a resource to provide a structured opportunity for dialogue between stakeholders from the Czech Republic in the peer learning activity (June 2021). To facilitate discussions, the 21 governance and financing issues related to the 7 standards were clustered around three key concerns: “A common vision for policy development” (see 1.1), “Governance of educational support” (see 7.1) and “Accountability systems for quality in education” (see 4.2). This enabled a focused discussion without losing sight of inter-related issues. Concluding the meeting, participants were asked to identify the best levers for change amongst the 21 issues raised in the document (three for each standard).

Although the views of the participants may not be representative for the respective stakeholder groups, it is interesting to note that the variance between views was greatest where it directly concerned the governance of policy planning and implementation (e.g., 1.1 A common vision for policy development, 1.2 Governance of diverse initiatives, 1.3 Synergies with ongoing reforms, 2.2 Importance of mid-level governance, 3.2 Governance of funding and service provision). On the other hand, participants tended to agree on the importance of Accountability systems for quality education (4.2), Governance issues around capacity building (5.1 for teachers, 5.2 for educational leaders) and cooperation (6.2 Coordinating mechanism between service providers, 6.3 Cooperation across stakeholder groups and their organisations) as well as the importance of 7.3 Family involvement and children’s voices as levers for change.

The diversity of views about the importance of over-all governance issues may be related to the fact that good governance is not a goal in itself, rather an important means to achieve inclusive education. While capacity building, cooperation, and family involvement are extremely important, they are highly dependent on good governance and funding mechanisms. But it is also a reminder of the fact that when discussing key issues, one should keep in mind that different stakeholders may hold differing views about what needs to change first. This underlines that proposal to first enter into a structured, inter-connected dialogue as a priority action. As Ganon-Shilon et al. (2020, 20) put it:

“Understanding how reforms are mediated, enacted, interpreted, and negotiated within schools (…) requires adopting a circulating bottom-up and top-down implementation strategy, which is determined by continuous and complex interaction process between state stakeholders (e.g. school districts), implementing agents (e.g. local stakeholders), as well as the organizational and local context. This process may not just leave space for sense-making processes but can also urge all stakeholders involved in the reform to work collaboratively while experimenting on how this is going to affect their school context.”

To facilitate sense-making processes as part of the proposed structured dialogue may be of key importance. The peer learning activities provided opportunities to engage with colleagues for Germany, Ireland and Poland, with their experiences, their personal views and their opinions. Positive emotional dynamics are needed to engage in deeper sense-making and greater agreement about an appropriate course of action (Ganon-Shilon and Schechter, 2017). Trust and recognition of the expertise and autonomy of educational practitioners at both district and school levels is needed to successfully implement school reforms in decentralised education systems (Pietarinen et al. 2019, 492). And finally, accountability needs to be balanced with trust to promote effective accountability relationships (Ehren et al. 2020).

Narratives, sense-making and emotions

The peer learning activity with stakeholders from the Czech Republic also highlighted the importance of narration as a tool to transfer and share knowledge. One participant shared the experience of visiting inclusive schools in Finland where she heard the stories of colleagues who embraced inclusive education and saw the ways in which they approach inclusive practices. As part of the proposals for Priority Actions (Deliverable 7), it is suggested to use opportunities for sharing examples of innovative practices and foster collaboration. Such opportunities could inspire all stakeholders by supporting the development of new narratives around inclusive practices.

Another participant highlighted the importance of motivation which can be fostered by meaningful dialogue (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). A shared values-based vision is best articulated through communication and framing activities, which is an essential process in making sense of a reform’s broad guidelines based on own experiences, beliefs, and values of all stakeholders (Ganon-Shilon et al. 2020, 17). The discussion stimulus paper could be a tool to help focus dialogues by providing a structure and an initial set of good practice examples from other countries.

Educational governance and financing

Interdependency of Educational Governance and Financing

Governance and financing are intricately connected with each other, one could even say they are two sides of the same coin. For example, changes in policy or new governance mechanisms will not be implemented unless resources are made available. So to say, funding is the “fuel” behind governance structures. But even availability of resources will not guarantee full implementation unless there are clear accountability mechanisms. And any change in funding schemes will change the dynamics of governance by creating new incentives for some stakeholders, but possibly not for others.

Stakeholder motivation and work ethos, local culture and value system as well as other factors may change the effects of new financing schemes in unexpected and unforeseen ways. On the other hand, governance interventions can also have unwanted effects. For example, policies aiming at a decrease of students in special schools might result in increased drop-out rates rather than inclusion of students in regular schools as was the case in the Netherlands (Gubbels et al. 2017).

Separate funding schemes for students with special educational needs may be required to ensure necessary support but will likely lead to an increase in identification rates unless other mechanisms to counteract will be implemented at the same time, for example a combination of input, throughput and output funding (Meijer & Watkins 2019, Goldan, Lambrecht & Loreman 2021, 53 f.). Similar balances may be needed between specific (e.g., student with disability) and general population support criteria (e.g., disadvantaged school) or centralised and decentralised funding mechanisms (ibid.).

Top-down and bottom-up dynamics

National education systems are multi-level systems to enable educational governance at national, regional, and local levels. This is necessary to maintain coherence and equity of educational resources, processes, and outcomes while at the same time respond to regional and local differences related to demographics and other regional differences, such as economic, social, and geographic situations.

Inclusive education depends on the participation of all stakeholders and a shared motivation and effort to progressively implement inclusion. This requires a sense of self-efficacy and agency of professionals who are able to initiate change processes in their school and classrooms. School leaders need to provide educational leadership and therefore require a certain autonomy.

Governance mechanisms that rely solely on top-down processes are therefore not compatible with the vision of inclusive education. But a bottom-up approaches will lead to inequalities that are not wanted either. The mid-level governing body therefore has an important role to play in negotiating with national and local decision-makers and balancing differences between local autonomy and accountability. In the Czech Republic, it may be important therefore to strengthen the regions to enable a middle-up-down mechanism for financing and governance.

Interdependency of different policy streams

Educational governance and financing of inclusive education should not be considered as an independent policy stream, rather as a transversal governance and financing issue. For example, introducing a new role (e.g., teacher assistant) or a new mechanism of support (e.g., specialist provision in regular schools) will require changes in training systems, work profiles and competencies of regular teachers and school leaders as well as modes of collaboration and teaching.

Specific initiatives to address one problem area (e.g., Roma inclusion, disparities between regions) may lead to fragmentation and therefore the creation of problems somewhere else. Identifying specific groups (e.g., children with autism, talented children) may result in creating disadvantage for groups that are not identified due to lack of professionals who are able to adequately use well-established and meaningful criteria.

Changing governance and financing mechanisms therefore requires both, a system-centred and a person-centred perspective to analyse potential problems that intended changes may have for other policy domains (e.g., teacher education, curriculum development, digitalisation) or other stakeholder groups.

The revised framework of standards proposed in the Final Recommendations and Proposed Priority Action (Deliverable 7) includes a new 8th standard with a focus on “Governance for inclusive education systems”. The analysis work clearly indicated the need for a standard that deals with governance issues, namely: “The roles and responsibilities of decision-makers and educators at all the system levels are clear and ensure that everyone takes responsibility and is accountable for the achievement of all learners.” It is towards this new standard that this discussion stimulus paper seeks to provide information and an opportunity for future dialogues.

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1st Standard: Governance of policy planning and implementation

*Inclusive Education is defined, understood, accepted and supported by all stakeholders as an approach leading to the improvement of education for all learners, ensuring equitable learning opportunities and a supportive learning environment.*

*This means that:*

*- the general public is aware that inclusion means that all learners have the chance to reach their full potential;*

*- all system stakeholders understand that inclusive education is approach for all learners;*

*- a child-centred approach is the basis for all professionals’ work.*

*Emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis:*

Policy is guided by a clear vision for inclusive quality education, but there are challenges to translate this vision into action.

MŠMT is implementing national awareness raising strategies and there are numerous associations or umbrella organisations fostering dialogue. However, awareness raising is perceived as ad hoc and lacking continuous public communication and a central change management approach.

There is a clear long-term framework for implementing quality inclusive education at national and regional level. However, there are indications that at the regional level, this framework still needs translation and implementation that is fostered by sustainable funding mechanisms and stakeholder awareness raising.

The negative effects of rapid implementation of initiatives without systematic evidence collection via piloting can be identified as a challenge.

No evidence was found regarding whether policy goals and objectives for inclusive education are clearly integrated in all areas of general education policy.

*Key Messages from Analysis Work:*

The evidence of the actions and initiatives to raise stakeholders’ awareness regarding inclusive education highlighted in the documentary analysis show in stakeholders’ agreement with the vision that inclusive education is a rights issue, increases quality and equity for all learners and that inclusive education is clearly defined in policy.

The documentary analysis and stakeholder data collection both indicate that there is not a shared understanding of the concept of inclusive education. In practice inclusion seems to be perceived as being mainly addressed to some socially disadvantaged families and learners with behavioural issues, often seen as learners from the Roma community.

Stakeholders feel that the Czech Republic’s education system has a well-established tradition of segregated schools and it is a challenge to overcome the attitudinal barriers against inclusion.

*Proposed areas for discussion:*

**1. A common vision for policy development**

How can educational governance support all stakeholders to develop and communicate a shared and sustainable vision of inclusive education across multiple strategies and initiatives, across different stakeholder groups and across all levels of the education system?

**2. Governance of diverse initiatives**

Which governance mechanisms could help ensure the effective use of grants, projects, and funds as well as the effectiveness and sustainability of the initiated changes?

**3. Synergies with ongoing reforms: Reform of national curriculum**

Could the current revision of the national curriculum be an opportunity to broaden the discourse on education, integrate inclusive education into the general education policy framework and enhance sustained dialogue on the vision of inclusive education?

1.1 A common vision for policy development

Inclusive education as a process and vision is inseparable from overall educational policies and practices. Inclusive education systems ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers. In 2015, the Committee on the Rights of persons with Disabilities recommended in its [Concluding observations of the initial report for the Czech Republic](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/811110?ln=en) to incorporate inclusive education as a guiding principle of the education system. Since then and as reported in the Documentary Analysis, the MŠMT is committed to further promote inclusive education as stated in the Long-term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System of the Czech Republic 2019-2023 ([Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky 2019–2023](https://www.msmt.cz/file/51673_1_1/)). An Action Plan for Inclusive Education for 2019-2020 ([Akční plán inkluzívního vzdělávání na období 2019 – 2020)](http://www.msmt.cz/file/49950_1_1/) was developed by the MŠMT and in addition, each of the 14 Regions developed an Inclusive School Concept (e.g.,[Školská inkluzivní koncepce Ústeckého kraje 2019-2021](http://www.inkluzevpraxi.cz/files/SIK-UK_-_komplet4.pdf) for theÚstí Region) providing detailed information of regional issues that need to be addressed. To reduce inequalities in education is also a priority in the Education Policy Strategy 2020 ([Strategie vzdělávací politiky 2020](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-vzdelavaci-politiky-2020-1?highlightWords=p%C5%99%C3%ADpravn%C3%BDch+t%C5%99%C3%ADd)). In addition, the document states that improving quality can only occur if there are goals and needs that most of society and all actors in education system understand and are motivated and committed (p. 25). More recently, the Strategy of Educational Policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+ ([Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2030+](https://www.msmt.cz/file/54104_1_1/)) is strongly committed to ensure equal access, reduce the inequalities in access to quality education and enable maximum development of the potential of children, pupils and students. Explaining the benefits of inclusive education is seen as an important to promote cooperation between the state and actors in education (see Key Activity 1.1. Strengthening professional capacity and competence to work with diverse groups of children and pupils, p. 114). A separate Strategy is developed by the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic is the Roma Integration Strategy 2021-2030 ([Strategie romské integrace 2021 – 2030](https://www.mvcr.cz/sluzba/ViewFile.aspx?docid=22287100)).

How can educational governance support all stakeholders to develop and communicate a shared and sustainable vision of inclusive education across multiple strategies and initiatives, across different stakeholder groups and across all levels of the education system?

*Malta has developed a* [*National Inclusive Education Framework*](https://education.gov.mt/inclusion/Documents/MEDE_Inclusion_Framework_Sep2019web.pdf) *to provide a clear direction to schools on their journey towards inclusive education. It is in line with the education strategy of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) and based on the recommendations given by the External Audit Report prepared by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Rather than being authored by a small group, the development of such a framework could involve all stakeholder groups.*

*In Canada,* [*National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities*](https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/principal/about-national-dialogues-and-action) *were initiated to discuss issues related to anti-Black racism, share experiences and ideas, explore best practices and contribute to the formulation and implementation of concrete actions. The outcome of the deliberations will inform the co-creation of a National Charter that will be signed by all participating institutions. Such a national dialogue could be initiated with a thematic focus on inclusive education.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 2: Regional Governance Mechanisms

Standard 6: Governance of coordinating services and stakeholders

1.2 Governance of diverse initiatives to strengthen inclusive education

Considerable resources have been invested over the last few years to address issues of segregation and disadvantage. In addition to the regular financing mechanisms, additional resources have been made available through different grants, many of them with the financial support of the EU. The development of action plans and subsequent grant applications play an important role for the implementation of inclusive education, for example through the Operational Program Research, Development and Education ([Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání](https://opvvv.msmt.cz/)). Some projects, for example [Quality Inclusion Consulting Development](http://www.nuv.cz/kipr/projekt-1) engaged selected schools in all regions. Other projects directly aimed at the implementation of Inclusive Education, for example [School Support for Inclusion Step by Step](http://www.nuv.cz/projekty/apiva?lang=1), managed by the National Institute of Education ([Národní ústav pro vzdělávání](http://www.nuv.cz/)), other projects such as The [Support of Action Planning](http://www.nuv.cz/our-projects/pkap-1) for regions and schools includes inclusive education as one component of many. Often, separate projects are initiated for children with special needs, socially disadvantaged children, children with mental health issues or behavioural problems; other projects target disadvantaged municipalities or specific groups (e.g., Roma inclusion). [Inclusive and quality education in territories with socially excluded localities](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/individualni-projekt-op-vvv-inkluzivni-a-kvalitni-vzdelavani-v-uzemich-se-svl/) (EU 2016-2022) is currently implemented by the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic. The new Roma Inclusion Strategy 2021-2030 ([Strategie romské integrace 2021 – 2030](https://www.mvcr.cz/sluzba/ViewFile.aspx?docid=22287100)) will no doubt also lead to several initiatives and projects. The Strategy of Educational Policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+ ([Strategie 2030+](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-2030)) was approved in October 2020 and sets the direction of education development an investment priorities for the next ten years.

Which governance mechanisms could help ensure the effective use of grants, projects, and funds as well as the effectiveness and sustainability of the initiated changes?

*At the international level, a* [*Global Partnership for Education*](https://www.globalpartnership.org/) *was established to bring together lower-income countries, donors, international organisations, civil society (including youth and teacher organisations), the private sector and private foundations to transform education systems with the common vision of “Quality education for every child” and the goal to accelerate access, learning outcomes and gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century”. Rather than having different donors following their own logic of financing, the partnership ensures a sustainable approach.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 3: Governance and financing to promote inclusion

1.3 Synergies with ongoing reforms: Revision of national curriculum

As stated in the Strategy of Educational Policy of the Czech Republic by 2020 ([Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020](https://www.msmt.cz/uploads/Strategie_2020_web.pdf), p. 3), “over the past period, awareness of the links and connections between the various components of the education system has gradually disappeared, the development of which has not been sufficiently underpinned by a long-term vision and comprehensive strategy and has been influenced by rather isolated and insufficiently interconnected solutions.”. It also states that, “the Czech Republic must move towards a system that does not divide pupils on the basis of cognitive ability into classes and schools with more or less demanding curricula, but allows everyone to develop their full potential in a system of quality and inclusive public education.” (p. 17). There is evidence that teachers are still reluctant to welcome all students to their regular classroom and perceive parents as the main barriers of their child educational success (see Report Education of children with social disadvantage in primary school, [Vzdělávání dětí se sociálním znevýhodněním v základní škole](http://www.nuv.cz/uploads/KIPR/Vystupy_z_klicovych_aktivit/KA_5/Komparacni_studie_Vzdelavani_deti_se_socialnim_znevyhodnenim_v_zakladni_skole.pdf), 2019). The need for a strong vision for schools is also emphasised in the thematic report on successful primary school strategies for disadvantaged pupils ([Hodnocení úspěšných strategií základních škol vzdělávajících znevýhodněné žáky 2020](https://www.csicr.cz/Csicr/media/Prilohy/PDF_el._publikace/Tematick%C3%A9%20zpr%C3%A1vy/TZ_Hodnoceni_uspesnych_strategii_ZS_znevyhodneni_21-10-2020_F.pdf)).

There is one national initiative that has the potential to transform the vision of inclusive education of all stakeholders. Currently, the national curriculum ([Framework educational program, FEP](http://www.nuv.cz/t/rrvp)) is being revised as part of the Strategy 2030+ implementation. The curriculum revision is led by the National Institute for Education of the Czech Republic (Národní pedagogický institut České republiky). This is an excellent opportunity to discuss the goals of education, the competencies that all children and youth should achieve as well as the vision of have one curriculum for all children.

Could the current revision of the national curriculum be an opportunity to broaden the discourse on education, integrate inclusive education into the general education policy framework and enhance sustained dialogue on the vision of inclusive education?

*Wales is currently developing a* [*new curriculum*](https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/)*, which is the cornerstone of Wales’ effort to shape an education system led by commonly defined, learner-centred purposes. The curriculum is embedded in* [*Education in Wales: Our National Mission*](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/education-in-wales-our-national-mission.pdf)*, an action plan for 2017-21 that falls in line with the Welsh vision for its education system. The reform agenda encompasses five policy areas: curriculum, assessment and evaluation, equity, excellence and wellbeing, teaching; and leadership. The OECD has published guidelines and recommendations that include: Developing a shared understanding of what the vision looks like in practice, supporting the realisation of the curriculum across all schools in Wales, focusing the co-construction process on next steps for schools, and consolidating policy coherence around schools (OECD (2020): Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales. Implementing Education Policies. Paris: OECD.* [*https://doi.org/10.1787/4b483953-en*](https://doi.org/10.1787/4b483953-en)

*The new framework curriculum (*[*Lehrplan 21*](https://www.lehrplan21.ch/)*) for the German speaking Cantons of Switzerland was developed with the premise that it is applied to all children, including children with disabilities (*[*Sonderschulung*](https://www.lehrplan21.ch/sonderschulung)*). The process of developing* [*guidelines*](https://www.regionalkonferenzen.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/20190829_Anwendung%20des%20LP21%20f%C3%BCr%20SuS%20mit%20komplexen%20Behinderungen.pdf) *for the application of the curriculum for children with complex disabilities was led by steering group with representatives of the Cantonal Ministries of education in close consultation with teacher education institutions and practitioners. At the present time, implementation of the guidelines is underway, both in regular and in special schools as well as in teacher training institutions.*

*In Portugal is tackling issues of “curriculum overload” and the “time lags” that curricula reforms suffer from between development and implementation. It initiated a* [*Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility*](https://www.dge.mec.pt/autonomia-e-flexibilidade-curricular) *which aims to define the guiding principles and rules for design, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum for primary and secondary education. The “Students’ Profile by the End of compulsory Schooling defines a vision of the competencies that all students should achieve. The project is in line with a suite of other programmes and initiatives, including the new law for Inclusion. (OECD (2018):* [*Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy in Portugal – an OECD Review*](https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/Curriculum-Flexibility-and-Autonomy-in-Portugal-an-OECD-Review.pdf)*. Paris: OECD. The new curriculum grants schools autonomy over a portion of the curricular and pedagogical areas. This means that schools can design learning experiences that are in line with the aim of the student profile. It gives all stakeholders a strong sense of ownership.*

*OECD has conducted a* [*literature review to support effective implementation of curriculum reform*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/curriculum-reform_efe8a48c-en) *in 2020. The paper analyses the curriculum reform literature through the lens of the OECD proposed implementation framework that promotes inclusive stakeholder engagement.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 1: Governance of policy planning and implementation

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

Standard 7: Governance of equitable learning opportunities

2nd Standard: Regional governance mechanisms

*All learners in all schools are provided opportunities and effective support to meet their education, social and emotional needs.*

*This means that:*

*- disparities across regions are addressed so that all learners are educated in flexible, accessible and inclusive learning environments.*

*Emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis:*

There is a clear long-term framework for implementing quality inclusive education at national and regional level. However, there are indications at the regional level, this framework still needs translation and implementation that is fostered by stakeholder awareness rising.

Regional authorities are independent and self-governing but have clear links to the MŠMT. A challenge is presented by the unbalanced network of special schools and other support services, leading to differences across regions regarding the numbers of pupils in mainstream and special schools, mainstream support availability, compensatory measures and provision and the ability to attract qualified staff.

Policies call for municipalities to focus on promoting inclusive education. The challenge remains to overcome the various disparities across regions. Regions identified as having with lower performance are especially challenged to attract qualified teachers. In addition, the prioritisation of allocating limited funds to different schools with different challenges, makes it difficult for regions to have a long-term plan for developing their schools.

MŠMT, through the Long-Term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System, has a strategy to build the capacity for all support at all system levels. A main challenge appears to be the high degree of decentralisation and low degree of consensus on education management. A further challenge also arises as strategic documents lack overall co-ordination that guides policy systematic policy implementation.

No evidence was found on a formal strategy for promoting dialogue between ministries, regional/local authorities/municipalities and training providers to agree on the requirement of all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities.

No explicit evidence on guidance on what inclusive education looks like in practice across system levels was found.

*Key messages from Analysis Work:*

Both the documentary analysis and stakeholder data collection indicate that policy to promote inclusive education is in place, but that implementation in practice remains a challenge.

For stakeholders, it does not seem clear what inclusive education in practice looks like, resulting in different levels of implementation across schools. The capacity of schools to support all learners remains a challenge and the enactment of learners’ rights is not in line with policy.

The evidence collected regarding regional disparities however indicates a lack of alignment between what is indicated in policy and stakeholders’ views. The documentary analysis shows that policy aims to address regional disparities and stresses actions aimed at reducing these. While stakeholders also recognise the existence of regional disparities and how this impacts learners and families, they call for an end to the stereotyping of specific regions.

It must be recognised that disparities exist across and within all regions and are linked to wider socio-economic factors. These also impact on socially disadvantaged groups who face exclusion in the field of education and within society in general.

A more specific inclusive approach for targeting support for individual schools based on their local context is needed across and within all regions.

*Proposed areas for discussion:*

**1. Governance of a decentralised education system**

How could the current fragmentation of school governance be overcome without reintroducing centralised educational decision-making?

**2. Importance of mid-level governance**

How could mid-level governance be strengthened?

**3. Governance for progressive realisation of inclusive practices**

How can different government bodies come together to develop a shared vision and strategy for inclusive education?

2.1 Governance of a decentralised education system

The [National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic](https://www.msmt.cz/file/35406_1_1/) (2001) initiated a process of decentralisation of education to improve response of local stakeholder to specific situation. Decentralisation gave way to innovation and participation from all stakeholders, but has led to widespread fragmentation of governance, dilution of support capacities and problems with coordination of education policies at all levels of administration (see Eurydice [Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments,](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/ongoing-reforms-and-policy-developments-16_en) 2017). Two thirds of key educational decisions taken at school level, another 25% by Local Authorities (central administration only 2% of decisions, compared to 24% on average ([Education Policy Outlook Czech Republic](http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Czech-Republic-2020.pdf), OECD 2020, p. 17, see also List of key indicators, p. 26). The 14 administrative regions are only taking 4.2% of the decisions and the 6258 municipalities (for statistics, see [Council of European Municipalities and Regions](https://www.ccre.org/pays/view/35), CEMR) who organise and provide pre-school and basic education although given their small size, many only manage one school, and in some cases none at all ([Education Policy Outlook Czech Republic](http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Czech-Republic-2020.pdf), OECD 2020, p. 17.). The increased level of school autonomy did increase accountability, but also led to a disproportionate shift of responsibility towards the school level without adequate training and support of school leaders (see Eurydice [Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/ongoing-reforms-and-policy-developments-16_en), 2017). Balancing education policy in this fragmented system was identified as a key challenge by OECD ([Education Policy Outlook Czech Republic](http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Czech-Republic-2020.pdf), 2020). Regular schools are mostly run by municipalities, whereas special schools are run by regions or directly by the MŠMT. Most schools have the status of independent legal entities, some as subsidised organisations or organisational units of the state (see Eurydice [Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/administration-and-governance-local-andor-institutional-level-21_en#2_7_2_1_1_School_bodies) 2021). There is an Association of Region of the Czech Republic ([Asociace krajů České republiky](http://www.asociacekraju.cz/)) as well as an Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic ([Svaz měst a obcí České republiky](https://www.smocr.cz/cs)), therefore platforms for cooperation at regional and municipal levels do exist.

How could the current fragmentation of school governance be overcome without reintroducing centralised educational decision-making?

*Norway introduced a new competency development model for schools in which national funding for collaborative, continuous professional development is based on school and local analysis of needs and decision making in networks. Municipalities are encouraged to participate in collaboration forums and jointly agree on how the public funds will be used and what measures will be prioritised. This implies a structural shift of responsibilities form the Directorate for Education and Training at the national level to county governors and municipalities and requires a careful process of ownership and allocation of responsibilities by different key players (OECD (2019):* [*Education Policy Outlook 2021. Working together to help students achieve their potential*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/2b8ad56e-en.pdf?expires=1621954582&id=id&accname=oid009350&checksum=EE596740F461BC9993BC334DE88B9814)*. Paris: OECD).*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

Standard 6: Governance for human and system capacity building

2.2 Importance of Mid-Level Governance

One of the major issues of the Czech education system are the regional disparities for example in high regional variance of education performance, which is consistently addressed in all policy documents, most recently in the Strategy 2030+ ([Strategie 2030+](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-2030)). Improving the management of schools and school facilities by streamlining the cooperation between the centre and the middle management (regional authorities) is a key strategic objective in the Long-term Plan of education and the development of the education system of the Czech Republic 2019-2023 ([Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/dz-cr-2019-2023) 2019–2023). The Long-term Plan also states that the MŠMT and regional authorities should in future cooperate more closely in the areas of decision-making on school related matters (in particular), which are not as clear or effective at the heart of the school. From the perspective of the regions, they do have the knowledge and the ability to coordinate social, educational and health services, but they cannot intervene in the structure of education of schools (see Long-term Plan of education and development of the education system in the Ústi Region, [Dlouhodobého záměru vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy v Ústeckém kraji 2016 – 2020](https://formulare.kr-ustecky.cz/materialyzukver/27_ZUK_2020-03-09/pdf/27_ZUK_MAT_14_2_priloha_1.pdf), p. 30). The limited ability of regions to influence school is reflected in the small percentage of decisions taken at this level (see [How decentralised are education systems, and what does it mean for schools?](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/e14575d5-en.pdf?expires=1617098376&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=4AD8A87985C7D1BFA7ED5BBBA30FF6BC) OECD 2018, graph on p. 3). All regions do have a Regional Office (Krajský úřad) which closely cooperates with central government to design policy documents, strengthen principles of evidence-based policies, preparing legislation, share data from schools and school facilities to avoid duplication of data collection, co-financing, coordination. Many national institutions in education are also represented at the regional level. For example, the National Institute of Education ([Národní Pedagogický Institut](https://www.nidv.cz/)) has an office in each region maintaining regional centres for teacher support as well as a network of pedagogical-psychological services. The regions also establish pedagogical-psychological services as well as special schools who also provide counselling services (see Eurydice [Guidance and Counselling in Early Childhood and School Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-early-childhood-and-school-education-17_en#12_4_2_1_Pedagogical_and_psychological_counselling_centre) 2021). In addition, there are 14 regional school inspectorates (see Eurydice [Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/quality-assurance-early-childhood-and-school-education-17_en), 2021).

How could mid-level governance be strengthened?

*The* [*Norwegian consultation scheme*](https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/kommuner-og-regioner/kommunalrett-og-kommunal-inndeling/forholdet-kommune-stat/om-ordningen/id544787/) *was introduced to guide consultations between the state and the municipal sector to replace the traditional channels of interaction and make the two levels equal partner in the governance process. It operates in three dimensions (organisation, financing and information). Participating actors gain a better understanding of each other’s roles through dialogue between the levels and the regional bodies (*[*Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities)*](https://www.ks.no/om-ks/ks-in-english/) *have gained more legitimacy and influence as a link to the central government (Wilkoszewski, H. & Sundby, E. (2016).* [*From Hard to Soft Governance in Multi-level Education Systems*](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ejed.12189)*. European Journal of Education, 51(3), 447-462). See also EU’s Open Method of Coordination, OMC and European Commission/OECD (2018):* [*“Fostering innovation in less-developed regions (with low institutional capacity)”*](https://www.oecd.org/cfe/regionaldevelopment/Tsipouri%282018%29FosteringInnovationInLessDevelopedRegions_FI.pdf) *Paris: OECD.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

2.3 Governance for progressive realisation of inclusive practices

Policy development as well as implementation of innovations and reforms are mainly organised top-down: National strategies or plans are developed, then the regions develop their plans within this framework, then schools follow. The National Institute of Education has an important position in applying for and receiving funding for projects and reforms that are then implemented using different formats. In addition, the [Ministry of Regional Development](https://www.mmr.cz/en/homepage) which developed a [Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021+](https://mmr.cz/getmedia/a9985cb6-b672-4a97-a92c-c4c68bea2925/EN-III_ma_SRR-prac_doplneni-schemat-a-map_kontrola.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf). The strategy not only includes the issue of economically and socially vulnerable areas, but also goals related to the improvement of education (p. 68ff.) as part of over-all strategies to reduce the risk of social polarization and preventing exclusion. Each governance body has clear statements of problems form their perspective and envisages solutions based on this analysis. For example, the regional development strategy formulates several “Type measures” that directly link to inclusive education, for example Type measure 6 (availability of social and health services), Type Measure 17 (renewal of infrastructure of schools) or Type Measure 47 (Reduce drop out rate in primary and secondary schools). The document identifies MEYS (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) as a key partner for implementation, but it is not clear how the coordination of so many separate measures can be effectively coordinated, other than through the action plans that will be developed (p. 157). The Agency for Social Inclusion ([Odbor pro sociální začleňování](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/)) is a department of the Ministry for Regional Development and currently engaged together with MŠMT in the EU-funded project “[Inclusive and quality education in areas with socially excluded localities](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/individualni-projekt-op-vvv-inkluzivni-a-kvalitni-vzdelavani-v-uzemich-se-svl/)” (2016-2022) in response to the Strategic Plan for Social Inclusion. Yet, it is not clear how this activity is fitting with the Strategy 2030+.

How can different government bodies come together to develop a shared vision and strategy for inclusive education?

*The* [*Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy*](https://icld.se/) *(ICLD) promotes partnerships as a tool to make municipalities more inclusive in Sweden and partner countries, closely linked to the Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals). It has developed a* [*handbook*](https://icld.se/app/uploads/2020/07/ICLD_Handbook_MunicipalPartnerships_V8.pdf) *to increase involved partner organisation’s knowledge and capacity to operationalise the principles of equity, inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability with the ultimate aim of increasing local citizens’ influence at the local level. One project in Chisinau, Moldova, involved local authorities, non-governmental and civic society organisations to improve access for persons with disabilities to social infrastructure. (see also Möller, B. (2020): From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Understanding, Capacity, and Will to Change Local Government Practices. In B. Dahya & A. Das (Eds.)* [*New Urban Agenda in Asia-Pacific. Governance for Sustainable and Inclusive Cities.*](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-981-13-6709-0.pdf) *Singapore: Springer.*

*In Germany, the charitable organization “*[*Aktion Mensch*](https://www.aktion-mensch.de/)*” is financed from the Lottery and supports inclusion. It ran a major inclusion awareness campaign and actively supports the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities through various projects. In manages an online* [*Inclusion-Portal*](https://www.aktion-mensch.de/inklusion) *providing information for families, schools and municipalities, e.g., on the* [*network inclusion in Oldenburg*](https://www.aktion-mensch.de/inklusion/bildung/beispiele/netzwerk-oldenburg)*. The Jacobs Foundation active in Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg initiated the program “*[*Bildungslandschaften*](https://jacobsfoundation.org/start-des-nationalen-programms-bildungslandschaften-schweiz/)*” (education landscapes, initiated in 2012) that supports municipalities and regions in collaboration with ministries of education, associations and experts to bring together all necessary partners to improve equal access of all children to high quality education by developing cooperation systems for lifelong learning.*

*The Peer Learning Activity (23rd June 2021) document prepared by Ireland includes a description of the “National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy” (NTRIS). The steering group included all relevant Government Departments, Agencies and NGOs. 149 actions were identified in the strategy covering all relevant themes and policy domains, including education actions like bullying research, pilot projects to target attendance, participation and school completion in specific Traveller and Roma Communities regionally. Goals and objectives are broad enough to allow actions to reflect local needs.*

*The Peer Learning Activity (28th June 2021) document prepared by Poland gives a detailed account of the strategy and processes implemented to ensure dialogue and common understanding of the envisaged reforms.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 1: Governance of policy planning and implementation

Standard 7: Governance for equitable learning opportunities

3rd Standard: Governance and financing to promote inclusion

*Resource allocation is equitable, efficient, cost-effective, flexible and co-ordinated.*

*This means that:*

*- all national, EU and other funds are effectively co-ordinated and in line with the stated goals for inclusive education;*

*- there is a move away from ‘funding per pupil’ to more adaptable models of funding that give schools more flexibility to support learning needs in different ways.*

*Emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis:*

Funding mechanisms are in place. However, there are challenges in relation to ensuring the effectiveness of governance mechanisms, as well as reducing heavy administrative burdens on schools. The negative effects of rapid implementation of initiatives without systematic evidence collection via piloting can also be recognised as a challenge to be overcome.

Long-term financial support is centrally provided to the regions. The regions are obliged to provide special support, as well as inclusive education. However, the regions face challenges in deciding which challenged schools to prioritise for additional support and resources.

In 2019 a revision of the funding system shifted funding per pupil to funding linked to the allocated support. The basic premise of this model however remains an input formula based on ‘approved’ measures linked identified needs. It is recognised that additional revisions to the funding formula and models are required.

There are multiple options for funding, grants and programmes for schools addressing different types of support for learners of vulnerable groups (learners with special needs and/or disabilities, learners of the Roma community, or low-income families). However, there is no systematic overview of how these different funding channels are being used in practice.

No evidence for clear defined strategies for developing the role of specialist provision to increase the capability of mainstream schools was found. Evidence indicates attitudinal barriers to such developments centred around a well-established system of segregated education.

*Key Messages from Analysis Work:*

The documentary analysis and stakeholder data collection analysis indicate funding is flexible, but not necessarily equitable, efficient, cost-effective, or co-ordinated.

The documentary analysis showed that there is a high level of resource investment targeted towards reducing disparities across regions and supporting the inclusion of vulnerable learners. Stakeholders confirm that these resources are available, but as they are spread across multiple programmes, implemented by a range of service providers who fund in a variety of ways the ‘on-demand’ funding model presents a huge administrative burden. It also leads to financing which may be tied, and time limited to very specific resource needs of schools or may not be available when needed.

As the available funding is most often targeted to compensatory policy initiatives (for example separate educational programmes or provision for specific groups of learners), that are not always directly tied to the implementation of policy for inclusive education at regional and local levels, it prevents schools from using financial resources more flexibly to benefit all learners.

Both analyses identified a mid- to long-term issue of sustainability of funding mechanisms. The Czech education system lacks long-term, embedded, reliable and consistent financial support for schools allowing them to develop and implement long term strategies and plans for inclusive education.

*Proposed areas for discussion:*

**1. Governance and management of multiple funding sources**

How can educational governance help creating synergies between different funding sources to promote inclusive education?

**2. Governance of funding and service provision**

How can financing and funding support systems ensure an inclusive approach to providing specialist provision?

**3. Funding models for schools**

How can flexible resource frameworks support inclusive education at school level?

3.1 Governance and management of multiple funding sources

Funding of education system in the Czech Republic has increased 12.1% from 2019 to 2020. The basic funding scheme changed January 2020 from a pupil-based to a teacher-based funding scheme (OECD, [Education Policy Outlook Czech Republic](http://www.oecd.org/czech/EDUCATION%20POLICY%20OUTLOOK%20CZECH%20REPUBLIC_EN.pdf) 2020). Currently, there is more funding made available for secondary education, despite higher return on lower level of education. According to OECD, funding mechanisms could respond more to local and future needs. Teacher salaries are directly paid by MŠMT (since 2020), now based on teaching, rather than on number of students (ibid., p. 22), but schools need to apply for grants (e.g., for teachers’ assistants through [Development and grant programmes](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/zakladni-vzdelavani/dotace-a-granty-1) (2018) or [Šablony II within the OP RDE](https://opvvv.msmt.cz/vyzva/vyzva-c-02-18-064-sablony-ii-pro-hlavni-mesto-praha-verze-1.htm)). The Thematic Report within the Inspection report for 2019/2020 (p. 452) notes that the funding options for disadvantaged students are not long-term and therefore do not guarantee stability of measures, but rather project based. Some funding is earmarked, for example allocation by specific measure, depending on organisation/administration of schools (e.g., 5 students for special class), other funding is associated to services provided, see also The long-term plan of education and development of the educational system of the Czech Republic for the period 2019-2023 ([Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky na období 2019–2023](http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/dz-cr-2019-2023), allocation of resources by measure). There are separate funding mechanisms for socially disadvantaged children (see 2.3), but at the same time, “social disadvantage is a category of special needs (see Education of children with social disadvantage in primary school , [Vzdělávání dětí se sociálním znevýhodněním v základní škole](http://www.nuv.cz/uploads/KIPR/Vystupy_z_klicovych_aktivit/KA_5/Komparacni_studie_Vzdelavani_deti_se_socialnim_znevyhodnenim_v_zakladni_skole.pdf) 2019, National Institute for Education). The two separate roles of the regional level in the education financing system (receiving education grant to finance secondary schools and allocating these funds to schools; receiving education grant from central budget for primary schools managed by municipalities and redistributing these funds among the municipalities adds to the complexities ([The Funding of School Education. Connecting Resources and Learning](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264276147-en.pdf?expires=1617113435&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E41973AE64C5FFB11B748FFB9776F90C), OECD 2017, p. 78)

How can educational governance help creating synergies between different funding sources to promote inclusive education?

*One of the key questions with regard to equity funding schools raised by OECD (OECD (2017):* [*The Funding of School Education: Connecting Resources and Learning:*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/the-funding-of-school-education_5jfvxdqhtw40.pdf?itemId=%2Fcontent%2Fpublication%2F9789264276147-en&mimeType=pdf) *Paris: OECD, p.21ff) is how much funding should be distributed via main allocation mechanism and how much via other mechanisms (such as targeted funds). Targeted funds can be used for specific purposes and thereby ensure responsiveness to emerging priorities or identified needs of specific groups. But multiple targeted programmes generate overlap, bureaucracy, and lack of long-term sustainability for schools. Schools should be allowed some discretion on how they use funding, balanced with strong accountability measures to ensure impact on learning.*

*Ireland’s special education funding system has undergone much scrutiny in recent years because of marked increase in costs (46% increase of government expenditure on special education between 2011 and 2019, NCSE (2019):* [*Policy Advice on Special Schools and Classes. An inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society?*](https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Progress-Report-Policy-Advice-on-Special-Schools-Classes-website-upload.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2Bbn2jdqhH0fHcexBD6HZP5eEPd9cxDRD05k5Nx5etFo3sC_YSSKdeR8U) *National Council for Special Education.) and trying to meet the obligations of ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Ireland has since removed the requirement for students to be diagnosed to access support to avoid over-identification. There are doubts whether sufficient and appropriate accountability measures are in place and whether schools and professionals have the capacity to implement inclusive education meaningfully. There is a continued use of segregated settings.*

*Kenny, N., McCoy, S. & Mihut, G. (2020): Special education reforms in Ireland: changing systems, changing schools, International Journal of Inclusive Education, DOI:*[*10.1080/13603116.2020.1821447*](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1821447)

*Shevlin, M. & Banks, J. Inclusion at a Crossroads (2021): Dismantling Ireland’s System of Special Education. Education Sciences, 11, 161. https://doi.org/10.3390/ educsci11040161*

[*Banks, J.*](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Joanne%20Banks)*(2021): "A Winning Formula? Funding Inclusive Education in Ireland",*[*Goldan, J.*](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Janka%20Goldan)*,*[*Lambrecht, J.*](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Jennifer%20Lambrecht)*and*[*Loreman, T.*](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Tim%20Loreman)*(Ed.) Resourcing Inclusive Education (International Perspectives on Inclusive Education, Vol. 15), Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 7-19.*[*https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-363620210000015003*](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-363620210000015003)

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 1: Governance of policy planning and implementation

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

3.2 Governance of funding and service provision

Current funding schemes are considered rather complicated and there is a considerable administrative burden for schools to apply for different funds and grants. In addition, national initiatives and grants may not fit the specific priorities of schools, which may lead to ineffective use of resources. Also, it may put schools with low capacity to apply to grants at an additional disadvantage. OECD (2017) states that devolution of resource management to schools requires adequate leadership capacity ([The Funding of School Education. Connecting Resources and Learning](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264276147-en.pdf?expires=1617113435&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E41973AE64C5FFB11B748FFB9776F90C), p. 82). There is the additional challenge of offering services for the school and all the staff vs. using resources that are only available if a student has been identified as having special educational needs. This problem arises around sharing teacher assistants or equipment made available for students with disabilities that may not be used effectively by local staff. According to Eurydice Website ([National Reforms in School Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-school-education-17_en), 2021), as of this year, through an amendment of the Decree on Education of Pupils with Special Educational Needs and of Gifted Students , schools are able to access support for children who have not yet been identified.

A possible challenge around governance of funding inclusive education may arise from the fact that special educational centres do not only teach children with more severe disabilities but are also engaged in diagnosing special needs (Eurydice, [Special Education Needs Provision within Mainstream Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/special-education-needs-provision-within-mainstream-education-17_en), 2021). Generally, education systems try to avoid the possibility of self-referral, especially if it impacts on funding, especially since special schooling has also been made available for children behavioural or learning difficulties (see. Documentary Analysis, p. 71). Based on the information available, it is unclear how special educational centres provide expertise and services to regular schools to ensure that special needs are adequately addressed. The uneven regional distribution of special educational centres may also contribute to regional disparities.

How can financing and funding support systems ensure an inclusive approach to providing specialist provision?

*A throughput model of financing inclusive education is based on the idea that budgets for additional support needs are not allocated according to identified students (input model), but rather according to presumed number of students in a region or municipality and requires a close collaboration between mainstream and special education. When allocating budgets, regional disparities should be addressed with an equalisation component in order to address different levels of needs associated with social disadvantage.*

*“In Poland, education decentralisation was part of the overall decentralisation process of the country initiated in 1990. The main transfer from the central to local budgets is called “general subvention” and is composed of a few separately calculated components. Two main ones are the education component and the equalisation component. The education component is calculated on the basis of student numbers (with numerous coefficients reflecting different costs of providing education to different groups of students), and thus reflects different costs of service provision. The equalisation component is based on a formula and equalises poorer jurisdictions up to 90% of average per capita revenues of similar local governments. It thus reflects revenue equalisation.” (quoted from: OECD (2017).* [*The Funding of School Education. Connecting Resources and Learning.*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264276147-en.pdf?expires=1622016419&id=id&accname=oid009350&checksum=70BE18B5805029EB69E9B737062E4704) *Paris: OECD, p. 71). Recent developments have been discussed as port of the Peer Learning Activity (28th June 2021, see document under policy development work).*

*Some years ago, the Canton of Zurich has introduced a new funding scheme for second tier support measures (see 3.3 Continuum of provision) by providing an additional lump sum to school for additional support measures. The Cantonal Ministry of Education has developed a “*[*social index*](https://pub.bista.zh.ch/de/zahlen-und-fakten/andere/sozialindex/erklaerungen/)*” to adjust this lump sum to the local social situation. As a consequence, municipalities with a high percentage of disadvantaged families receive more resources. This scheme is embedded in a country-wide system of equalisation and transfer of funds at national (*[*Nationaler Finanzausgleich*](https://www.efd.admin.ch/efd/de/home/finanzpolitik/nationaler-finanzausgleich.html)*) and cantonal levels (e.g.,* [*Zürcher Finanzausgleich*](https://www.zh.ch/de/steuern-finanzen/gemeindefinanzen/zuercher-finanzausgleich.html)*).*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 4: Quality Assurance for Inclusive Education

Standard 6: Governance of coordinating services and stakeholders

3.3 Funding models for schools

Although schools enjoy a very high degree of autonomy, the financing of additional support for students with special needs is highly regulated and depends on accessing additional resources through grants and applications. For example, 5 students with measures at the second to fifth level may attend a special class and additional staff are assigned to a specific student (e.g., teachers’ assistants, see Eurydice, [Special Education Needs Provision within Mainstream Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/special-education-needs-provision-within-mainstream-education-17_en), 2021). The main question here is: If funding of teacher assistants and other special educational support and materials is linked to one specific student, how is the school able to build a comprehensive inclusive school environment? There should be a balancing of needs of the entire school (e.g., to ensure and maintain accessibility, infrastructure, qualified staff) and input funding for specific students. Schools generally only receive funding when they produce problems (also see thematic report on social disadvantage Inspection Report 2019/2020, p. 451), even if there are no children with disabilities, some schools draw on these support measures through “Category of other living conditions as a specific form of special educational needs”. If funding models for schools were more flexible, but linked to strong accountability mechanisms, schools together with their municipality may be able to set their own goals for inclusive education. It might be useful to think of schools being financed for offering a continuum of support that includes all children, enabling the school to re-think their provision of education and create synergies to ensure participation of all children and youth.

How can flexible resource frameworks support inclusive education at school level?

*Many European countries have introduced funding schemes that combine input with throughput model of financing combined with accountability systems to ensure funding is used effectively. One way of achieving a more inclusive approach to funding special support measures is the establishment of a multi-tier invention model. In 2007, Finland has introduced such a model to respond to concerns expressed by several municipalities about the increasing number of students referred to Special Educational Needs (SEN) support. The three-tier model also supports early identification of students who are at risk of falling behind or dropout. A more detailed description can be found in OECD (2020):* [*Improving educational equity in Romania. OECD Education Policy Perspectives No.4*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/f4a8c506-en.pdf?expires=1622022957&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=9008D7B764B6A5CCE3C25C6996C4F50C)*, p. 8 Paris: OECD). Assessment is closely linked to instruction and multi-disciplinary teams provide advice and support for second and third tier interventions.*

*The Island of Rügen in Germany has introduced a tiered model of support based on the “Response-to-intervention” model, called* [*Rügener Inklusionsmodell*](https://www.rim.uni-rostock.de/)*. All children attend public schools (full inclusion) and their progress is monitored regularly by standardised assessment tools (focus on mathematics and German language) – which was not introduced in Finland. The over-all results are positive but were achieved with high workload for teachers.*

*At the present time, England is in the process of defining a* [*new funding formula for allocations of nigh needs funding to local authorities*](https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/high-needs-nff-proposed-changes/supporting_documents/High%20needs%20NFF%20review%20consultation%20document.pdf) *to be implemented in 2022-23 (ongoing consultation process). The current formula includes basic entitlement provided per pupil and adjusted for area costs, using the number of pupils who attend special schools, and proxy indicators such as 2-18 year old population, deprivation, health and disability, and low attainment (see* [*High needs national funding formula: technical note*](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/901888/2021-22_NFF_High_needs_block_technical_note.pdf) *(2020), see also OECD (2019):* [*Education Policy Outlook 2019. Working together to help students achieve their potential*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/2b8ad56e-en.pdf?expires=1622022710&id=id&accname=oid009350&checksum=E9938FC2CB1DA26A23B70E3B303EE83E)*. Paris: OECD, p. 211ff.).*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 2: Regional governance mechanisms

Standard 7: Governance for equitable learning opportunities

4th Standard: Quality assurance for inclusive education

*Stakeholders collect and effectively use reliable and relevant information for monitoring, quality assurance and accountability purposes.*

*This means that:*

*- there is a range of school, region and system level quantitative and qualitative data, research, feedback and other information for all stakeholders to use in their work;*

*- all stakeholders collaborate to utilize the available evidence in order to achieve the goals for inclusive education.*

*Emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis:*

There is no explicit evidence of central data being available on whether learners’ rights to age appropriate inclusive education are being implemented. Indicative data is collected via different national and international organisations.

There is evidence of mechanisms, programmes and the development of indicators for quality assurance. However, there does not seems to be a consistent framework of quality assurance across regions and across school levels. The decentralisation within the education system presents a challenge for a strong quality assurance system that supports the work of all schools.

There is clear potential for the role of the Czech School Inspectorate to contribute to school improvement processes. What is still required is more systematic feedback for schools on their work, as well as an authoritative set of quality indicators to support schools with self-evaluation.

No evidence was found relating to clear mechanisms for identifying schools with lower educational outcomes. However, inequality across schools is an issue that is clearly recognised across system levels, as well as within academic research.

Some data which could potentially inform improvement processes at different levels is available. However, this is not comprehensive and the lack of a co-ordinated approach towards utilising all of this information for improving equitable learning opportunities for all learners is a recognised challenge.

No evidence was found concerning mechanisms to ensure that the outcomes of investment in inclusive systems are monitored and clearly communicated to other stakeholders.

*Key messages from Analysis Work:*

The documentary analysis and stakeholder data collection both indicate that monitoring and quality assurance lacks a consistent framework across regions and school levels. The decentralisation within the education system presents a challenge for a strong quality assurance system. Data which has the potential to inform improvement processes at different levels is available and does partially help schools improve their practice. However, the monitoring of the implementation of inclusive education is not systematic and is unlikely to support the reduction of disparities and provide equitable learning opportunities for all.

In addition, stakeholders criticised the school evaluation procedure. The current system of school monitoring and assessment does not consider school success in the context of the individual challenges faced by schools based for example on their locality, socio-economic context, diversity of learners, or level of inclusive teaching.

Stakeholders see the need for more systematic quality assurance and guidance on the process of monitoring and the implementation of inclusive practice.

*Proposed areas for discussion:*

**1. Integrated information system for monitoring and decision-making**

How can data be developed into a few key indicators for inclusive education?

**2. Accountability systems for quality in education**

Is it realistic to include self-evaluation into a national accountability system?

**3. Effective use of information to guide practice**

How can input, throughput and output information help guide inclusive practices?

4.1 Integrated information system for monitoring and decision-making

The National Inspection System for the Education System of the Czech Republic (NIQUES) was launched in 2015 and the establishment of the system completed in 2015. There are 14 Regional School Inspectorates headed by chief school inspector who is appointed by Minister of Education. The Inspectorate collects and analyses information on students, schools, reviews school education programme, mainly for its compliance with legislation and use of state funds (see Eurydice 2021 [Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/quality-assurance-early-childhood-and-school-education-17_en)). The [MŠMT](https://phzh-my.sharepoint.com/personal/judith_hollenweger_phzh_ch/Documents/Top_Level/A-IPE_1_ab61116/Czech_Republic_EA/Discussion%20Paper/M%C5%A0MT) publishes statistical outputs and analyses (National Statistics, International Statistics, Regional Education, Tertiary Education, including statistical yearbooks). The School register (see [Ministry Website](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/statistika-skolstvi/skolska-matrika-informace-pro-respondenty)) contains information for each student, including information on disability, first language, health problems (Register of Pupils, see Eurydice, [Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/administration-and-governance-local-andor-institutional-level-21_en#2_7_2_1_1_School_bodies), 2021). The data is sent to the level that organises the schools (some direct to Ministry, some to regional authority, some to department of education of the municipal office with extended powers, e.g.,Prague). The Czech Republic also regularly participates in International Assessment and Evaluation Projects, such as PISA, TALIS, TIMSS, PIRLS among others, see [Ministry Website](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/statistika-skolstvi/mezinarodni-statistiky)). Participation in international studies gives feedback on the system, but there is a danger of reacting to headlines ([Better learning for Europe’s young people. Developing coherent quality assurance strategies](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1361c84b-80c8-11e8-ac6a-01aa75ed71a1), European Commission, 2018), because increasing one indicator may have detrimental effects on other indicators (e.g., linking school accountability to student performance or even teacher salaries to student test results). The Inspectorate Annual Report 2019/2020 suggests as a system level recommendation to create a system enabling interconnection of data and share information with public (Inspectorate Annual Report 2019/2020, [Kvalita a efektivita vzdělávání a vzdělávací soustavy. Výroční zpráva 2019/2020](https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Kvalita-a-efektivita-vzdelavani-a-vzdelavaci-s-%284%29), p. 83).

How can data be developed into a few key indicators for inclusive education?

*Poland is currently implementing of the* [*National Educational Data System*](https://cie.gov.pl/projekty/projekty-realizowane/) *(2019-2021) to enable data exchange between multiple systems and eliminating multiple entries of identical data. In a prior project* [*Integration of education system data bases*](https://cie.gov.pl/projekty/cyfryzacja-procesow-back-office-w-ore/) *(2014-2020) with the aim to integrate at least 60 databases of the education system and to develop a prototype of the National Education Data System. In the Peer Learning Activity (28th June 2021) document, the challenge of obtaining relevant data on inclusive education remains in some areas (e.g., participation, discrimination practices). The need to further supplement the current data collection work was mentioned.*

*Lithuanian schools are supported in their budgeting and accounting through the ministry’s education management information system (EMIS) which gives them ready access to indicators such as the average school area per single student or heating costs (taken from OECD (2017):* [*The funding of school education: connecting resources and learning. Paris: OECD*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264276147-en.pdf?expires=1622025651&id=id&accname=oid009350&checksum=02A13120BDE4CBA0A5A0EDB3F24FC34A)*, p. 161; quoting Fakharzadeh, T. (2016):* [*Budgeting and Accounting in OECD Education Systems: A Literature Review,*](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jm3xgsz03kh-en) OECD Education Working Papers. Paris: OECD.

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 1: Governance of policy planning and implementation

Standard 6: Governance of coordinating services and stakeholders

4.2 Accountability systems for quality in education

According to the Guidelines developed for the Strategy 2030+ ([Hlavní směry vzdělávací politiky ČR do roku 2030+](http://www.msmt.cz/file/51582_1_1/), p. 51), there is no one in the system who has direct legal responsibility for the quality of education for a certain territorial unit. No one can coordinate services and resources at the regional level for services or resources that not every school needs, e.g., didactic technology, methodological support of principals etc.. The coordination of services and resources at regional level could contribute considerably to the quality of education, according to these guidelines. The document also points out that about 47% of the differences between regions can be linked to inequalities in the economy and social problems in the regions, but 53% of differences are linked to other factors, especially the role of the local quality of education (ibid., p. 60). A sufficient and formative feedback on the quality of school work and operational, focused and intensive support for schools in difficulty, based on the cooperation of stakeholders is recommended (ibid., p. 45). The guidelines also introduce the notion that education quality standards should rely on self-evaluation of professional standards to support continuing professional development of teachers to be able to respond to the changing needs of heterogeneous student populations (ibid., 45). Much importance should be given therefore to the combination of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms, and thereby also reducing the administrative reporting currently in place (see also [Quality assurance for school development. Guiding principles for policy development on quality assurance in school education](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs2-quality-assurance-school_en.pdf), European Commission 2017) and to linking teacher appraisal to professional capacity building. According to the [Education Policy Outlook](http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Czech-Republic-2020.pdf) of the OECD (2020, p. 15) only 33% of teachers say that this is the case. The long-term plan of education and development of the educational system in the Czech Republic for the period 2019-2023 ([Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky na období 2019–2023](http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/dz-cr-2019-2023)) states the principle of evidence-based policy and the use of information tools for school system’s management. It links evaluation and self-evaluation for improvement, although self-evaluation of schools is no longer required under the current legislation (see also Report on the monitoring of inclusive access to schools, [Zpráva o možnostech sledování inkluzivních přístupů na úrovni školy 2017/2018](https://www.csicr.cz/getattachment/79d46006-8f87-418e-93cc-30483d3d196a/Zprava_sledovani-inkluzivnich-pristupu.pdf), p. 43). The document provides a comprehensive overview of possible approach to investigate the quality of inclusive education. A catalogue of tools for quality evaluation of schools is provided online ([Methodological portal for teachers and schools](http://evaluacninastroje.rvp.cz/nuovckk_portal/Default.aspx?tabid=150&language=cs-CZ)).

Is it realistic to include self-evaluation into a national accountability system?

*In 2017, the European Commission published* [*Quality assurance for school development. Guiding principles for policy development on quality assurance in school education.*](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs2-quality-assurance-school_en.pdf) *It sets out eight guiding principles: (1) coherence of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms, (2) professional learning communities, (3) trust and shared accountability, (4) opportunities to support innovation in schools. (5) shared understanding and dialogue among stakeholders, (6) nteworks to support development, (7) Building capacity for generating, interpreting and using data and (8) developing a balanced view of school development. The document provides country examples for each of these principles.*

*The new school inspection system in Poland was introduced in 2009 to develop a new culture of evaluation by combining internal and external evaluation to ensure quality in the now decentralised education system. The system includes for inter-related components of pedagogical supervision: (1) evaluation with a focus on quality of activities in schools, (2) legal compliance auditing, (3), support for schools and teachers, e.g., publication of findings from supervision, organisation of meetings, dissemination of information) to inspire and intensify performance improvement processes in schools, and (4) monitoring (collection and analysis of information on activities of schools to ensure adequate performance of schools), see Eurydice (2020):* [*Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education*](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/quality-assurance-early-childhood-and-school-education-50_en)*.*

*Scotland’s* [*National improvement Framework and Improvement Plan*](https://www.gov.scot/publications/2018-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/) *2021 (published by Scottish Government in 2020)sets out the vision and priorities for Scottish education that have been agreed across the system and the national improvement activity that needs to be undertaken to help deliver those key priorities. The* [*document*](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/12/2021-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/documents/achieving-excellence-equity-2021-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/achieving-excellence-equity-2021-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/govscot%3Adocument/achieving-excellence-equity-2021-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan.pdf?forceDownload=true) *sets out a vision and key priorities and is closely linked to other strategic frameworks in Scottish Education. The plan is informed by data, evidence from school inspections, local authority self-evaluation reports and advice. Common themes were identified in the regional and local authority plans informed by the school improvement plans – which were picked up under the relevant drivers for improvement. Good practice examples are included and linkages to the 2020 National Improvement Plan are made explicit (iterative process of school improvement).*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 1: Governance of policy planning and implementation

Standard 3: Governance and financing to promote inclusion

4.3 Effective use of information to guide practice

Issue of capacity of key actors being able to generate, interpret and use data is important to educational governance. Schools develop contextually relevant school education programmes based on the National Framework Education Programme which is currently under revision. Consequently, keeping track of student achievement would be an important part of quality management in local schools. The [Strategy for Educational Policies 2020](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-vzdelavaci-politiky-2020-1?highlightWords=p%C5%99%C3%ADpravn%C3%BDch+t%C5%99%C3%ADd), (p. 27) links standards with the evaluation of “founder” and Czech School Inspectorate, indicating that this requires indicator system and a modernisation of the evaluation system at level of child or pupil (p. 30), while making sure that this is not used “against the students”. For this reason, formative assessment and monitoring strategies should be supported (p. 31) to increase the capacity at the school level for formative aspects. The current curriculum development and revision is linked to evaluating and monitoring and therefore provides an opportunity to support implementation of key strategic goals in the Long-term Education and the development of the education system of the Czech republic 2019-2023 ([Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky 2019–2023](https://www.msmt.cz/file/51673_1_1/).) Currently, not all schools do track achievement data over time (only 50% of schools, according to students’ report; OECD average is 71%, see Education Policy Outlook, OECD, p. 15). As mentioned above, self-evaluation of schools is no longer required by legislation (Eurydice, [Quality Assurance in early Childhood and School Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/quality-assurance-early-childhood-and-school-education-13_en), 2017). Ideally, schools should be provided with an indicator system that allows them to link their school development plans to the national curriculum by taking into account other relevant parameters (e.g.,socio-economic background of students, previous achievement data, resources available to school and other factors). Much information is already collected presently, but there may be a need for an indicator system that schools find useful to be evaluated against.

How can input, throughput and output information help guide inclusive practices?

*Ireland implemented the DEIS Plan (2017,* [*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*](https://www.education.ie/en/schools-colleges/services/deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools-/)*)* *for communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion. The plan includes a set of objectives and actions to support children at greatest risk of Educational disadvantage and has five goals: (1) implementation of a more robust Assessment Framework for identification of schools and effective resource allocation (2) improve learning experience and outcomes of pupils in DEIS schools, (3) improve capacity of school leaders and teachers, (4) to support and foster best practise through inter-agency collaboration, (5) to support schools by providing research, information, evaluation and feedback to achieve the goals of the plan. The successful programme for schools is described in the Peer Learning Activity Document prepared by Ireland (23rd June 2021). The programme also includes self-evaluation of schools to identify strengths and challenges.*

*England relies on a national testing (outcome) system of accountability to evaluate the quality of schools and teachers under a competitive scheme. To include all children in this scheme, even children learning below the standard of the national curriculum tests and assessments, the so called P-Scales (*[*Performance attainment targets for pupils with special educational needs)*](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903590/Performance_-_P_Scale_-_attainment_targets_for_pupils_with_special_educational_needs_June_2017.pdf) *were introduced. At the same time, children with special educational needs (SEN) may be seen as a threat to school attainment profiles by lowering the over-all results of the school. There are tensions between the inclusive education agenda and the school improvement agenda. The introduction of P-Scales tried to extend the notion of testing and standards to the heterogeneous group of students with SEN. The P-Scales have since been withdrawn and replaced by the* [*Engagement Model*](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903458/Engagement_Model_Guidance_2020.pdf) *to assess the progress of pupils working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments. It is an example of how policy streams implemented separately can have a detrimental effect on inclusive education outcomes.*

*Daniels. H., Thompson, I. & Tawell, A. (2019). After Warnock: The effects of perverse incentives in policies in England for students with special educational needs. Frontiers in Education, 4, Article 36.* [*https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00036*](https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00036)

*In Switzerland, a non-categorical approach to identifying students with disabilities (third tier,* [*Standardisiertes Abklärungsverfahren*](https://szh.ch/themen/sav)*) based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, ICF) combines functional assessment with an assessment of need that allows monitoring of identification rates, of resource allocation in regular and special schools as well as of achieved outcomes, compared to the local programmes developed. Some cantons use a school-based procedure to identify students for the second tier using the participation component only of the ICF. Special educational needs provision is an integral component of external (based on* [*Quality Profiles*](https://www.zh.ch/content/dam/zhweb/bilder-dokumente/organisation/bildungsdirektion/fsb/qualitaetsprofile-2021-2026/210310_fsb_qualitaetsprofil_regelschulen_barrierefrei.pdf)*) and internal evaluations. Representative national samples are drawn regularly to monitor the quality of the education systems against the national education goals based on the curriculum (*[*Nationale Bildungsziele*](https://www.edk.ch/de/themen/harmos/nationale-bildungsziele#:~:text=Nationale%20Bildungsziele%20der%20EDK&text=Diese%20liegen%20f%C3%BCr%20vier%20Fachbereiche,und%20Englisch%2C%20Mathematik%20und%20Naturwissenschaften.)*).*

*Linkages to other Standards:*

Standard 1: Governance of policy planning and implementation

Standard 3: Governance and financing to promote inclusion

Standard 7: Governance of coordinating services and stakeholders

5th Standard: Governance for human and system capacity building

*Professional development issues at all system levels are effectively addressed.*

*This means that:*

*- all stakeholders view professional learning and development as a lifelong continuous process;*

*- effective support mechanisms are in place to ensure all professionals have access to the professional development opportunities they require.*

*- all stakeholders have access to forums/groups etc. for sharing information and exchanging information on practices and see this as important an opportunity to meet and receive mutual professional support at various levels.*

*Emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis:*

MŠMT formulates the competences for teachers, but has no accreditation mechanism to ensure that training opportunities are clearly aligned with education policy goals. Inclusive education may or may not be part of the teacher education curriculum and special needs teachers follow a different professional training programme.

There are multiple recommendations from European and international bodies calling for improvements in initial teacher education and professional development. The low participation in continuous professional development is linked to a lack of incentives, the underdevelopment of professional.

MŠMT provides financial support to cover in-service training which has been approved by them. Evidence does not indicate a clear funding mechanism. Local capacity building is within the autonomy of the schools. However, the challenge remains that teachers do not feel prepared for working in classrooms with diverse learners.

No evidence was found of strategic plans developed for staff training in inclusive education. Primarily, the school principal is responsible for staff development. Teachers report a high need for training in working with learners with special needs.

A currently recognised challenge is the large number of teaching / learning support assistants within the support system. There is an understanding that their work should not focus on exclusively providing individual support for individual learners. Rather the goal should be for them to assist more in the classroom with goal of supporting the class teacher, the learning needs of any learners, as well as the inclusion of a learner with recognised special educational needs.

There is no clear evidence to suggest a strategy for ensuring the availability of high-quality and appropriately trained teacher educators is in place. More general issues relating to regional differences in the availability of training facilities and the autonomy of training institutions, clearly impact upon the role and professional development of teacher educators.

*Key Messages from Analysis Work:*

The importance of highly qualified and well-motivated teachers to ensuring inclusive schools is well recognised. However, teachers do not feel well prepared for inclusive practice and other stakeholders have similar views. There is a gap between the theory taught in educational faculties and the practice encountered in schools. Stakeholders feel that there is no strategic plan for continuous professional development that focuses on inclusive education to ensure the availability of qualified teachers to meet the needs of diverse learner groups.

Stakeholders agree that training providers have a high degree of independence and there are few mechanisms for ensuring initial and continuing teacher education is clearly aligned with national and regional policy goals for inclusive education. Stakeholders also stressed that having teacher training faculties in regions requiring additional support could encourage teachers to stay in the region for their professional career.

Compared to the documentary analysis stakeholders focused more on the attitudes of teachers. They noted that there are positive developments in the will of the teachers, other professionals, and schools to make inclusive education work. However, there are embedded negative teacher attitudes towards inclusion which need to be overcome.

*Proposed areas for discussion:*

**1. Governance of professional capacity building**

How can the capacity to implement inclusive education practices by teachers be enhanced?

**2. Capacity building for school governance and educational leadership**

How can effective school leadership help promote inclusive education in regular schools?

**3. Strategies to build capacity of professional support systems**

How should capacity building to strengthen professional support systems be supported?

5.1 Governance of professional capacity building

One of the reasons for the poorer performance of some regions and schools is the concentration of skills shortages and quality teachers (for example, in the Karlovy Vary region, 12.5% of teachers are without qualifications (Guidelines to strategy 2030+). According to the Long-term Plan for the Usti Region 2020-2024, p. 25) teachers are not well prepared and do have insufficient knowledge. The [Strategy for Educational Policies 2020](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-vzdelavaci-politiky-2020-1?highlightWords=p%C5%99%C3%ADpravn%C3%BDch+t%C5%99%C3%ADd) (p. 25ff) states the development of a career system and the improvement of working conditions as critical, as well as modernize initial teacher education, strengthen continuing professional development as well as methodological support for teachers. The strategy also mentions the need to increase cooperation between teacher training institutions and schools (p. 27.). These requirements are also noted in the long-term plan of education and development of the educational system of the Czech Republic for the period 2019-2023 ([Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky na období 2019–2023](http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/dz-cr-2019-2023)) and the Inspection report 2019/2020. According to OECD Country Profile (p. 22), there is a low level of participation of teachers in continuing professional development. The Call Support for children and pupils with special educational needs (Operational Program, Research, Development and Education; [Podpora dětí a žáků se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami](https://opvvv.msmt.cz/vyzva/vyzva-c-02-19-077.htm)) supported strengthening the competencies of staff of schools in mental health support for children and youth. Also, the Agency for Social Inclusion is engaged in providing support to teachers ([Inclusive and Quality Education from the perspective of the Agency for Social Inclusion](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/oblasti-podpory/vzdelavani/inkluzivni-a-kvalitni-vzdelavani-pohledem-agentury-pro-socialni-zaclenovani/)). There is no unified programme for training teachers and no formal induction programme ([EASNIE](https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/czech-republic/teacher-education-for-inclusive-education)). In general, the National Institute for Education ([Národní pedagogický institut České republiky](http://www.nuv.cz/t/dv)) for continuing professional development, qualifications, and recognition of education.

How can the capacity to implement inclusive education practices by teachers be enhanced?

*Norway has introduced a New Competence Development Model for school that aims to provide municipalities and schools with more autonomy and empower them to carry out systematic school improvements at the local level. The model includes a decentralised scheme that channels state funds to municipalities and universities for collaboration in capacity development and an innovation scheme for schools and universities to engage in partnerships and develop projects. (taken from* [*Improving School Quality in Norway 2020: Progress with the Competence Development Model.*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/98600316-en.pdf?expires=1622038980&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=B7C4B0880271AE7D20014433F237558A) *OECD Education Policy Perspectives No. 8). Deepening the stakeholder involvement in the model is one of the recommendations to ensure effective communication, foster transparency with quality dimension and indicators and engaging stakeholders with the model.* [*A grant scheme*](https://www.udir.no/kvalitet-og-kompetanse/lokal-kompetanseutvikling/tilskuddsordningene-for-lokal-kompetanseutvikling-i-barnehage-og-grunnopplaring/#156827) *supports this process. The initiative includes a* [*competency boost for special education and inclusive practices*](https://www.udir.no/kvalitet-og-kompetanse/lokal-kompetanseutvikling/kompetanseloftet-for-spesialpedagogikk-og-inkluderende-praksis/).

*Germany has engaged in the development of positive teacher attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education. The activities were presented and discussed during the Peer Learning Activity (25th June 2021). In Hesse, existing school networks are in the process of merging into inclusive school alliances to improve linkages to supra-regional advice and support centres. In-service teacher training was an important component of implementation. In Saxony, a certificate course for teachers called ZINT (developing an integrative/inclusive school together) was established and implemented to support inclusive education. Thuringia developed a qualification concept “Inclusive Education” for teachers, head teachers, educators and multi-professional teams.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 2: Regional governance mechanisms

Standard 7: Governance for equitable learning opportunities

5.2 Capacity building for school governance and educational leadership

School leaders have far-reaching autonomy in the administration of their schools. Their capacity to effectively and efficiently lead and manage the school and staff is therefore of critical importance. The Documentary Analysis found not evidence of strategic plans for school leadership capacity building activities. Capacity building for school leaders should include capacity building for pedagogical leadership and limit the administrative work they currently are mainly engaged with (see [European ideas for better learning: The governance of school education system](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs6-Full-Final-Output.pdf), European Commission, 2018). The Inspection Report 2019/2020 reports lack of staff, negative attitudes of some staff, lack of capacity to manage diversity, low percentage of effective ICT used, low level of providing clear feedback and use of formative assessment. The role of “school founder” is considered important by the thematic report. The insertion of assistant teachers seems to be helpful for children with special educational needs (SEN), but less then 8% were shared assistants (e.g.,not assigned to a specific child. These assistants do mainly direct pedagogical work with SEN children, raising the question about the quality of support provided as teacher assistants are the least qualified staff. As mentioned earlier, teacher assistants were introduced by special grants. The role of teacher assistants is mentioned as an issue in the Long-term plan 2019-2023.

How can effective school leadership help promote inclusive education in regular schools?

*Parallel to the implementation of the new curriculum, Wales has developed and implemented a school as a learning organisation policy (OECD (2018):* [*Developing Schools as Learning Organisations in Wales.*](https://www.oecd.org/education/Developing-Schools-as-Learning-Organisations-in-Wales-Highlights.pdf) *Paris: OECD) to bring the new curriculum to life. It identified the need for continued investment in the capacity of school leaders to model and grow learning leadership.*

*The school network* [*Blick über den Zaun*](https://www.blickueberdenzaun.de/) *of over 130 schools in Germany conducts peer reviews for schools based on a common framework and holds regular meetings, develops standards, and publishes guidelines. It fosters partnerships between schools and supports the* [*implementation of the CRPD*](https://ousfreunde.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/tagung-erklaerung-inklusion.pdf)*. Foundations in Germany have created school prizes as a way of recognizing and promoting innovative schools, for example the* [*Jakob-Muth Price*](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/unsere-projekte/abgeschlossene-projekte/jakob-muth-preis) *for Inclusive Schools (awarded by the German UNESCO Commission, the Federal Government of Germany and the Bertelsmann Foundation). Schools involved in the programme are encouraged to network with other schools and thereby support horizontal learning among schools. School networks to support inclusive education were also established in Serbia, the student population covered by schools that are supported through the network is around 150’000 students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF (2015). Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children. Montreal: UIS.* [*http://dx.doi.org/10.15220/978-92-9189-161-0-en*](http://dx.doi.org/10.15220/978-92-9189-161-0-en)*, p. 84). In addition, the European Commission has published Guiding principles for policy development on the use of networks in school education systems, called* [*Networks for learning and development across schools*](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs5-networks-learning_en.pdf) *(2017).*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 3: Governance and financing to promote inclusion¨

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

Standard 7: Governance for equitable learning opportunities

5.3 Strategies to build capacity of professional support systems

Inclusive education also requires support in accessing education, facilitating transitions and avoid dropout – issues that cannot be addressed by teachers along but requires coordination and support from other services at local and regional level. According to the School Inspectorate Report (2019/2020) there is a lack of school psychologists, a position that attracts lower-skilled teachers who need to fill in some hours, according to the Inspection Report. Also, there is no specific training for career counselling (see Website of Euro Guidance for Czech Republic). If teachers wish to become special education professionals, they must train for 5 additional years – which probably will discourage many who would be suited for such a position. It might be also necessary to clarify the mandate and required qualification of all service providers and ensure that their professional roles are compatible and complimentary. To create a professional support system for inclusive education, individual human capacity building is not sufficient, it will be necessary to increase institutional capacity to develop a coherent network of services and support at the regional and local levels. The strengthening of support infrastructure (pedagogical-psychological counselling, social work, case management) is seen as an important part of the strategy to reduce inequalities (see Strategy 2030+ and Guidelines to the Strategy 2030+). There is a “Conference of associations in Education”, a voluntary group of pedagogical associations, pedagogical programmes and civil associations (see European Commission 2017, [Quality assurance for school development](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs2-quality-assurance-school_en.pdf), p. 25), but this seems not to directly involve schools. Building networks of schools designed for SEN students is a strategic goal for the Usti region (Long-term Plan for the Usti Region 2020-2024).

How should capacity building to strengthen professional support systems be supported?

*The Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany has initiated a “*[*Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung*](https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/index.php)*” (Quality campaign teacher education,* [*information in English*](https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/de/english-2294.html)*) to support capacity building of teacher education institutions to promote research and prepare teachers for inclusive education (see topic* [*Heterogenität und Inklusion*](https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/de/heterogenitaet-und-inklusion-1751.html)*). The campaign supports programmes across the country (see* [*Project Map*](https://www.qualitaetsoffensive-lehrerbildung.de/de/projekte.php)*)*

*Several European Countries have developed Competency frameworks for teachers and other professionals. For example, the* [*Professional Standards 2021 for Scotland’s teachers*](https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/professional-standards-2021-engagement.aspx) *or* [*Teachers’ standards*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards) *for England. Germany has developed an* [*expertise for the education and professionalisation of professionals for inclusive education*](https://www.gemeinsam-einfach-machen.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/AS/UN_BRK/Dokumente_InklusionGestalten/Expertise2.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2) *in Germany (Döbert, Hans; Weishaupt, Horst (Hrsg.) (2013): Inklusive Bildung professionell gestalten – Situationsanalyse und Handlungsempfehlungen). The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education has carried out an* [*analysis of country policies related to teacher professional learning for inclusion*](https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/TPL4I_Synthesis_Report.pdf) *(European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2020): Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion: An Analysis of Country Policies in Europe. (S. Symeonidou, A. De Vroey and A. Lecheval, eds.). Odense, Denmark), including information from its member countries.*

*The Peer Learning Activity (25th June 2021) document prepared by Germany includes information on the Framework for School Quality (Hessischer Referenzrahmen Schulqualität) and the establishment of school alliances between regular schools and support centres. Schools leaders have an important role to ensure a professional organisation of the school, meaningful use of resources, the quality of teaching and learning as well as the creation and maintenance of adequate working conditions for the professionals in the schools.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

Standard 6: Governance of coordinating services and stakeholders

6th Standard: Governance of coordinating services and stakeholders

*There is effective communication and collaboration across and between all system stakeholders.*

*This means that:*

*- the various responsibilities and roles of stakeholders at all levels (i.e. state, region, municipality, community and school) are clearly defined and respected.*

*- means are shared communication and ways of sharing information are clearly defrined and understood by all stakeholders.*

*- there is effective communication and interaction between families, schools, services and local authorities.*

*Emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis:*

There is a clear recognition of the need for cross-sectoral provision and work. The CSI has quality standards for services and provision across different school levels and services. There is no evidence indicating if these standards are applied in other social sector areas of provision.

There are recommendations for cross-sectoral co-operations for inclusive education, but existing policy is not clearly cross-sectoral. Different services and institutions are responsible for addressing different needs of learners with special needs and/or disabilities, learners from the Roma community, or other vulnerable groups. It is not clear from the evidence if there is one central institution responsible for maintaining an overview of support required by, or provided to such learners.

Policies are in place to address provision of children with special educational needs and their families. However, there is no evidence of a co-ordinated cross-sectoral strategy or monitoring mechanism. There is evidence to suggest that families from disadvantaged backgrounds are badly informed and confronted with different organisational bodies making decisions and providing provision for their children.

Evidence does not show centrally organised professional learning communities. However individual schools and school founders have connected with other schools. Some teachers indicate that exchange with peers provides support for implementing new ideas and peer learning and coaching seems to provide impact. Whilst the importance of exchange and collaboration between schools’ teams is recognised, there is evidence to indicate that such exchange is rare and not systematically supported.

*Key Messages from Analysis Work:*

Both the documentary analysis and the stakeholder data collection identified the effective communication across and between all stakeholders as an area of challenge.

The documentary analysis findings show that there are policies for reducing system and individual learner inequalities in place. However, the existence of multiple initiatives means policy implementation can be seen as fragmented.

Stakeholders also perceive governance mechanisms as being fragmented and question the decentralised structure of the Czech education system in this regard. This is also reflected in how policy-makers at different levels communicate about inclusive education, which according to stakeholders does not always demonstrate a commitment to implement policy in practice to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all.

In general, inclusive education is viewed as a cross-sectoral and cross-ministerial responsibility. However, the collaboration in this area is insufficient and lacks a joint framework that improves the quality of all education professionals’ work to implement inclusive education.

Due to the decentralised structure local political priorities are not in alignment with the national inclusive education policy goals. Municipal and local policy makers can guide policy, funding and the perception of inclusive education in a way that does not support progress in the implementation of inclusive education and in many cases do so.

There is a clear wish for a governance mechanism between authorities at different levels and in different fields with schools to guide and facilitate the implementation of inclusive education policy. The implementation of equitable learning opportunities for all learners and specific support for the challenges faced by families, needs a cross-sectoral and cross-ministerial approach with a joint and clearly communicated commitment of the respective policy-makers at all levels. Alongside this, communication with all parents needs to be developed within and across all levels.

*Proposed areas for discussion:*

**1. Mechanisms of coordination at ministerial level**

Which mechanisms could be established at ministerial level to promote collaboration across sectors and stakeholder groups?

**2. Coordinating mechanism between service providers**

How can service providers and schools create networks for collaboration and coordination?

**3. Cooperation across stakeholder groups and their organisations**

How can educational governance support and promote cooperation across stakeholder groups?

6.1 Mechanisms of coordination at ministerial level

The [Regional development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021+](https://mmr.cz/getmedia/a9985cb6-b672-4a97-a92c-c4c68bea2925/EN-III_ma_SRR-prac_doplneni-schemat-a-map_kontrola.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf), Ministry of Regional Development seeks to set up functional cooperation between Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and Ministry of Finance in addressing services on the borderline between health and social care. It is essential to share information, both between healthcare providers and between health care and social care providers (p. 83). The strategy also includes measures to give positive motivation for joint strategic planning and develop cooperation among municipalities (p. 138f.), yet the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports seems not to be involved here. The Ministry of Regional Development also has the [Agency for Social Inclusion](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/en/) (Agenturou pro sociální začleňování) to provide support to local governments in the process of social inclusion through several projects to support cities and municipalities to develop quality and inclusive education; it also offers teacher training and conferences (e.g., on [Strategic Planning for Quality Schools](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/konference-olomouc/)) through a coordinated approach (see for example: [Koordinovaný přístup k sociálně vyloučeným lokalitám](https://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/vyhlaseni-vyzvy-pro-obce-ke-spolupraci-v-ramci-7-vlny-koordinovaneho-pristupu/)). Other agencies and ministerial bodies such as the State labour Inspection office and regional labour inspectorates are responsible to inspect the provision of early childhood care (see Eurydice 2021, [Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/quality-assurance-early-childhood-and-school-education-17_en)). The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for free lunches provided to schools by the region – which is viewed as not very effective by the Education Inspection Report 2019/2020, p. 452). According to the report, there is also collaboration with NGOs for preventive measures. As mentioned earlier, the National Institute of Education has regional bodies, but it is unclear how the collaborate in the regions with regional and local partners.

Which mechanisms could be established at ministerial level to promote collaboration across sectors and stakeholder groups?

*Latvia has established a* [*Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre*](https://www.pkc.gov.lv/en/about-us) *under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. It oversees the entire central government planning process, making changes when needed and providing guidance to ministries through consultation. It promotes the interconnection of sectoral policies by strengthening cooperation and joint action of institutions and ministries pursuing the same goals. For example, it supports* [*cross-sectoral cooperation*](https://www.pkc.gov.lv/index.php/lv/bernu-atbalstam) *to support children with mental and behavioural disorders. It also verses the* [*Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027*](https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406)*. More information can be found in: OECD (2020) OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia. Developing Latvia’s education development guidelines 2021-2027. Paris: OECD,* [*https://doi.org/10.1787/ebc98a53-en*](https://doi.org/10.1787/ebc98a53-en)*,*

*The European Venture Philanthropy Association (*[*EVPA*](https://evpa.eu.com/)*) has published a policy report on cross-sectoral collaboration for better social outcomes which includes information on cross-sectoral initiatives across Europe. The examples provided from all around Europe are not directly linked to Inclusive Education, but to supporting inclusion around education. Full Report: Barth B., Cruz Ferreira J., and Miguel A. (2018):* [*Cross-sector Collaboration for Better Social Outcomes*](https://evpa.eu.com/uploads/publications/MAZE-EVPA_Cross_Sector_Collaboration_for_Better_Social_Outcomes_2018.pdf)*. European Venture Philanthropy Association. Another reference worth consulting is the report* [*Let’s break silos now! Achieving disability-inclusive education in a post- COVID world*](https://handicap-international.ch/sn_uploads/document/Report2020_Inclusive_education___Covid_EN_.pdf) *by Handicap International (2020). It links multi-sectoral approaches to inclusive education with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, UNDP (2017) has published* [*Guidance on Institutional and Coordination Mechanisms*](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2478Institutional_Coordination_Mechanisms_GuidanceNote.pdf) *to facilitate Integration and Coherence for SDG Implementation.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 2: Regional governance mechanisms

6.2 Coordinating mechanism between service providers

As mentioned earlier, most schools have the status of independent legal entities, so ensuring collaboration and knowledge transfer (e.g., from special education centres to regular schools could be challenging. Because some schools are so isolated, they do not know what measures other schools have (Inspection Report p. 453). According to the Guidelines for the Strategy 2030+, school autonomy contributes to a high competitive environment between schools, which does not motivate schools to cooperate, shar experiences or pass on good practices (see 7.3.3.1 Concentration of professional capacities in territories). Systemic weaknesses were also identified by the Strategy of educational policy by 2020 (p. 23) reflected in lack of interconnection between different types of counselling needs that families or children may have. It is unclear how strong linkages are between special education centres and regular schools and who exactly is providing individual services for teachers, students and parents (e.g., for Sign language support). According to the Inspection report 2019/2020 (p. 41), pedagogical-psychological counselling centres mainly do assessments for school maturity (85% of their work). There may be a need to rethink the purpose of such activities in the context of inclusive education. According to the Inspection Report 2019/2020, thematic report, p. 452), a network of multi-professional support would also improve chances of receiving funding. The report also recommends organisers of schools to not leave the care for families in the hand of one school, at municipal level a more equal distribution could be achieved. Increasing professionalism capacities, trust and mutual cooperation is one of four of the strategic lines in the strategy 2030+ (p. 58ff.), which includes increasing capacities of special schools, pedagogical-psychological services, methodological support services through networks, improved management and by introducing a “middle link of support”. It is planned to pilot such a model before system-wide introduction.

How can service providers and schools create networks for collaboration and coordination?

*Many countries have introduced special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) to facilitate the coordination of additional support in regular schools, for example in* [*Wales*](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/the-role-of-the-special-educational-needs-coordinator-senco.pdf) *or in Ireland (*[*Special Educational Needs Organisers*](https://ncse.ie/seno-support-service)*).* [*Area SENCO*](https://www.inclusivechoice.com/Area%20Special%20Educational%20Needs%20Co-ordinators%20%28SENCOs%29.pdf)  *in England work in early childhood education and strengthen the links between settings, parents, schools, social care and health services. If schools are large enough, multi-disciplinary teams may directly support regular teachers in schools. The report* [*Alliances for Inclusion*](https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2013-Alliances-for-Inclusion-cross-sector-policy-synergies-and-interprofessional-collaboration-in-and-around-schools.pdf) *provides examples from across Europe for cross-sector policy synergies and inter-professional collaboration in and around schools.*

*Although not describing one specific system of cross- sectoral collaboration, the following paper provides a systematic review of co-financing models that might be useful when considering cross-sectoral interventions: McGuire, F., Vijayasingham, L., Vassall, A. et al. (2019). Financing intersectoral action for health: a systematic review of co-financing models. Global Health 15, 86.* [*https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-019-0513-7*](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-019-0513-7)*. Most reports and initiatives focus on health initiatives linked to education.*

*The Peer Learning Activity (25th June 2021) document prepared by Germany includes information on establishment of school alliances between regular schools and support centres. Key partners included regional school authorities, municipal school authorities, school leaders of regional advice and support centres, school leaders of supra-regional advice and support centres as well as school leaders of all mainstream schools within the inclusive school alliance.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 7: Governance for equitable learning opportunities

6.3 Cooperation across stakeholder groups and their organisations

Not much evidence could be identified to illustrate the situation of cooperation across stakeholder groups and their organisations. Parents are involved in school councils, but the role of parent’s organisation is unclear. Also, no information could be identified to highlight the role of teacher’s professional organisations or teacher unions that may be partners in developing shared professional standards or competency frameworks. Also, it is an open question whether and to which extent NGOs (e.g., Organisations of People with Disabilities) cooperate with schools or other services to provide specialist knowledge. As mentioned earlier, career counselling is generally done by teachers who did not necessarily receive formal training. Inclusive education does not end after compulsory education, but should continue during vocational and higher education.

How can educational governance support and promote cooperation across stakeholder groups?

*The Directorate for Education and Training in Norway initiated a comprehensive communication strategy to support the implementation of the New Competence Development Model for schools to bring together and develop a common understanding of overarching goals, roles and terminology of all the different schemes and strategy for competence development (OECD (2020):* [*Improving School Quality in Norway 2020: Progress with the Competence Development Model*](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/98600316-en.pdf?expires=1622061630&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=2983667D101169078C94EBE264A1C715)*. OECD Education Policy Perspectives. No. 8, p. 12ff. ). The same document also provides examples of communication strategies to support curriculum implementation in Wales (p. 13) and describes activities in Norway to strengthen co-ordination among country governors and the Directorate.*

*The Peer Learning Activity Document used to guide discussion on the 28th June 2021 with the Polish Ministry Representatives describes the policy development work in which all relevant stakeholder groups participated. One of the key factors identified in the process was the preparation of a coherent and comprehensive vision of change as well as the cooperation with various participants in the process to build a coalition around the envisaged changes.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 1: Governance of policy planning and implementation

Standard 2: Regional governance mechanisms

Standard 7: Governance for equitable learning opportunities

7th Standard: Governance for equitable learning opportunities

*Inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners is insured.*

*This means that:*

*- learner voice and engagement is central to the work of school teams.*

*- parents are effectively engaged and involved in their children’s education.*

*Emerging issues from the Documentary Analysis:*

Equal access to education is granted by law and the categorisation of pupils is prohibited. Schools are required to provide supportive measures to ensure quality education for all learners. The challenge remains to ensure that all learners, including those with special needs, from migrant or disadvantaged background complete their education. No evidence was found for minimum levels of support, or clear guidance on inclusive learning environments and how they address inequities in access to provision and resources.

Principles of inclusion are evident within national policies. However, the system is not based on principles of universal design. Rather, the support system is based on compensatory measures designed to address the existing inequities and meet recognised special or additional learning needs.

Learners with special needs have the right to support measures. The challenges of providing appropriate equipment, educating learners with their friends and peers and avoiding the segregation of learners of the Roma community remain.

No evidence was found on strategies to support school leaders to adopt an inclusive approach and create a welcome ethos for learners and staff. International evidence shows that less than half of learners have a strong sense of belonging in school.

The Long-Term Plan 2019-2023 aims to develop the potential of all children. However, in practice, expectations for learners from the Roma community remains low, with half of them receiving a curriculum adapted for ‘learners with minor mental disabilities. This puts on a trajectory that makes it less likely for them to obtain a secondary education school leaving certificate.

No evidence was found concerning mechanisms to ensure that current systems for needs identification and support allocation are geared towards early intervention and prevention, rather than compensatory support.

More training is required for specialists assessing learners, in order for them to distinguish between the effects of additional learning needs and those arising from culturally different backgrounds. Evidence indicates that there are challenges relating to parents from disadvantaged backgrounds being deterred from receiving information on a schools’ performance or being informally told certain schools have full capacity.

*Key Messages from Analysis Work:*

The documentary analysis highlighted that provision for learners most vulnerable to exclusion – including those with recognised special educational needs and those from the Roma community – remains strongly linked to highly specialised support, mainly focussed upon segregated settings in special schools, or special classes in mainstream schools. A strong tradition of segregation which is challenging to overcome was confirmed by stakeholders who highlighted areas of concern within the Czech education system that led to this situation.

As indicated in the discussion around other standards, the social environment and family capacities play a role when other stakeholders in education co-operate with families and support learners. Learners and families can have very different experiences depending on the individual school the learner is attending.

That end-users - learners and their families – are the group most likely to have limited information on and an understanding of what their rights and entitlements are and what the opportunities completing compulsory education can offer them, was also confirmed by stakeholders. In particular, school staff highlighted efforts on trying to communicate these issues and the importance of a good education to parents.

Stakeholders, especially, school staff put a lot of emphasis on the responsibilities of parents and families. Learner failure is considered by many to be a family problem and not a failure of the education or school system in supporting vulnerable learners.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, both school staff and parents have growing concerns that vulnerable learners may be even more at risk of exclusion from education than before due to remote learning and home schooling. At the same time, the COVID 19 pandemic is seen as an opportunity for innovation in teaching. Teachers are willing and motivated to do their best to educate and support learners in this situation.

*Proposed areas for discussion:*

**1. Governance of educational support**

How can school develop further towards fully inclusive provision of adequate support for all students?

**2. Governance of learning opportunities**

How can schools enact the national curriculum and make it accessible to all students without reducing it?

**3. Family involvement and children’s voices**

How can local authorities and schools actively involve families and community members to support inclusive education?

7.1 Governance of educational support

Not only the disparities between regions are perceived as a problem, but also between schools. There are schools with low institutional and personal capacity, combined with high autonomy and low accountability for learning of students. Financial oversight and pedagogical accountability are separated (OCED 2017, 208), and budgetary compliance is currently still given more attention than inclusiveness of school. One of the key recommendations in the recent Inspection report (p.83) is to increase pedagogical leadership, for example by sharing management responsibilities. The thematic study in the Inspection report says that schools need a strong vision (p. 442) and that school management has to contribute to such a vision, also to ensure adequate selection of specialised pedagogical staff. The fact that additional resources are only made available if an individual child has been identified as having a disability and schools have submitted their proposal to receive a specific type of additional resources creates barriers to inclusive education. The school is put into a position to apply a “wait-to-fail” strategy: the more severe the diagnosed problems, the more funding will be made available. Such a funding scheme enforces external differentiation and segregation (e.g., into special classes), rather than promote internal differentiation. This is reflected in the fact that Roma classes are established and taught using a curriculum for children with mild mental disability (see for example, Long term plan for Usti region 2020-2022 (p. 17).

How can schools develop further towards fully inclusive provision of adequate support for all students?

*In recent years, countries have started to invest more in the development of inclusive school leadership (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2019):* [*Inclusive School Leadership: Exploring Policies Across Europe.*](https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/sisl_synthesis_report.pdf) *(E. Óskarsdóttir, V. Donnelly and M. Turner-Cmuchal, eds.). Odense, Denmark). Especially in decentralised education systems, school leaders play a crucial role in ensuring high quality inclusive education. In the United States the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) linked the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) to a supplemental guidance document* [*PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities,*](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/PSELforSWDs01252017.pdf) *illustrating what effective inclusive school leadership means. (see Billingsley, B., DeMatthews, D., Connally, K., & McLeskey, J. (2018).* [*Leadership for Effective Inclusive Schools: Considerations for Preparation and Reform*](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/australasian-journal-of-special-and-inclusive-education/article/leadership-for-effective-inclusive-schools-considerations-for-preparation-and-reform/738FE6D6F3019314336C614AD69984A2)*. Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education, 42(1), 65-81. doi:10.1017/jsi.2018.6). It is a good example of how generic professional standards are extended and explored to include specific issues around inclusive education. In Switzerland, a Certificate of Advanced Study programme has been recently initiated for* [*Inclusive School Leaders*](https://phzh.ch/de/Weiterbildung/weiterbildungssuche/Anlassdetail/CAS-Schulfuehrung-und-Inklusion-n144451037.html)*.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 3: Governance and financing to promote inclusion

Standard 5: Governance for human and system capacity building

7.2 Governance of learning opportunities

There are successful examples of tackling disadvantage in excluded localities at municipal level with all primary school being coordinated and receiving support (Inspection report p. 416); some schools who are “pro-inclusive schools” accept disadvantaged students from outside their catchment area. All the schools participating in the thematic report mainly identify Roma children; school-wide strategies were put in place to remove financial barriers (8 schools), create leisure activities, improve communication with parents, organise assistance for specific groups of students. But only a few schools worked on lowest is cooperation with kindergarten (3 schools) or improving quality of teaching (3 schools). The diversity of approaches to deal with socially disadvantage groups (thematic report of Inspection Report), provides good opportunities to network and learn from each other, for example by learning about financial barriers that prevent families from using extracurricular activities. In the last years, the use of teacher assistants has increased substantially, both for SEN children and for disadvantaged children. An analysis by the Inspectorate (Inspection report, p. 437) showed that disadvantage teacher assistants were more present in the classroom than SEN teacher assistants. Disadvantage teacher assistants adjusted to the students and made sure that they were involved, but with a strong focus on basic knowledge and by using didactics/methods worse than in average Czech schools. In other words, they were lowering the expectations and moved away from the requirements of the general curriculum. The [Strategy for Educational Policies 2020](https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-vzdelavaci-politiky-2020-1?highlightWords=p%C5%99%C3%ADpravn%C3%BDch+t%C5%99%C3%ADd) highlights the need for a more student-centric approach by accommodating to individual needs, but without using alternative curricula.

How can schools enact the national curriculum and make it accessible to all students without reducing it?

*A recent study (Sundqvist, C. & Hannas, B.M. (2020):* [*Same vision – different approaches? Special needs education in light of inclusion in Finland and Norway*](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08856257.2020.1786911)*. European Journal of Special Needs Education, DOI:*[*10.1080/08856257.2020.1786911*](https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2020.1786911)*) raises interesting questions in comparing Norway which heavily relies on teacher assistants and Finland which uses special educators to teach pupils with special educational needs. Finland places higher value on quality provision (in special classes), while Norway focuses more on keeping students in the regular classrooms. The study suggests that both countries need to redirect their strategies: In Finland, educational settings need a stronger focus and in Norway, there is a need to invest more in teachers’ competence in Special Needs Education.*

*Relying extensively on Teacher Assistants as a central feature of inclusive education service delivery can be problematic as described in a recent publication (Giangreco, M.F. (2021): Maslow’s Hammer: teacher assistant research and inclusive practices at a crossroads. European Journal of Special Needs education, 36(2), 278-293,* [*https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901377*](https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1901377)*.*

*Using a territorial intervention approach, Portugal has identified Priority Educational Intervention Areas (*[*Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária – TEIP*](http://www.dge.mec.pt/teip)*) that aims to promote educational success and reduce early school leaving rates within geographical areas that have higher-than-average disadvantaged populations. It is described by OECD (OECD (2018): Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre. Parix: OECD. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264301528-en) as a successful programme, originally designed in 1996, with a fourth generation of the programme currently in preparation. The document also lists initiatives in other countries to achieve greater equity and quality for disadvantaged groups. In the Canton of Zurich, the* [*QUIMS programme*](https://www.zh.ch/de/bildung/informationen-fuer-schulen/informationen-volksschule/volksschule-schulinfo-unterricht/volksschule-schulinfo-unterrichtsentwicklung/quims.html) *has been running successfully since 2010 to support schools with high percentage of migrant children to reduce inequality in education and raising the standard of education in schools for all students (description in* [*English*](http://www.congress-intercultural.eu/en/initiative/195-quims-programme--quality-in-multicultural-schools.html)*)*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 2: Regional governance mechanisms

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

Standard 5: Governance for human and system capacity building

7.3 Family involvement and children’s voices

As mentioned already, parents are part of the school councils and students may establish a pupils’ parliament, the later so far as a pilot project (see Eurydice [Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/administration-and-governance-local-andor-institutional-level-21_en#2_7_2_1_1_School_bodies) 2021). The evaluation of successful strategies of primary educating disadvantaged students. thematic report ([Hodnocení úspěšných strategií základních škol vzdělávajících znevýhodněné žáky. Tematická zpráva](https://www.csicr.cz/cz/Aktuality/Tematicka-zprava-Hodnoceni-uspesnych-strategii-ZS)) found that some schools used an emphatic approach to pupils and their parents while other used a directive approach. Parents are also mentioned several times in the Strategy 2030+; sometimes as partners, sometimes as holders of wrong expectations, sometimes as part of the problem. While this reflects the complex reality that parents and schools find themselves in, it also contains the seeds of discrimination. Only through intense contact that cannot be managed by one isolated teacher alone, is it possible to develop a common ground upon which to build a strong partnership between equals. There are several measures and activities schools can initiate, for example engage parents and students in educational planning and evaluation, establish continuing communication and create real opportunities for shared decision-making.

How can local authorities and schools actively involve families and community members to support inclusive education?

*An effective way of giving voice to families and children is to include parents’ and pupils’ views of the education they are receiving in systematic regular survey as part of the* [*quality assurance strategies of schools*](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1361c84b-80c8-11e8-ac6a-01aa75ed71a1) *(e.g., Norway, European Commission (2018): Better learning for Europe’s young people: developing coherent quality assurance strategies for school education. Luxembourg: EU, p. 27).*

*As part of the DEIS Plan (2017,* [*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*](https://www.education.ie/en/schools-colleges/services/deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools-/)*), Ireland developed the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme that seeks to promote partnerships between parents and teachers and seeks to provide integrated services (with Welfare and Education) for children who have difficulties in relation to school attendance, participation and retention. HSCL Coordinators are engaged full-time liaison work between the home, the school and the community (see* [*Information Booklet for DEIS schools participating in the Home School Community Liaison Scheme*](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Home-School-Community-Liaison-HSCL-Scheme/Information-Booklet-for-DEIS-schools-participating-in-the-Home-School-Community-Liaison-Scheme.pdf)*, 2019). Additional information how schools engage with parents and how the Home School Community Liaison coordinators are working with families is described in the document prepared by Ireland as a contribution to the Peer Learning Activity which took place on the 23rd June 2021.*

*Linkages to other standards*

Standard 4: Quality assurance for inclusive education

Standard 6: Governance of coordinating services and stakeholders