

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

Final Recommendations and Proposed Priority Action

• **SRSP** •

Structural Reform
Support Programme



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ADDRESSING REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN THE CZECH EDUCATION SYSTEM

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promote more inclusive and equitable learning
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Ústecký regions**

**Final Recommendations and Proposed Priority
Action**

(Deliverable 7)

This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
PREAMBLE	7
STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	9
Feedback on structure of the recommendations	10
Feedback on the essential content of the recommendations	10
BASIS FOR THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	12
THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	14
Attitudes and perceptions towards inclusive education	14
<i>Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 1st standard</i>	15
Recommendation 1	15
Recommendation 2	16
System capacity building	17
<i>Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 2nd standard</i>	17
Recommendation 3	18
Recommendation 4	19
Funding models	20
<i>Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 3rd standard</i>	20
Recommendation 5	21
Recommendation 6	22
Monitoring, quality assurance and accountability	23
<i>Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 4th standard</i>	23
Recommendation 7	24
Recommendation 8	25
Professional development	26
<i>Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 5th standard</i>	26
Recommendation 9	27
Recommendation 10	28
Communication and collaboration between stakeholders	29
<i>Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 6th standard</i>	29
Recommendation 11	30
Learning and teaching environments	31



<i>Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 7th standard</i>	31
Recommendation 12	32
Recommendation 13	33
Recommendation 14	34
Recommendation 15	35
INTER-CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE RECOMMENDATIONS	37
Ensuring shared understanding of the vision	38
Supporting active participation of learners and families	39
Developing capacities and capabilities	40
Supporting a flexible resourcing system	41
Actively monitoring the inclusive education system	42
PROPOSED PRIORITY ACTION	44
Structured dialogue as a priority action	44
Clarifications around the concept of 'structured dialogue'	46
A revised framework of standards as a 'tool' for dialogue	47
CONCLUDING REMARKS	50



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents the final recommendations of the SRSP Action *Addressing Regional Disparities in the Czech Education System* (Deliverable 7). In effect this document brings together all of the evidence and findings from across the Action into a set of proposals for further work to be taken forward by Czech stakeholders. It represents Output 2 of the Action.

The Action has specifically aimed to support the implementation of measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in the Karlovarský and Ústecký regions of the Czech Republic.

The draft recommendations and priority action (Deliverable 6) built on the findings of previous activities within the action. These draft recommendations were presented and feedback from stakeholders was undertaken via the presentation of the recommendations in an online [webinar](#), four consultation meetings with stakeholders and an online survey.

The first section of this report presents a summary of the collective [stakeholder feedback](#) on the draft recommendations. A synthesis of the feedback is presented in Annex 1 accompanying this document. Overall Czech stakeholders were in agreement with the drafted recommendations and their relevance for the Czech education system. The feedback was mostly constructive and was used to make the recommendations clearer and add illustrations of what each of the recommendations means in practice.

The second section outlines the five factors used as the [basis](#) for identifying the draft and now final recommendations. These five factors relate to overall agreement with the vision of inclusive education from Czech stakeholders, challenges stakeholders face in implementing policy into practice and the challenges and different approaches associated with this, as well as ideas on ways forward.

The third section presents the 15 [final recommendations](#) in detail. The recommendations are organised around the 7 standards for the overall Action. For each recommendation an illustration of what the recommendation would look like in practice is presented. These illustrations provide information on concrete examples of work from other countries, or of initiatives already being undertaken in the Czech Republic.

The 15 final recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: The vision for inclusive education outlined in Czech legislation and policy takes a rights-based approach and aims to ensure that every learner has access to high-quality inclusive education and social inclusion. However, policy implementation in the Czech Republic must ensure that *the vision is clearly and consistently communicated to all stakeholders* across all system levels (national, regional and school).

Recommendation 2: National level stakeholders must be *active in developing a shared conception of what high-quality, equitable inclusive education looks like in practice*. There should be a range of opportunities for dialogue with regional and school level stakeholders *about the kind of schools and learning communities that are required* in order to achieve national policy goals for inclusive education.



Recommendation 3: National and regional level dialogue activities should lead to *the development of agreed operational definitions around key concepts* such as access, participation, engagement and achievement in schools.

Recommendation 4: In order to embed the concept of inclusive education in practice as an approach for all learners, these *operational definitions should also be used as the basis for identifying the competences and skills that all school teams require* (leaders, teachers, support professionals) to successfully implement inclusive education.

Recommendation 5: There should be a *move away from multiple, often short-term, programme or project-based funding streams* to more streamlined, coherent and sustainable funding mechanisms that support schools to develop and implement long-term strategies and plans for inclusive education.

Recommendation 6: All *funding mechanisms must be underpinned by the goal of supporting early intervention and prevention strategies*, rather than relying on compensatory funding models that reinforce learner segregation within the system.

Recommendation 7: The roles and responsibilities of decision-makers and educators at all system levels and across all sectors involved in the education system must be clearly delineated in order to ensure that *everyone takes responsibility and is accountable for the achievement of ALL learners*.

Recommendation 8: Cross sectoral, cross system level work should be undertaken to develop a quality assurance and accountability framework that is fully aligned with the national vision and goals for inclusive education.

Recommendation 9: All relevant policies at national (covering different ministries) and organisational (covering different service providers) levels within the Czech Republic must *align all initial and continuing professional development opportunities for all educational professionals with the vision and goals of high-quality inclusive education for all learners*.

Recommendation 10: *Minimum levels of service provision in line with the national policy goals for inclusive education* should be introduced to guide the work of all training providers involved in initial and continuing professional development opportunities programme development and outcomes for all system stakeholders.

Recommendation 11: National, regional and school level policies and *action plans for inclusive education at all levels must be aligned and coherent in their aim* to support the active participation and engagement of all learners and their families in order to maximise individual learning opportunities.

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

Recommendation 13: All school stakeholders must be supported to *develop competences in identifying barriers to learning and participation* and providing support and early intervention strategies to overcome these barriers.

Recommendation 14: At regional levels all school stakeholders must be supported to develop strategies relevant to local situations and contexts that *engage all parents and develop partnerships* that aim at fostering the well-being and achievement of all learners.



Recommendation 15: There should be cross-sectoral, national level support for the *development of regional level self-review frameworks* based on self-review indicators that set out a vision for high-quality inclusive education for all learners in their local schools.

The fourth section describes possible [interconnections](#) between the recommendations in relation to key themes for their implementation. All 15 of the recommendations are interconnected and mutually support each other. The recommendations are not hierarchical; there is not one starting point from which the implementation of all others will then follow. Rather a systemic approach is required for their implementation.

It is possible to identify a number of cross links between the recommendations. One possible conceptualisation of inter-connections between the recommendations is around *themes* – or *foci* – for possible implementation action plans. The 5 graphical representations indicate interconnections between different recommendations in relation to possible thematic action plans, including:

- Ensuring shared understanding of the vision
- Supporting active participation of learners and families
- Developing capacities and capabilities
- Supporting a flexible resourcing system
- Actively monitoring the inclusive education system

The fifth section presents the [proposed priority action](#) for short-term implementation, in building a foundation for longer-term actions. The proposed priority action is a *structured stakeholder dialogue* around a number of significant issues. Developing a wider understanding of the potential benefits of inclusive education for all learners and all system stakeholders is a critical lever, considered the most likely to have maximal impact in building a foundation for longer-term actions.

This structured dialogue with a range of stakeholders from across all sectors and systems levels should have three clear aims:

- 1. Awareness raising within wider society;**
- 2. Ensuring clarity around the roles and responsibilities of decision-makers and educators at all system levels;**
- 3. Developing joint action plans for inclusive education at all levels.**

A revised framework of standards is proposed as a ‘tool’ for this dialogue.

The final section presents some overall [concluding remarks](#) and outlines final steps to be taken in the Action. Any future dialogue in the Czech Republic needs to be framed by narratives that are less on addressing disparities and more on supporting developments. Czech stakeholders cannot lose sight of the need to remove disparities between different regions, groups and individuals. However, work on this Action has indicated that there are potential negative effects of labelling regions in a comparative way that might work against the benefits of providing support.



PREAMBLE

This document presents the final recommendations of the SRSP Action *Addressing Regional Disparities in the Czech Education System* (Deliverable 7). In effect this document brings together all of the evidence and findings from across the Action into a set of proposals for further work to be taken forward by Czech stakeholders. It represents Output 2 of the Action.

The Action has specifically aimed to support the implementation of measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in the Karlovarský and Ústecký regions of the Czech Republic.

The starting point for this work was to conduct an analysis of the educational situation resulting in disparities in education for some learners in the two designated regions. The analysis work covered two interconnected activities:

- documentary analysis of an agreed list of European, international and Czech national policy and research documents (Deliverable 3);
- stakeholder data collection in the two regions from person from a wide group of stakeholders, including: learners; parents and families; school teams; school wider community representatives; national, regional and school level decision makers.

Both of the analysis activities used an agreed analysis framework that guided the collection of the information required to prepare recommendations for measures to be implemented and priority actions to be taken in the regions. This analysis framework, including the rationale, standards development and application, as well as the methodology of the documentary analysis is described in Deliverable 2.

The findings in the form of overall key messages and final reflections have been reported in Evidence of strengths of and challenges for implementing measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities in the Czech Republic (Deliverable 4). The overall key messages presented in the report highlight factors within the Czech education system that are seen to promote disparities - in the education system, across regions and in access to equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for learners from vulnerable groups.

The draft recommendations and priority action (Deliverable 6) built on the above findings. In addition, a process of collection of feedback from stakeholders on the draft recommendations was undertaken via:

- the presentation of the recommendations in an online [webinar](#);
- four consultation meetings with stakeholders;
- an online survey.

A full description of these activities is presented in Deliverable 5.

Both the survey and the consultations asked stakeholders:

1. If they agree with the recommendations in principle;
2. What would need to be addressed to make recommendations clearer;



3. What are possible examples that exemplify each recommendation.

The first section of this report presents a summary of the collective [stakeholder feedback](#) on the draft recommendations. A collation of the feedback is presented in the Annex accompanying this document.

The second section outlines the five factors used as the [basis](#) for identifying the draft and now final recommendations.

The third section presents the 15 [final recommendations](#) in detail. The recommendations are organised around the 7 standards for the overall Action.

The fourth section describes possible [interconnections](#) between the recommendations in relation to key themes for their implementation.

The fifth section presents the [proposed priority action](#) for short-term implementation, in building a foundation for longer-term actions.

The final section presents some overall [concluding remarks](#) and outlines final steps to be taken in the Action.

This document is accompanied by three Annexes (only in English):

Annex 1: Synthesis of the feedback on the draft recommendations, which presents the feedback collected through Activity 2.3 Feedback on the Draft Recommendations.

Annex 2: Additional Resources, which presents additional resources that could be useful in supporting the implementation of recommendations related to the 7 standards.

Annex 3: Czech examples that inform the recommendations as they present current work of practice in the Czech Republic that illustrate what the recommendations could look like in practice.



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Feedback was collected from 3 consultation meetings including the extended Steering Committee members, key stakeholders at national level and stakeholders from the Karlovarský and Ústecký regions as well as from the survey participants representing learners; families; school teams (leaders, teachers, support professionals) from separate special school and/or classes, school teams (leaders, teachers, support professionals) from primary education; school teams (leaders, teachers, support professionals) from lower secondary education; and university teachers responsible for teacher education.

Across the consultation meetings and online survey, the participating stakeholders agreed with the recommendations in principle and gave constructive feedback that has been addressed in the final recommendations.

During the consultation meetings 22 of the stakeholders agreed with the 15 draft recommendations in principle. One respondent did not agree, although following an explanation, it became clear that the idea behind the recommendation was agreed upon however more detail in the recommendation is needed.

For the survey a minimum of 9 of the 10 respondents agreed to each of the draft recommendations in principle.

An overview of stakeholder agreement with the recommendations can be found in the table below.

Table 1: Overview of Activities

Activity	Number of Stakeholders	Number of Agreements in Principle
Stakeholder Consultation	23	22
Steering Committee Consultation	9	9
Online Survey	10	9 ¹
Total	42	40

The majority of the feedback highlights agreement with the importance and relevance of the recommendations for the Czech Republic's education system.

The synthesised feedback from the consultation activities are presented in the Annex. The feedback synthesises the notes from the consultation meetings as well as the automated

¹ A minimum of 9 respondents agreed with each of the 15 recommendations



translation of the open questions from the online survey. The notes are grouped in general comments as well as specific for each recommendation.,

Overall, the feedback can be seen to inform the *structure* of the recommendations, as well as the specific *content*.

Feedback on structure of the recommendations

In looking across all of the feedback, five recurring requests are apparent:

1. For each recommendation the underlying issue, as well as related concepts and ideas need to be more clearly explained.
2. There is general support for the national level relevance of the recommendations for all stakeholders, but all recommendations should also inform, where possible, who should be involved in related actions to be taken. Where possible recommendations should include specific information relating to the two regions in order to guide their work.
3. The interlinks between the recommendations should be made explicit so it is clear how they support each other.
4. A national or international example of policy action exemplifying how this recommendation could be implemented should be included for each recommendation.

Each of these requests has been addressed in the final version of the recommendations as far as possible.

Feedback on the essential content of the recommendations

The overall positive feedback on the recommendations confirmed that the 15 draft recommendations do not need substantively changing. However, stakeholders stressed there are a number of elements that should be more clearly highlighted in the recommendations:

1. Staff from the ministry of education and key policy makers need to be vocal advocates of inclusive education. This includes using clear statements on what the goal of inclusive education is for the Czech Republic, as well as taking a stand against discrimination and stereotyping of any kind. The recommendations need to be clearer on this and openly address the reality of the current levels and types of segregation in the system.
2. The request for an organising or governance body that can act as the middle link between national policy and regional implementation needs to be stressed. This body needs to provide guidance on policy implementation and support for practice, as well as monitor and ensure effective implementation. Such a mid-level governance body is seen as a mechanism to counteract the effects of decentralisation and resulting fragmentation in the Czech system, which makes the implementation of inclusive education such a challenge for schools.



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3. A more inclusive approach in dealing with the regions needs to be taken. Policy implementation work needs to be general in a way that addresses inclusive education across the Czech Republic, but at the same time specific action and support needs to be targeted at regions and struggling schools. However, this should not lead to the labelling of regions and / or schools.
 4. Specific policy implementation work should not be implemented through, or seen as one-off projects. A long term, coherent strategy with co-ordinated cross-level and cross sectoral actions plans, supported by long-term and sustainable funding mechanisms is required.

The final recommendations presented in the next section take all of the points above into account.



BASIS FOR THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The main goal of the overall work with Czech stakeholders has been to bring together all findings and proposals from across the work into a coherent set of proposals for further work – recommendations for policy and practice, as well as the identification of priority action to be taken as a lever for effecting maximal change in line with the recommendations. From the outset of the work, the basis for recommendations was always framed by *areas to build on* – strengths that can be used as possible levers for change in the Czech system for inclusive education, as well as *areas for reflection* – challenges requiring further development in the Czech system for inclusive education.

The overall Action findings presented in Deliverable 4 provide a comprehensive and detailed insight into opportunities (strengths) and challenges (weaknesses) in the Czech system for inclusive education. These opportunities and challenges have been identified as the result of a detailed analysis of evidence from policy and research documentation as well as stakeholders' perceptions of the Czech education system. Based on the examination of these findings, the Agency has identified five factors as crucial starting points for identifying the draft and now final recommendations:

1. Czech stakeholders are generally in agreement with the vision that inclusive education is a rights issue and aims to increase quality and equity for all learners. To achieve equitable and high-quality learning opportunities for *all* learners it is important not to lose sight of the particular needs of some vulnerable groups and provide adequate support. Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of learners with special needs or a socially disadvantaged background as well as learners from the Roma community within the Czech education system.
2. Czech stakeholders generally view the current national level policy for inclusive education as coherent and comprehensive and feel that inclusive education is clearly defined in policy. However, they clearly articulate that there are a range of issues they are facing in putting policy for inclusive education into practice.
3. Many Czech stakeholders have relevant ideas on how to overcome the difficulties in putting policy for inclusive education into practice. There is a high degree of agreement about these issues within and across different system stakeholder groups. However, many stakeholders perceive a lack of opportunities and/or resources to implement these solutions effectively.
4. There are positive examples of practice at different school, local and regional levels in the Czech Republic. However, these examples are mostly at individual school level. As such, they require further analysis with regards to the learning opportunities they present, as well as further support to enable scaling-up and transfer to other situations.
5. There are differences in the approaches taken to inclusive education and in the demands and expectations for inclusive practice across regions, local areas and schools. The reasons for and impact of these differences require careful consideration in relation to learners' needs, activities in schools and school staff attitudes and values, if the overall system is to be strengthened.



As outlined in the previous section and in the Annex, these factors underpinning the formulation of the draft recommendations were presented in consultation activities and accepted in principle by the stakeholders involved.

As a result, the final recommendations can be seen as:

- *Evidenced based proposals for future policy action* to be taken forward by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT), working collaboratively together with colleagues from the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Health, Child protection (MSPV), policy-makers at regional and school level, as well as in collaboration with other stakeholders, including school leaders, teacher trainers, teaching staff and specialists, local support services, local associations, NGOs and school inspectors.
- *Proposals for immediate changes* to the frameworks supporting policy implementation in the Czech Republic. While more recommendations could be made, these have been identified as *current* priorities for action, which have the potential to achieve the most impact. They should be seen as the most crucial issues to be addressed in order to improve the quality of inclusive education in the short to mid-term.
- *Inter-connected and mutually supporting each other*. The complementarity of the recommendations must be specifically highlighted as it is not possible to consider addressing one recommendation without considering the impact and effect upon others. The interconnections between recommendations are specifically examined in the section on [Inter-connections between the recommendations](#) of this report.

It is important to stress here that these recommendations cannot be implemented by MŠMT alone. The recommendations assume that MŠMT will act as the lead organisation to ensure that the tasks associated with the recommendations are undertaken in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The shared responsibility of *all* national and regional level policy makers for ensuring the agreed policy vision and goals for inclusive education are implemented must be stressed. The implementation of all recommendations will require clear commitment from decision-makers working at all levels – national, regional and school.



THE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A thread running all through the activities in the Action are the 7 standards that were agreed at the beginning of the work with the Czech stakeholders. The 7 standards are in effect aspirations for the Czech system: goals, or intentions of what the Czech education system should be able to offer all learners and their families.

The standards have been used as the guide for preparing all activities, as the framework for collecting information both in the documentary analysis and stakeholder data collection and then analysing that data. As a consequence, the final recommendations are all directly linked to these 7 aspirations for the Czech education system.

Each standard is presented in a dedicated section, below. The standard is described in full, along with a summary of key messages from the data collection and analysis (as detailed in Deliverable 4) that highlight the critical issues currently faced in the Czech system.

The recommendations linked to the standard are then presented. These aim to identify what courses of action MŠMT could take, together with all stakeholders to improve work around the standard. For each recommendation, these courses of action are presented in bold text.

These recommendations are presented as measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in the whole Czech education system. A guiding principle underpinning these recommendations is that inclusive education is for all learners, but its effective implementation also assumes there should be targeted support for some learners and learner groups – including learners from the Roma community – in order to ensure they do not experience discrimination or disadvantages.

It is beyond the brief of this current work to identify exactly how the recommendations should be implemented in detail. However, it is possible to provide explanations of what the recommendations mean in more detail. These explanations are provided generally for the whole system and the specific roles of national level stakeholders are indicated. What the recommendations may mean specifically for the roles and responsibilities of regional level stakeholders are also indicated.

Finally, for each recommendation, an illustration of what the recommendation would look like in practice is presented. These illustrations provide information on concrete examples of work from other countries, or of initiatives already being undertaken in the Czech Republic.

Attitudes and perceptions towards inclusive education

1st Standard: 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. The key issues for this standard are clarity and common understanding of inclusive education.



Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 1st standard

The documentary evidence around the actions and initiatives to raise stakeholders' awareness regarding inclusive education, show 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.

Based on these findings, two recommendations have been identified to support the development of positive attitudes and perceptions towards inclusive education as an approach leading to the improvement of education for all learners.

Recommendation 1

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

Most stakeholders agree that there is a clear idea of what the goal for Inclusive education is, but what that then means in practice for different stakeholders in the Czech Republic and how that vision is then translated into practice for everyone concerned needs to be clear and communicated in an unambiguous way.

National level stakeholders – i.e. the staff teams MŠMT, MSPV and other ministries – must agree upon and clarify what the concept of inclusive education means in practice within the Czech Republic. This is the starting point for ensuring that all stakeholders understand inclusive education as an approach for all learners.

The staff teams in MŠMT and its partners, especially in MSPV, need to be very clear themselves on what they mean by inclusive education and what they think this means for different stakeholders.

This means that:

- Representatives from ministries must be vocal advocates for inclusion and be seen to stand against discrimination and stereotyping.
- They must develop strategies to address the challenge that inclusion has the potential to be politicised, when being against or for inclusion is seen as an instrument in wider political debates.
- They must develop strategies to communicate to stakeholders in the regions, as well as the wider public that inclusive education is about quality in the whole



education system where all learners benefit, and that support is not limited to certain vulnerable learners.

*An illustration of what this recommendation would look like in practice is **Poland's** Ministry of National Education and Science's public consultation "Concept of organization of education for learners with disabilities" The consultations were conducted in the form of an online survey, workshops, focus studies and a conference summarizing the collected information, opinions and developed solutions. The public consultations were attended by 1,557 people. The participants included teachers, directors, schools and institutions, parents of learners with disabilities, as well as representatives of regional educational authorities, local government units, psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, teacher training centres, institutions and non-governmental organisations working for the benefit of children and young people with disabilities, and teacher training colleges.*

As a follow up, in 2016, educational debates were held with a total of about 15,000 participants, organised by the Ministry of Education in different regions of the country and – the majority - by regional educational authorities at the provincial level. Such a national dialogue can be held in the Czech Republic to discuss the concept of inclusive education, as well as issues around social inclusion, discrimination and stereotyping. (Addressing Regional Disparities in the Czech Education System. Peer Learning Activity: Engaging stakeholders in policy implementation work in Poland. Elisabeth Neroj, Beata Jachimczak and Adam Mickiewicz, 2020.)

Recommendation 2

National level stakeholders must be active in developing a shared conception of what high-quality, equitable inclusive education looks like in practice. There should be a range of opportunities for dialogue with regional and school level stakeholders about the kind of schools and learning communities that are required in order to achieve national policy goals for inclusive education.

If at the national level, there is a clear understanding of what inclusive education means and looks like in practice, then the next step is to ensure that a shared understanding is developed across all system levels. Everyone involved needs to understand what inclusive education looks like in practice for them and for this to happen, there needs to be a focus on dialogue between different stakeholders to consider the questions: what should the implementation of the vision look like in our region, local communities and schools? What does the vision mean for our work? How can we take the vision forward?

This discussion with different stakeholders should not focus on comparisons between regions, local communities, schools, or learner groups that label and negatively impact on them in any way. Rather this dialogue must be framed by a narrative that clearly values all stakeholders' work. It should focus on what stakeholders want to aim for together and how they think they can achieve it.

National level stakeholders must engage with their own colleagues within and across ministries and departments, in order to ensure a continuous internal dialogue that supports all staff members to have similar exchanges with regional policy makers and school teams.



National level stakeholders must develop a strategic plan for engaging in systematic dialogue around inclusive education with:

- wider society, in order to ensure wider communities are aware that inclusive education is an approach that benefits all learners, not just some groups or individuals;
- regional policy makers, in order to ensure their thinking and actions are in line with the legislative vision for inclusive education and national policy goals.

Importantly, **national level stakeholders** must ensure the dialogue is perceived as inclusive, positive and supportive of the work in regions. This means shifting the overall narrative away from *reducing disparities between* regions, communities and schools towards *supporting developments for and within* regions, communities and schools.

Regional level stakeholders must actively engage with national level stakeholders in order to develop a shared policy language around inclusive education that can be used to communicate with school teams, as well as the professionals and community actors that support them in their work.

In co-operation with national level stakeholders **regional level stakeholders** must develop and implement dialogue activities that support school level stakeholders to agree on what inclusive education should look like in their school communities. These dialogue activities must emphasise for school teams:

- that all teachers/staff have a shared responsibility for all learners;
- the need for partnership with and communication and information for parents.

An illustration of what this recommendation would look like in practice is from work in Canada, on [National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities](#). Dialogue activities 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 combating stereotypes and discrimination within and through inclusive education.

System capacity building

2nd Standard: All learners in all schools are provided opportunities and effective support to meet their educational, social and emotional needs. The key issue for this standard is how far legislation and policy support an equitable education system for all learners and addresses regional disparities.

Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 2nd standard

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.

Based on these findings, two recommendations have been identified to support the development of structures and processes that facilitate system-wide capacity building for all organisations and the individuals working within them.

Recommendation 3

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

Dialogue regarding the implementation of policy goals and service provision is required with stakeholders from across all sectors - education, social, welfare, health and finance - , as well as all system levels. This dialogue should be used to agree operational definitions – that are agreed between all stakeholders involved. An operational definition should provide a clear and agreed description of what key concepts look like and mean when they have been achieved i.e. what does *access* look like and what does it mean in terms of being successfully implemented in schools, in regions and at national level.

National level stakeholders must lead the overall dialogue in order to ensure that the eventual operational definitions:

- clearly outline all learners' rights and entitlements to inclusive education;
- are in line with the Czech Republic's commitments to European and international be policy statements, as well as the Czech policy and strategy for inclusive education;
- provide the basis for collaborative work across system levels (national and regional) and across sectors - education, social, welfare, health and finance - including identifying clear guidance on the areas of responsibilities for all stakeholders across different system levels.



Regional level stakeholders must engage in intensified discussions with local level stakeholders - pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff, school management, municipality social services and employers – in order to translate the operational definitions into the local context and culture.

An illustration of what this recommendation would look like in practice is shown by the [Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy \(ICLD\)](#). It 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](#) 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.

Recommendation 4

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

Based on operational definitions of what key concepts mean in practice, the thinking and the dialogue can be shifted towards what competences different professionals need to be able to implement the policy vision and goals for inclusive education.

Competences must be considered as much broader than just certain knowledge, skills, or behaviours. The starting point of competence is stakeholder attitudes and their beliefs. Knowledge and understanding, as well as skills and behaviours build on attitudes and beliefs. A critical issue for developing competences for inclusive education is identifying and then developing the positive attitudes and thinking around different tasks and goals for inclusion stakeholders are being asked to work towards.

The identification of competences can be accomplished through multi-stakeholder dialogue. **National** and **regional level stakeholders** should both be jointly active in establishing possibilities for cross-sectoral, multi-professional discussions around necessary competences all stakeholders require.

In addition, **National level stakeholders** should consider commissioning evidence-based piloting and/or research exploring the necessary competences for innovative approaches to inclusive education at all school levels.

Regional level stakeholders must be active in identifying innovative examples of school level practice that clearly illustrate the competences required for inclusive education. These examples can then be used for discussions with stakeholders at the local school level around the attitudes, knowledge and skills professional need to ensure education in local schools is learner-centred and effectively personalised in a way that demonstrates how diversity is accommodated and valued.

An illustration of what this recommendation would look like in practice can be derived from the [Teacher Education Profile](#) of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. The Profile presents information on what essential values and areas of



competence should be developed within all initial teacher education programmes. The Profile has been drafted as a tool to be examined and developed in ways that specifically fit within the different context of each individual country's initial teacher education system. The Profile document draws upon various activities and discussions between policy makers and practitioners from a range of schools and teacher education sectors; initial and in-service student teachers; parents and families; and learners – who have collectively debated the competences that all teachers need to support their work in inclusive settings.

Four core values relating to teaching and learning have been identified as the basis for the work of all teachers in inclusive education. These core values are associated with areas of teacher competence. The areas of competence are made up of three elements: attitudes, knowledge and skills. A certain attitude or belief demands certain knowledge or level of understanding and then skills in order to implement this knowledge in a practical situation. For each area of competence identified, the essential attitudes, knowledge and skills that underpin them are presented.

As a follow up of this activity the Agency has co-operated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to provide a suite of materials on [Empowering Teachers to Promote Inclusive Education](#) which includes country case studies.

Funding models

3rd Standard: Allocation of funds and resources is equitable, efficient, cost-effective, flexible and co-ordinated. The key issues for this standard are the effectiveness, equity and enabling effects of resource allocation including the work with other agencies beyond education.

Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 3rd standard

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.

Based on these findings, two recommendations have been identified to support the development of funding mechanisms and strategies that are equitable, efficient, cost-effective, flexible and well co-ordinated.

Recommendation 5

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

Currently there are a range of possibilities within the system to access funding for educational initiatives. However, there is also a high degree of uncertainty around how to access it and how sustainable funding streams might be. A vital starting point for ensuring funding mechanisms are more systems need driven and more effectively targeted is developing an overview of what funding is actually available across the system i.e. a comprehensive and transparent overview of *all* funding and resourcing available to schools from *all* possible sources (ministries, public and non-public bodies).

This overview should be undertaken by **national** and **regional level stakeholders** working in co-operation in order to identify:

- potential gaps and overlaps
- effective and ineffective funding mechanisms
- the effects of system fragmentation on funding mechanisms.

Based on the coherent overview of all possible resources, there must be formal collaboration processes between **national** and **regional level stakeholders** with open communication that fosters synergies between different ministries, as well as ministries and regional authorities around developing more coherent, long-term and sustainable funding mechanisms for inclusive education.

Structured dialogue will be necessary with **all stakeholders** across all sectors and system levels about the current funding models and possibilities for new approaches to resource allocation strategies that meet the diverse needs of local and school populations, as well as group and individual learners.

National level stakeholders should explore possibilities for a mid-level governance and support body, or mechanism that is able to support school level stakeholders to make effective contributions to decision-making regarding the allocation of resources to meet their schools' short, mid and long-term needs and strategic plans for inclusive education.

*An illustration of what this recommendation would look like in practice can be observed in the **Canton of Zurich, Switerland**. The Canton 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](#)" 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](#)) and cantonal levels (e.g., [Zürcher Finanzausgleich](#)).

Another illustration of what this recommendation would look like in practice can also be found in **Germany**. The [Inclusive School Alliances](#) (Link in German) enable professionals, including school leaders, to collaborate and work collectively to make decisions about how resources for inclusive education are allocated across a number of schools.

The inclusive school alliances provide a place where school leaders can exchange opinions on and discuss inclusion and diversity. These discussions and the shared responsibility for students with disabilities shape a positive attitude towards inclusion and diversity. This has a direct impact on the school community and the school climate. School leaders can positively influence teachers' attitudes and contribute to their development.

The alliance brings the responsibility for meeting local level needs to the local level by giving them the responsibility and trust. Through decision making for inclusive education funding they take responsibility for inclusive education and develop inclusive cultures. (Addressing Regional Disparities in the Czech Education System. Peer Learning Activity: Developing positive teacher attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education in Germany. Andriana Stathakopoulou, Petra Koinzer and Andrea Bethge, 2020.)

Recommendation 6

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

Funding policies can be examined in relation to the essential intention behind the policy. Does the funding policy or strategy aim at *prevention*, that is at *avoiding* educational exclusion and longer-term social exclusion, before these issues emerge? Does the funding policy or strategy aim at *intervention*, that is *supporting* the effective implementation of inclusive education? Or does the funding policy or strategy aim at *compensation* – that is *addressing* the inability of legislation and/or provision to support high quality inclusive education for all learners in their local schools?

Effective and long-term sustainable financing systems for inclusive education have a mix of prevention, intervention and compensatory funding mechanisms, but they are geared towards early intervention and prevention approaches and do not over-rely on compensatory funding mechanisms (i.e. such as those that link funds and resources directly to the formal identification of a learner's special educational need).

National level stakeholders must co-ordinate dialogue with all funding authorities – including the ministry of finance - across all sectors and system levels, to identify a model of funding that ensures sustainable, appropriate funding and resourcing can be provided at school level to support all learners to overcome barriers to learning and participation.

Stakeholders across all levels must be involved to develop a model that:



- ensures transparency regarding the allocation and effective use of funds for additional support;
- identifies and addresses system fragmentation issues that impact on funding and resourcing of schools' work;
- provides funding that can be used flexibly at the discretion of school leadership teams, to implement strategies that prevent problems occurring and allow teachers to intervene as soon as issues are recognised/identified;
- ensures the provision of high-quality learning support opportunities for all learners;
- moves away from the use of formal needs identification procedures that involves the labelling of learners as the main means of accessing support;
- outlines funding mechanisms for learners with more complex and long-term support needs;
- ensures parents' involvement in necessary dialogue to ensure their understanding about necessary change in ways of funding and delivering support.

*An illustration of what this recommendation would look like in practice can be seen in a shift in funding mechanisms in **Norway**. The most dominant aspect of Norway's financing system is the strong decentralisation, which means that government funding very rarely goes to specific schools; it is instead allocated through the local governments. As in other countries statistics increased awareness of the high proportion of pupils in special needs education and the vast resources spent linked to this. At the same time the outcomes were poor. The municipalities turned their focus and channelled resources from special to adaptive education. The schools in these municipalities did better on national tests after these changes were implemented. The [shift from separate funding of mainstream education and SNE](#) (SNE given as input funding), to a system where schools receive a block budget (general funding) helped to promote inclusive education through a focus on adaptive education for all.*

Monitoring, quality assurance and accountability

4th Standard: Stakeholders collect and effectively use reliable and relevant information for monitoring, quality assurance and accountability purposes. The key issue for this standard is the effectiveness of educational governance and quality assurance and accountability processes at all system levels.

Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 4th standard

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.

Based on these findings, two recommendations have been identified to support the increased effectiveness of educational governance and quality assurance and accountability processes.

Recommendation 7

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

A main finding from the overall work in the Action is that there is a quite widely held view and a perception that inclusive education is the responsibility of a few experts, or a few specialist teachers, or a few policy-makers who potentially have that term as part of their job description. However, the system changes required for a high-quality inclusive education system that benefits all learners requires that all stakeholders recognise their personal and collective responsibility for implementing inclusive education.

National level stakeholders must ensure that the roles and responsibilities of personnel in ministries/departments at national and regional level are understood and clearly communicated to all stakeholders. Their respective roles within the decentralised system must ensure shared and overall responsibility and a synergy of effort through co-operative working.

In a decentralised system, transparency within lines of responsibility are areas of challenge, but where they can be changed into areas of strength is when there are mechanisms and possibilities for these different stakeholders to talk about their roles and agree on shared responsibilities for achieving shared goals. This will require **national** and **regional level stakeholders** working together to develop:

- clear and transparent communication around the lines and areas of responsibility for and to all stakeholders working at all levels;
- a common guidance structure for inclusive education leading to advisory documents which outline goals, procedures and monitoring mechanisms that guide all stakeholders' work;
- clear information for parents and families that presents consistent and coherent messages on their rights and responsibilities in relation to their children's education.



An illustration of what this means in practice can be seen in the [Norwegian consultation scheme](#). This scheme 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](#)) 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](#). *European Journal of Education*, 51(3), 447-462).

Recommendation 8

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

Within the Czech system there are different mechanisms for ensuring quality assurance and stakeholder accountability, including different ways of collecting data and information which indicates if the goals for education are being achieved and are being achieved. However, many of these quality assurance mechanisms are not always directly and fully aligned with the policy vision and goals for inclusive education.

National level stakeholders must initiate a systematic review of the existing frameworks for quality assurance and accountability in order to ensure their coherence with the policy vision and goals of inclusive education.

Regional level stakeholders must actively work with cross sectoral teams in developing a revised framework that:

- has the goal of supporting self-review and organisational development at regional and school levels based on the identification of evidence on what works in inclusive education and why;
- incorporate 'added value' indicators for schools' situations and increase the value placed on schools' work with diverse learner groups;
- provide clear guidance regarding the information and data collection that is required for systematic monitoring of the implementation of inclusive education to inform developments at school and regional levels.

National level stakeholders must explore possibilities for a mid-level governance and support body or mechanism that is able to support school level stakeholders to develop:

- action plans that address inclusiveness, as well as educational quality issues generally;
- self-evaluation criteria aligned with the vision for inclusive education.

An illustration of what this means in practice is demonstrated in 'Standards for use in school external reviews with indicative success criteria' of the [Quality Assurance Department](#) of the Ministry of Education in **Malta**. The internal review and support unit



within the Ministry for Education supports schools and their learning community in engaging in an ongoing, cyclical reflective process which is directed at improving educational outcomes for all their learners. In fact, standard 1.2 mentions that in schools there are internal evaluation processes, which are referred to for school development planning. 'The school development planning documentation (SDP) has appropriate structure, content and format facilitating effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation.' ([Quality Assurance Department](#), 2016, p. 1)

*Another illustration of what this means in practice is demonstrated by the **Vienna Middle School, Austria**. The [school](#) transformed gradually from a special school to an inclusive school for all learners aged 10-14 as well as serving as a Sonderpädagogisches-Zentrum (SPZ – Special Education Centre). Now it is a modern, achievement-oriented school, with a total of 200 learners (90 girls and 110 boys). Some 30% of the learners are from an immigrant background, 30% have identified SEN and 60% come from socially disadvantaged families and need financial support. The school's change to a model of good inclusive practice has influenced the mainstream schools in the area to move more and more towards inclusion. Since 2009, the VMS has started to advise and support inclusive classes in primary and secondary schools in different districts of the region. As the principal noted, 'By identifying quality indicators for inclusive education, adapted to the special needs of the region, knowledge of special education is turning into a pedagogy for all children'.*

Professional development

5th standard: Professional development issues at all system levels are effectively addressed. The key issues for this standard are how stakeholders at all levels are enabled through their initial education, continuing professional development and exchange mechanisms to implement inclusive education as a rights-based approach for all learners.

Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 5th standard

There is a clear alignment regarding the findings of the documentary analysis and the stakeholders' perceptions for this standard across all issues.

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.

Based on these findings, two recommendations have been identified to support the development of initial education and continuing professional development that enables all teachers to implement inclusive education as a rights-based approach for all learners.

Recommendation 9

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

Recommendation 4 outlines the need for the competences required for all staff to be identified and agreed upon. Widespread stakeholder dialogue should lead to agreements on the attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and understanding, skills and behaviours all educators require for inclusive education.

All policies, across all sectors – education, higher education, social, health and finance – that impact upon all educators' initial and continuing professional development must be aligned with the vision and goals for inclusive education. The agreements regarding the competences to be developed must be reflected in all relevant policies that determine the goals, content and funding of all educators' initial and continuing professional development.

National level stakeholders must engage all key stakeholders from across the relevant sectors to develop and then implement a co-ordinated policy framework that is fully aligned with the Czech vision for inclusive education.

This framework must ensure the appropriate status of all education professionals and provide incentives to ensure that high quality, appropriately trained candidates are attracted to and remain in the profession. It should also ensure appropriate training pathways of specialists (for example support teachers, psychologists, teacher assistants) for learners with low-incidence disabilities (e.g. learners with very complex learning disabilities; visual, hearing, multi-sensory impairments, etc.).

Regional level stakeholders must work with school level stakeholders to identify their specific requirements for priority access to continuing professional development opportunities for educators in their region that must be accounted for within the co-ordinated policy framework. This policy framework must be fully aligned with the Czech vision for inclusive education.

An illustration of what this means in practice is demonstrated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. It has initiated a [Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung](#) (Quality campaign teacher education, [information in English](#)) to support capacity building of teacher education institutions to promote research and prepare teachers for inclusive



education (see topic [Heterogenität und Inklusion](#)). Within this strategic initiative enabling teachers to be prepared for diversity is understood as a cross-sectional topic. This needs to be addressed in curricula, pedagogical methods, learning arrangements and all teaching fields and subjects. Nearly all projects have taken the issue of inclusion and diversity on board and are giving impulses to prepare teaching students in theory and practice for diverse school realities.

Recommendation 10

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

Minimum levels of service provision should detail what all service providers must offer the system in terms of professional training and development that ensures all teachers are prepared to meet the demands of education in Czech schools. **National level stakeholders** must provide clear guidance to service providers – universities, training organisations and institutions - on the expectations regional and school level stakeholders have in terms of the required competences for inclusive education. These demands must be met in all forms of professional training.

National and **regional level stakeholders** must work with school-level stakeholders, as well as stakeholders from universities, training organisations and institutions to undertake a comprehensive review and mapping of all initial and continuous professional development training possibilities. This review should be undertaken to develop minimum levels of service provision that align with policy goals for inclusive education.

The review and mapping exercise should aim towards:

- a comprehensive overview of different forms of teacher training provision, to identify overlaps in current provision, as well as gaps in geographical availability, or coverage of the requisite programme content relating to inclusive attitudes and values, knowledge and skills;
- the identification of the essential areas of competence - attitudes, knowledge and skills – that should be developed through theoretical as well as practical training opportunities in order to prepare **all** teachers for diverse classrooms;
- the alignment of core competences – attitudes, knowledge and skills - that underpin education and training for different school-based professionals;
- the identification and formal recognition of ITE and CPD curricular and programmes that are fully in line with national policy goals for inclusive education.

An illustration of what this means in practice can be seen in a primary school in Dublin, Ireland which is taking part in the [National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy \(NITRIS\)](#) pilot project. As part of a whole-school approach, the school leader introduced Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which was led by Traveller workers attached to the NITRIS pilot project, giving Travellers a meaningful voice. The school leader ensured that all staff participated in the CPD which was aimed at raising awareness around



Traveller culture and history. This CPD also involved highlighting to teachers the various barriers that can exist in a Traveller's life that make accessing and participation in education a challenge. This awareness raising had a strong impact on staff in helping them understand the challenges around parental engagement, literacy issues and physical living conditions of some of their Traveller pupils. An additional Traveller Storytelling Initiative empowered and enabled the Traveller pupils to contribute to the lesson, to self-identify as Traveller openly and to use their own identity to express their voice.

Communication and collaboration between stakeholders

6th standard: There is effective communication and collaboration across and between all system stakeholders. The key issue for this standard is how effectively communication and collaboration in the education system enables all stakeholders in education to be inclusive in their day-to-day work and school experience. This includes stakeholders at all levels i.e. state, region, municipality, community and school as well as learners, families, schools and services.

Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 6th standard

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.



Based on these findings, one recommendation has been identified to support effective communication and collaboration across and between all system stakeholders.

Recommendation 11

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

Recommendation 7 and 8 are particularly concerned with quality assurance and issues around how well the Czech goals for inclusive education are implemented. An essential factor in ensuring the goals for inclusive education are achieved is the quality of learner and parental engagement and active participation in educational decision making.

National level stakeholders must support regional and school level stakeholders to clearly articulate what it means for learners, parents and families to actively participate in local schools: what does effective communication and engagement with parents look like in practice; what does learner participation in decision making that effects them look like in practice?

National level stakeholders must set the expectations for regional and school level implementation action plans that provide clear guidance on what the enactment of learners' and parents'/families' rights looks like in practice.

National level stakeholders must explore possibilities for a mid-level governance body or mechanism that is able to support regional and school level stakeholders to develop their own policies and plans that clearly articulate the rights of all learners and their parents/families in relation to: attending school, being taught by a qualified teacher, receiving support from other services in their local school and community, being involved in decisions about their learning and having equitable opportunities to participate in meaningful learning.

The mid-level governance body or mechanism should work with regional and school level stakeholders to:

- ensure consistency in the translation of national policy goals into action plans at all system levels and across sectors;
- act as a platform to ensure the top-down and bottom-up communication and exchange necessary to support the implementation of inclusive education policy in practice;
- provide support for regional and school level stakeholders to interpret national level goals within their individual contexts;
- provide support for regional and school level stakeholders to recognise and overcome barriers to the implementation of action plans;
- provide practical support and guidance on the implementation of policy goals within local and individual school contexts.



An illustration of what this means in practice is demonstrated by the [How Good is our School](#) self-evaluation framework of Education Scotland. This is a United Kingdom **Scotland** Government executive agency charged with supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education and thereby securing the delivery of better learning experiences and outcomes for Scottish learners of all ages.

How Good is our School (HGIOS) has now been published in the 4th edition as a framework designed to support self-evaluation and reflection by practitioners at all levels. HGIOS provides a suite of quality indicators that support staff in all sectors to look inwards, to scrutinise their work and evaluate what is working well for learners and what could be improved. It is a key aspect of the Scottish approach to school improvement. The [new edition](#) includes indicators for personalised support and ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion.

Learning and teaching environments

7th standard: Inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners is ensured. The key issue for this standard is how effectively learners and their parents and families are engaged in the education of the learner.

Key messages from the data collection and analysis for the 7th standard

The documentary analysis and stakeholder data collection were strongly in alignment for this standard.

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.

Based on these findings, four recommendations have been identified to support inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners.

Recommendation 12

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

Learners have the right to be involved in decision making about their learning. This right needs to be put into practice on a daily basis in teaching and learning situations, but also through more formal means like schools' and students' councils at regional and national levels.

Giving learners a voice in their learning needs to compliment efforts to involve parents in the development of their child's learning activities and plans.

Regional level stakeholders must support school teams in identifying ways to increase consultation with **all** learners, parents and families in school and the wider system of decision-making about proposed decisions that affect them. This could include initiating discussions around:

- existing clear examples where learners their families are being consulted and given a voice and actually involved in decision making;
- the identification of the supportive factors in schools resulting in effective consultation;
- exploring possibilities for curriculum flexibility to meet the school's local cultural needs.

An illustration of what this means in practice is reported in "Better learning for Europe's young people: developing coherent quality assurance strategies for school education" (European Commission (2018): Luxembourg: EU, p. 27). 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](#). Alternatively or in addition, stakeholder views can routinely be gathered more locally through school self-evaluation and inspection processes. Inspectorates can undertake questionnaire surveys of parents as part of a school inspection or commonly meet with sample groups of pupils and parents, perhaps also interviewing other relevant stakeholders in the local community. With this systematic approach „inspectorates then have the opportunity to report to ministers and the public on system-wide patterns and trends they are seeing in the stakeholder views they are receiving during inspections.“

*Another illustration of what this means in practice is demonstrated in **Ireland** through DEIS programme. This programme provides for, among other things, smaller class sizes and other supports including additional teaching posts, priority access to Continuing Professional Development, enhanced book grants and Home School Community Liaison*



(HSCL) Coordinators. The [HSCL](#) Coordinators have worked with school principals to identify those families and pupils most in need of support, maintain a supportive link between the school and those families during home-schooling due to the COVID pandemic and will continue to support children and families through the return to in-classroom teaching.

A primary school in Cork has always been very active in engaging with parents and continually utilises the HSCL teacher. Through their involvement with the schools, the principal has reported that contact with Roma parents has improved immensely. The Roma worker on the team acted as a link between the school and the Roma parents, and enabled the lines of communication to open up. There were numerous misunderstandings between the school and the Roma families that had meant that there was poor engagement from Roma families and they rarely turned up for scheduled meetings with either teachers or the principal. They also did not understand school routines such as homework. The links with the Roma worker meant that all of these issues were resolved and it means that any barriers to Roma children attending school or not being able to engage with their learning can be addressed immediately. The Roma worker has also provided English lessons for parents and runs sessions on how to help their children. (Addressing Regional Disparities in the Czech Education System. Peer Learning Activity: Development of specific support strategies for learners with a Roma/Traveller background in Ireland. Brendan Doody and Mary Cregg, 2020.)

Recommendation 13

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

Recommendations 4 and 9 emphasise the importance of educators' competences for inclusive education. For professionals working in school teams, a central competence is the ability to recognise and then address barriers to learning that some learners face.

Teachers in particular must be supported to take a prevention focused approach to their teaching that aims to avoid learner failure, but also intervene as soon as possible when they identify learners are facing difficulties.

Regional level stakeholders must provide possibilities for increasing in-school and cross-school collaboration to share examples of effective approaches to recognising and overcoming barriers to learning. This sharing of experience should be supported with multi-agency expertise and experience (e.g. from social-workers, psychologists, counselling and guidance centres, special schools and resource centres) to support school teams to identify and collect evidence for promoting inclusive practice.

National level stakeholders must explore mechanisms for supporting the work in the regions, including:

- Ensuring the provision of effective training for teachers and other specialists.
- Providing joint training, conferences and meetings to promote exchange and co-operation between professionals from across all sectors and services who support school teams.



- Establish other mechanisms – such as using online platforms – for sharing experience and examples of practice.

An illustration of what this means in practice in the [Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation](#) (SWIFT) project of the **USA**. SWIFT focuses on helping schools to engage in a collaborative process of transformation to achieve both equity and excellence. The SWIFT Guide provides a video (SWIFT Shelf Stories), discussion guide and additional resources for each of the SWIFT domains:

- *Multi-tiered systems of support (inclusive academic instruction; inclusive behaviour instruction)*
- *Administrative leadership (strong and engaged site leadership; strong educator support system)*
- *Integrated educational framework (full integrated organisational structure; strong and positive school culture)*
- *Community engagement (trusting family partnerships; trusting community partnerships)*
- *Inclusive policy structure and practice (strong local educational agency/school relationships; local educational agency policy framework).*

SWIFT found that support staff within general education classrooms can support all learners' development and help to build acceptance of diversity and difference.

Recommendation 14

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

If all schools are to effectively reach out to and engage all parents and families in their work, they require effective support. This support would help individual staff members as well as school teams to share and exchange experiences that they think have been effective in achieving the goal of engaging parents and families.

Regional level stakeholders must ensure that co-ordinated support is made available for schools to improve their overall strategy, ensure the different challenges faced by families are clearly recognised, understood and sensitively addressed and manage individual situations for reaching out to and engaging with parents and families.

This should include:

- support for school teams to share and exchange successful practice in developing partnerships with parents and families;
- an exchange mechanism - formal network or virtual platform – that is moderated and supported by specialists for inclusive education ensuring alignment with national policy goals.



Regional level stakeholders must act as a co-ordinating body for the multi-disciplinary inputs from across social sectors and also mediators - such as NGOs, social workers and organisations supporting the outreach to the Roma community - to ensure their support and input is effectively co-ordinated and targeted at schools.

*An illustration of what this means in practice is taking place in **Portugal**. Using a territorial intervention approach, Portugal has identified Priority Educational Intervention Areas ([Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária – TEIP](#)) that aims to promote educational success and reduce early school leaving rates. This is targeted at 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. Paris: 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.*

*Another illustration of what this means in practice is demonstrated in *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in our Schools (DEIS)*, **Ireland's** Department of Education's policy platform to tackle social and educational disadvantage. The model for allocating special education teaching resources to schools includes a baseline component provided to every mainstream school to support inclusion, prevention of learning difficulties and early intervention.*

All schools are required to engage in a self-evaluation process which seeks to identify both the strengths of the school and the areas in which it faces challenge. Introduced formally in 2012, schools have been provided with comprehensive guidance and support to assist them in their work. More recently, in 2016, the Department published a quality framework for schools in which, for the first time, statements of effective and highly effective practice were provided for schools in two key dimensions of school life: management and leadership as well as teaching and learning. The quality framework ([Looking at Our School](#)) is designed to ensure complementarity between schools' self-evaluation work and external inspection conducted by the Department of Education's Inspectorate.

Recommendation 15

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

The importance of monitoring for quality assurance across the whole system is stressed in recommendation 8. Monitoring via self-review processes is an effective tool for improving practice at the school and regional levels. Self-review allows stakeholders to identify how far they have come in relation to the policy vision and goals for inclusive education and then identify what should be done to take things further. Such frameworks require regional and schools level stakeholders to question their practice through different forms of self-reflection questions that require evidence from practice to answer such as: how well are the national level goals being implemented? How well are the goals being interpreted at regional and school levels? How well are school achievements and the difficulties they still face being communicated to other stakeholders in the system?



National level stakeholders must take a lead in agreeing with regional level stakeholders a framework for identifying and reviewing regional level policy implementation against the national policy goals and practice. This should link into existing evaluation and inspection plans and procedures, but clearly focus on the identifications of strengths and challenges in the development of inclusive practice in local schools and classrooms.

National and regional level stakeholders must collaborate to develop self-review frameworks that:

- lead to the clear identification of school level stakeholder priorities and action plans that align with national level policy goals and are meaningful for the local school and community context;
- support dialogue with stakeholders – including employers and the wider community - from across different sectors regarding the success of the implementation of national policy goals from their perspectives;
- guide the clear identification of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholder working across different levels and sectors regarding the provision and allocation of resources, monitoring and data collection and collective use of information to ensure accountability and inform improvement.

*An illustration of what this means in practice has been developed by [the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education](#) in the **United Kingdom**. The [Index for Inclusion](#) is a set of materials to guide schools through a process of inclusive school development. It is about building supportive communities and fostering high achievement for all staff and students.*

The Index can be used by schools to:

- *adopt a self-review approach to analyse their cultures, policies and practices and to identify the barriers to learning and participation that may occur within each of these areas.*
- *decide their own priorities for change and to evaluate their progress.*
- *use it as an integral part of existing development policies, encouraging a wide and deep scrutiny of everything that makes up a school's activities.*

The Index takes the social model of disability as its starting point, builds on good practice, and then organises the Index work around a cycle of activities which guide schools through the stages of preparation, investigation, development and review.



INTER-CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE RECOMMENDATIONS

As has previously been stressed, all 15 of the recommendations are inter-connected and mutually support each other. The recommendations are not hierarchical; there is not one starting point from which the implementation of all others will then follow. Rather a systemic approach is required for their implementation.

This assertion is clearly supported by the evidence base used to develop the recommendations and presented in Deliverable 4, which highlights the inter-connected nature of the structures and processes within the system, as well as the effects specific issues may have across different system elements.

However, it is possible to identify a number of cross links between the recommendations. These inter-connections can be identified in different ways and linked to different frameworks or questions. One possible conceptualisation of inter-connections between the recommendations is around *themes* – or foci – for possible implementation action plans.

The 5 graphical representations below indicate interconnections between different recommendations in relation to possible thematic action plans.

The starting point for each theme area is the policy vision that *every learner has access to high-quality inclusive education and social inclusion*. Work on all recommendations flows out of, as well as into this vision. This two-way flow is indicated by two-way arrows in the figures below.

Work around specific recommendations should then be seen as interlinked, with work on one recommendation providing a foundation for work on others. These inter-links are represented by one-way arrows in the figures.

As can be seen in the figures, specific recommendations may underpin the overall work linked to a number of different themes.



Ensuring shared understanding of the vision

In order to support the implementation of the policy vision, in relation to the theme ensuring shared understandings, the inter-connections between recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4 need to be recognised and understood.

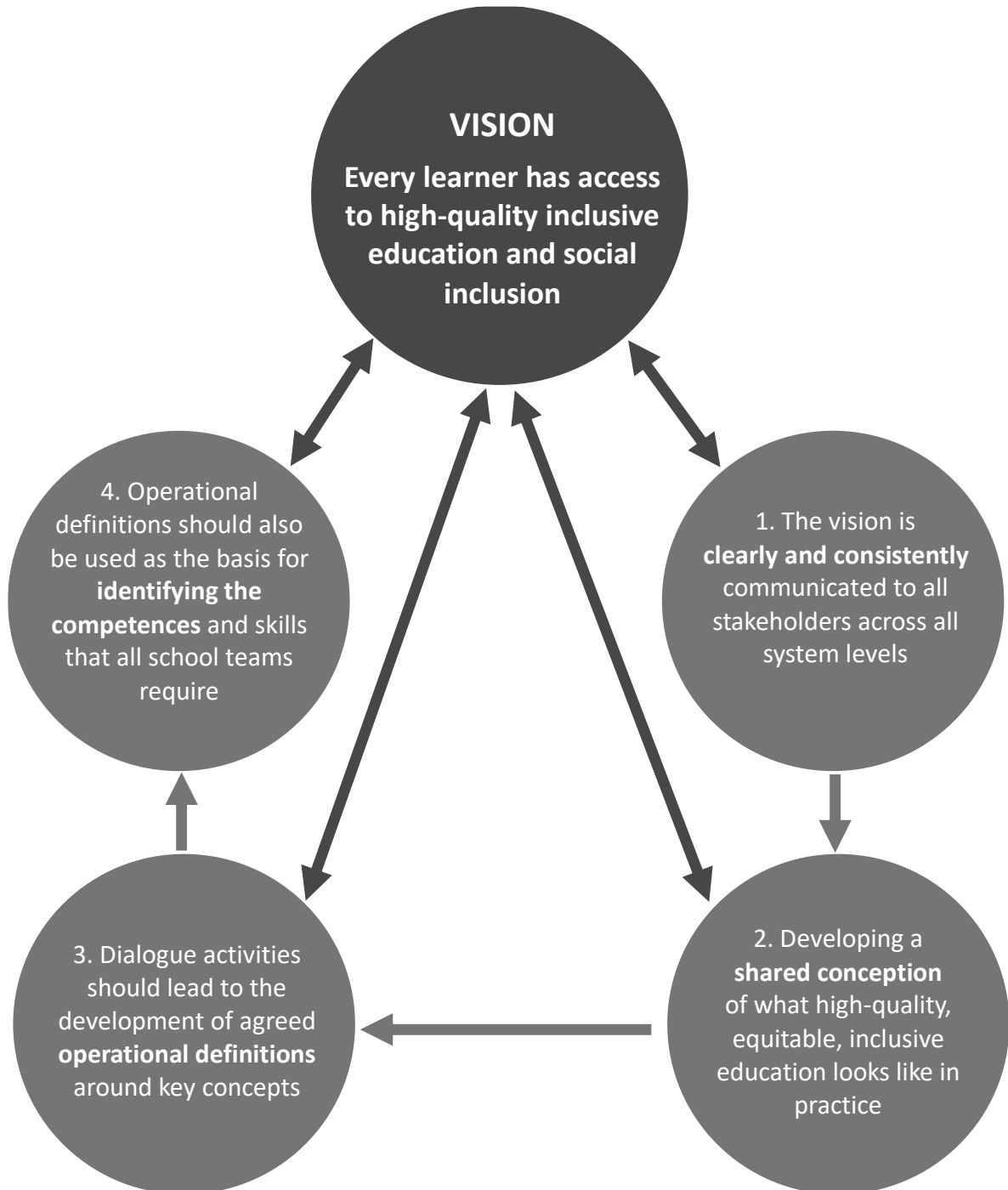


Figure 1. Ensuring shared understanding of the vision



Supporting active participation of learners and families

In order to support the implementation of the policy vision, in relation to the theme supporting active participation of learners and families, the inter-connections between recommendations 8, 11, 12 and 14 need to be recognised and understood.

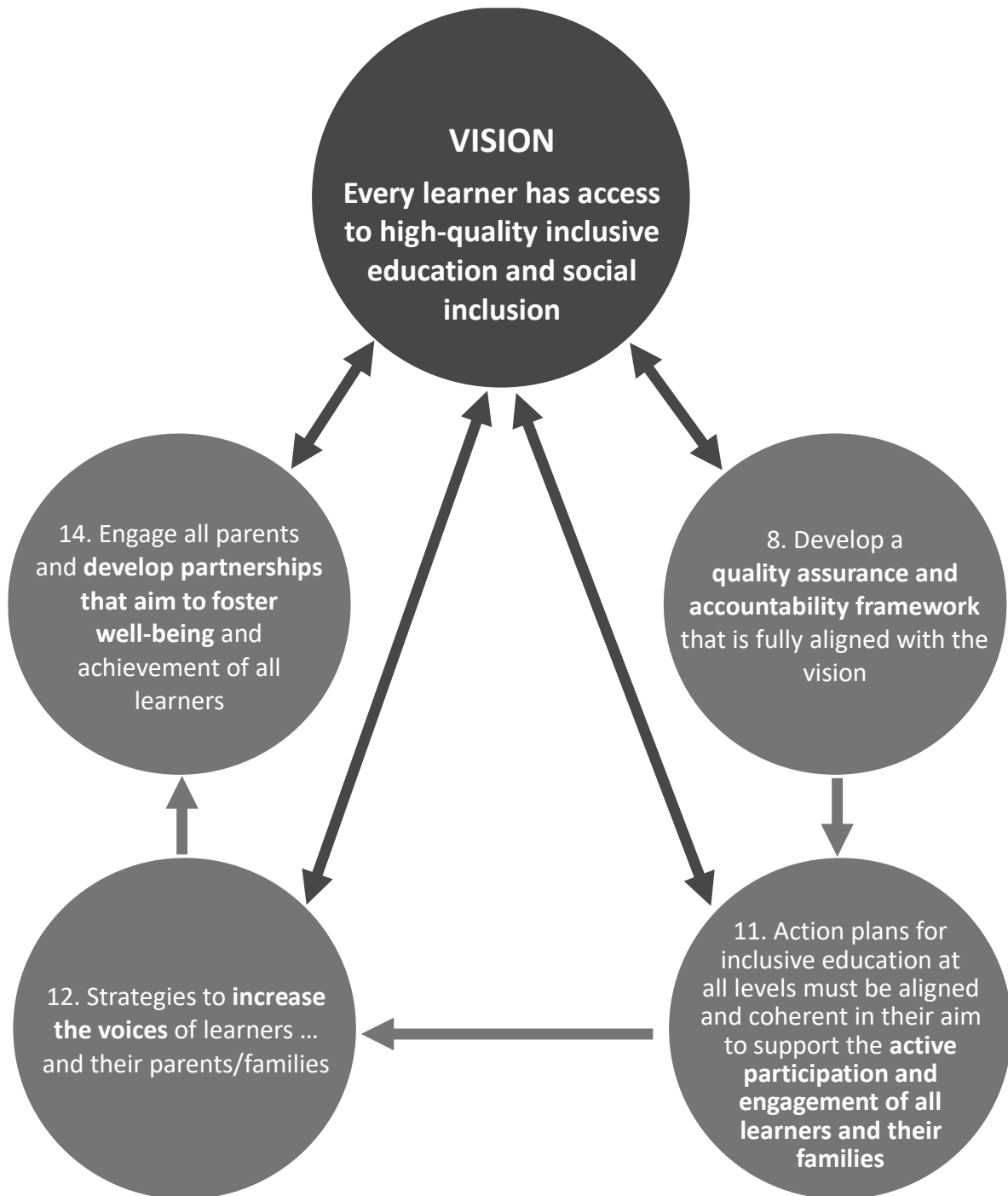


Figure 2. Supporting active participation of learners and families



Developing capacities and capabilities

In order to support the implementation of the policy vision, in relation to the theme developing capacities and capabilities, the inter-connections between recommendations 4, 9, 10 and 13 need to be recognised and understood.

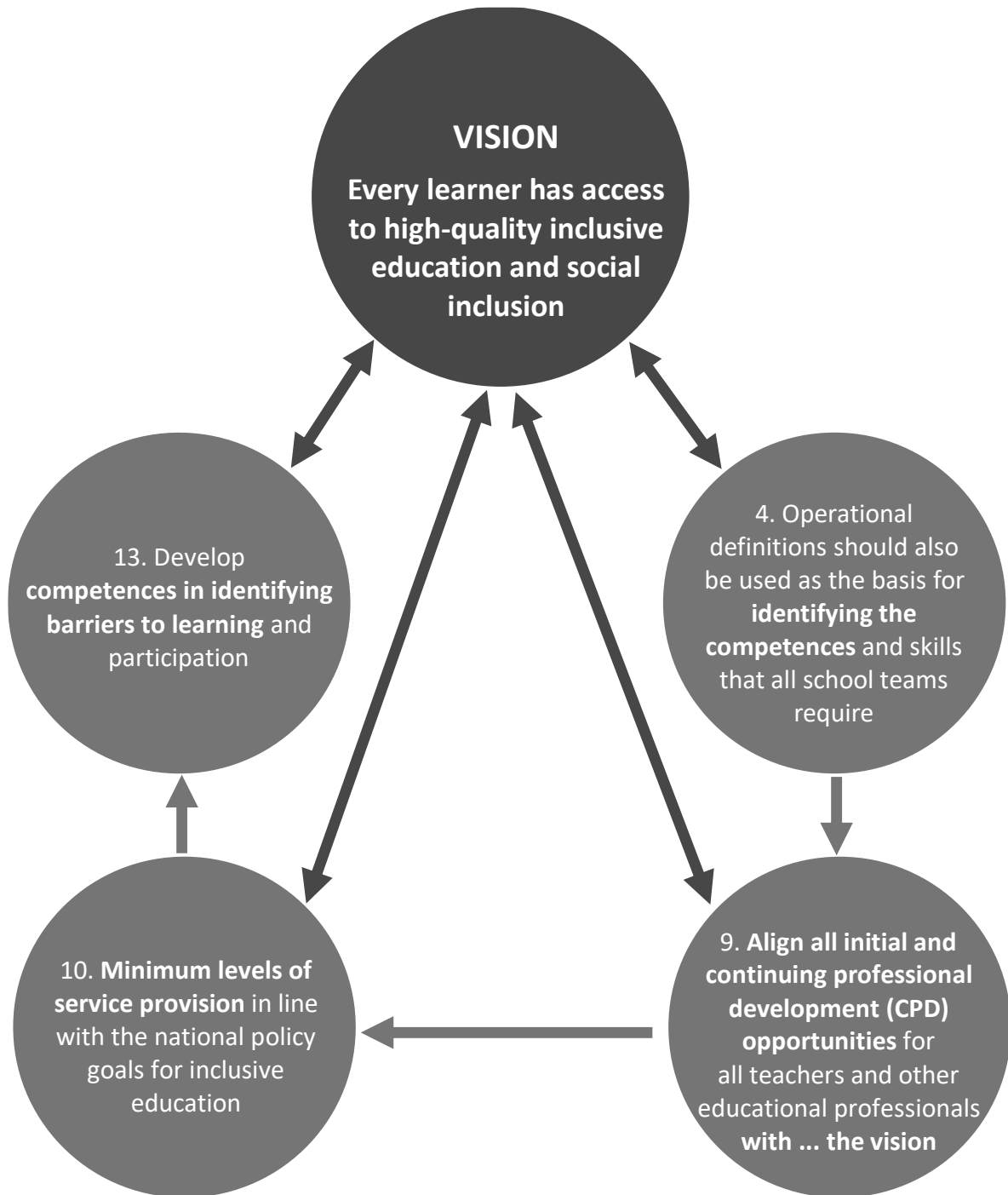


Figure 3. Developing capacities and capabilities



Supporting a flexible resourcing system

In order to support the implementation of the policy vision, in relation to the theme supporting a flexible resourcing system, the inter-connections between recommendations 7, 5 and 6 need to be recognised and understood.

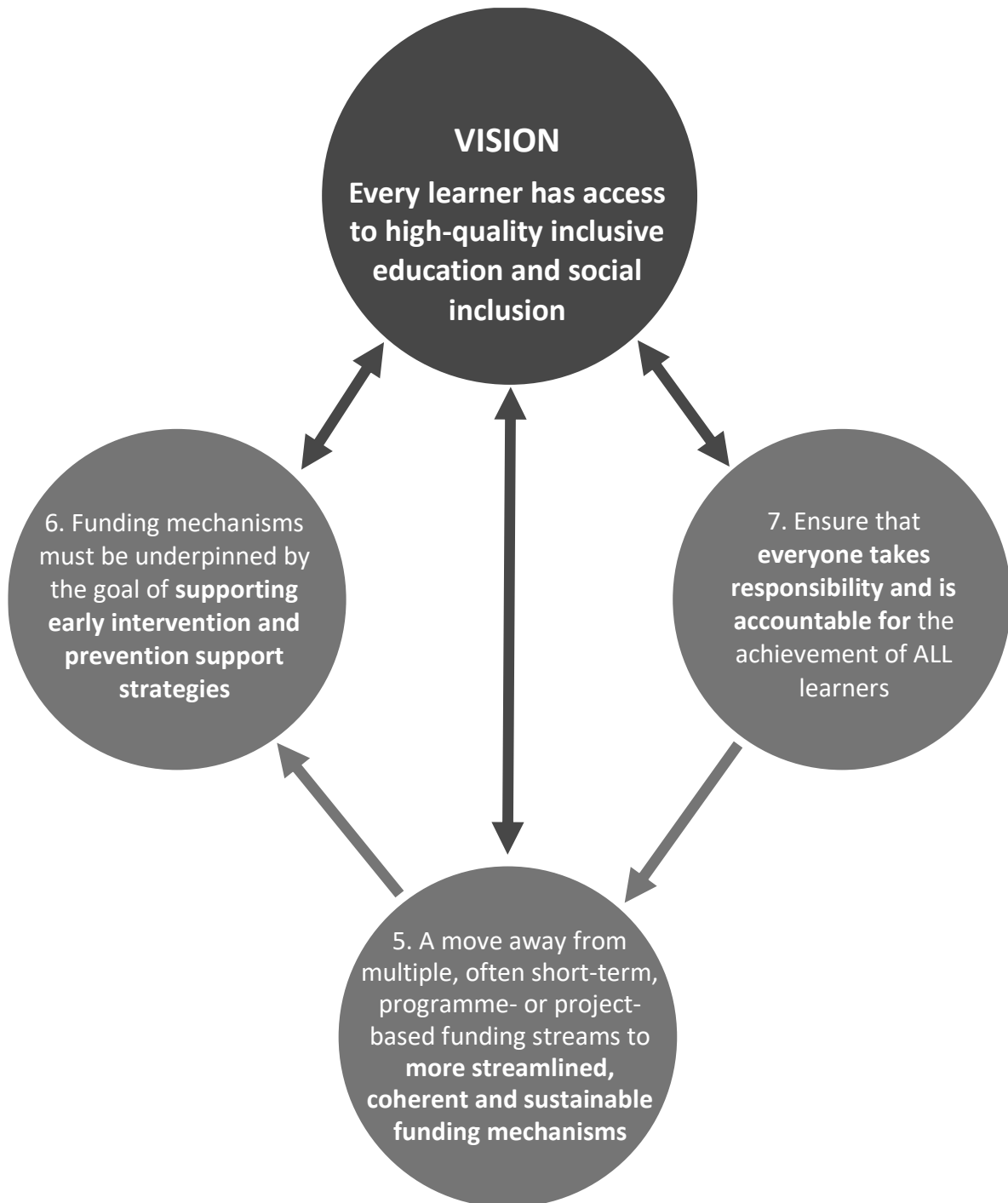


Figure 4. Supporting a flexible resourcing system



Actively monitoring the inclusive education system

In order to support the implementation of the policy vision, in relation to the theme actively monitoring the inclusive education system, the inter-connections between recommendations 7, 8, 11 and 15 need to be recognised and understood.

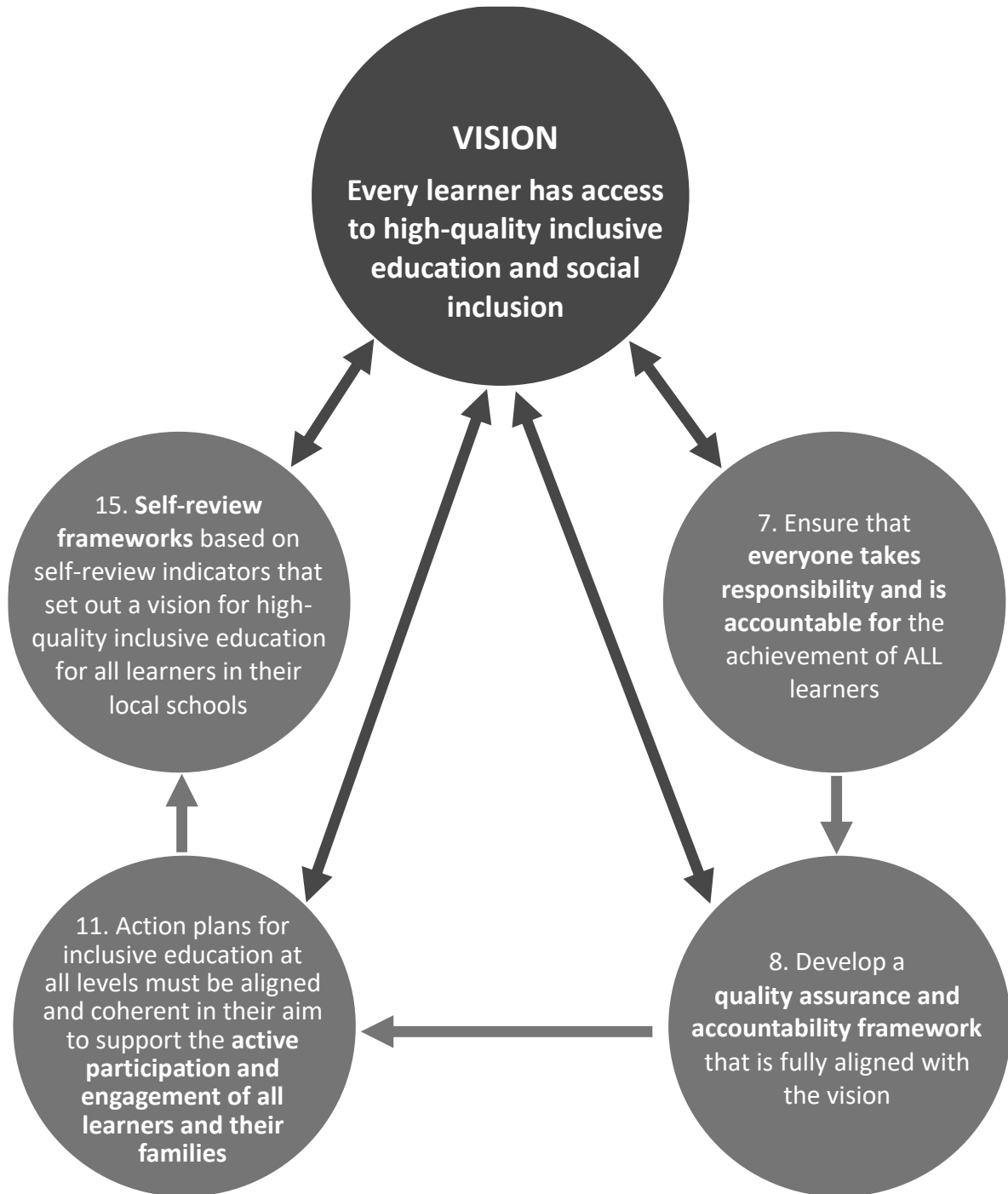


Figure 5. Actively monitoring the inclusive education system



Finally, it must be stressed, that the figures above represent a *possible* way of understanding inter-links between the 15 recommendations. Other conceptualisations are conceivable and one potential task for the Czech stakeholders could be to develop the representations of inter-connections that they feel are most important for them.



PROPOSED PRIORITY ACTION

The 15 recommendations presented in the previous sections outline the main actions that are considered necessary to ensure that the overall system for inclusive education in the Czech Republic is in alignment with the framework of standards identified by MŠMT and the Steering Committee for the work within the Action.

As has previously been outlined, the recommendations have been drafted with three parameters clearly in mind. These recommendations:

- are proposed as action to be taken forward by MŠMT, working collaboratively together with colleagues from the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Health, Child protection (MSPV), policy-makers at regional and local level, as well as all school level stakeholders;
- have been identified as current priorities that identify areas of strength to build on, as well as areas of challenges requiring further development;
- are highly inter-connected and it is not possible to consider addressing one recommendation without considering the impact and effect upon others.

It should be stressed that it is not possible – or necessarily effective – to implement the recommendations simultaneously. A process of dialogue around all of the recommendations and possibilities for prioritising and sequencing them should be undertaken, involving stakeholders from across the Czech system.

To support this process, evidence from the Action suggests that *structured stakeholder dialogue* around a number of significant issues should be seen as a **priority action** for short-term implementation. This priority action is considered crucial for ensuring longer term effectiveness within the overall inclusive education system as positive stakeholder attitudes towards inclusion, diversity and learner differences are the essential foundation for any further work. Developing a wider understanding of the potential benefits of inclusive education for all learners and all system stakeholders is a critical lever, considered the most likely to have maximal impact in building a foundation for longer-term actions.

Structured dialogue as a priority action

Czech stakeholders have acknowledged systemic issues beyond education impacting on achieving equitable education opportunities for all. It is a challenge to build an inclusive school within an exclusive social experience for learners and their families. Learners from vulnerable groups are still facing discrimination and a lack of acceptance in mainstream setting. This is not an isolated experience of the learners. It is often an inheritance of the stance the wider community and school take towards their parents, family or vulnerable group based on gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion and other beliefs and attitudes. The experience of the learner at the centre of an education system is a reflection of the policy and attitudes of their community. The



parents' and communities' positive view towards inclusive education is a key factor in enabling a positively inclusive learning experience for all learners.

The two systemic factors that are seen to impact upon and lead to greater disparities within the Czech education system - attitudes towards and commitment to equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for learners from vulnerable groups *and* governance and funding mechanisms that aim to foster the implementation of inclusive learning opportunities for learners from vulnerable groups in practice – as well as a number of specific recommendations outlined in the previous sections require clear and structured discussion before they can be taken forward.

Initiating a widespread stakeholder debate on and around inclusive education, what it means for **all** learners and what it should look like in practice across **all** regions, local areas and schools should be considered a critical lever for system change.

There should be a comprehensive and long-term programme of awareness raising within wider society that ensures the vision and goals for inclusive education are clearly communicated and understood.

This should be linked to on-going dialogue activities involving stakeholders from across all sectors and system levels: national, regional and schools and their local communities.

Structured, inter-connected dialogue with a range of stakeholders from across all sectors and systems levels should have three clear aims:

1. Awareness raising within wider society, in order to support:

- wider community awareness that inclusive education is an approach that benefits all learners, not just some groups or individuals;
- the communication of vision and goals for inclusive education so they are clearly understood by national, regional and school level stakeholders.

2. Ensuring clarity around the roles and responsibilities of decision-makers and educators at all system levels, in order to support:

- everyone to understand the importance of taking responsibility for the achievement of all learners;
- the development different forms of stakeholder co-operation and synergies of efforts through co-operative working.

3. Developing joint action plans for inclusive education at all levels, in order to support:

- cross-level debate around the recommendations and possibilities for prioritising and sequencing them involving stakeholders from across the Czech system
- the development of clear guidance on what the enactment of learners' and parents'/families' rights looks like in practice.

Representatives from national and regional levels should assume **joint responsibility** for initiating, implementing and evaluating this priority action.

In line with the recommendations proposed through this Action, the structured dialogue should be used as the basis for **reaching shared agreements** for next steps in supporting policy implementation work, including:



- operational definitions to be used;
- outcome and process goals to be worked towards;
- mechanisms and criteria for identifying progress towards the agreed goals;
- benchmarks and milestones indicating successful policy implementation.

There is a need to establish an **agreed mechanism** or forum for structuring the discussions and dialogue, so that all stakeholders can give concrete inputs to national and regional-level debates on what inclusive education means within their local contexts. This agreed mechanism should actively involve all stakeholders – including learners – across all system levels and social sectors. It should be clearly seen as a co-ordinated, shared initiative between national and regional authorities.

The proposal for an organising body that acts as the middle link between national policy and local implementation could be seen as a potential tool for facilitating discussions and dialogue across different groups of stakeholders.

One element of an agreed mechanism could include a **platform for sharing examples** of innovative practice and fostering collaboration between all system stakeholders (e.g. developing professional learning communities of schools, support teams and universities). This platform would support national and regional level debate on what inclusive education should look like in practice in the Czech Republic.

Clarifications around the concept of ‘structured dialogue’

The overall goal for widespread structured dialogue amongst Czech stakeholders is to ensure that inclusive education is clearly recognised as the central goal for the education system by all stakeholders. Without this widespread recognition, there is a risk that inclusive education will not become an embedded, accepted approach for all learners, rather it will remain at the level of local practice, piloting work and/or experimentation.

However, it must be made clear that social dialogue is not to be understood as a form of information sharing, or media campaign. Dialogue that leads to shared understandings and stakeholder ‘ownership’ of key concepts incorporates a number of crucial features:

- Multiple stakeholder voices – including those of learners and their parents and families - are shared and valued equally;
- Voices are actively listened and responded to;
- Narratives and on-going practice discussions from the ground are used to exemplify key issues that need to be discussed and reflected upon;
- Positive as well as negative voices, role models and examples are presented, examined and reflected upon collectively by stakeholders.

Genuine social dialogue is built upon face-to-face exchanges and personal communication between different stakeholders who collectively consider and examine critical issues they all share.



A revised framework of standards as a 'tool' for dialogue

The evidence from the documentary analysis (presented in Deliverable 3) and the stakeholder data collection (presented in Deliverable 4) clearly indicates that the 7 standards initially identified by MŠMT and the Steering Committee are considered relevant and widely are accepted as important goals for the Czech education system. When the standards were presented to and discussed with stakeholders, these were not questioned or negatively commented upon.

However, through the collection and analysis of the evidence used to prepare the draft recommendations, it can be seen that there are areas for refinement and potential gaps in the framework of standards used for the work. Therefore, alongside the final recommendations themselves, it is possible to propose some changes to the framework of standards that could be considered for future policy development work in the Czech Republic.

1. the 3rd standard focusses upon funding models. However, as is indicated through the overall work in the Action, the essential focus of this standard must be wider. It is therefore proposed to change the title of this standard to *inclusive financing systems*.
2. the 5th standard focusses upon professional development. As indicated by the overall work, the essential focus of this standard must be more closely linked to inclusive education. It is therefore proposed to change the title of this standard to *professional development for inclusive education*.
3. The 4th standard focusses upon monitoring, quality assurance and accountability and the 6th standard focusses upon communication and collaboration between stakeholders. Both of these standards touch upon, but do not specifically develop issues around system governance. As indicated through the analysis of evidence and by the preparation of the recommendations, there is a clear need for a standard that deals with governance issues. It is therefore proposed to add a new standard: *governance for inclusive education systems*.
4. The 7th standard focusses upon teaching and learning environments. This covers, but does not specifically focus upon the wider system of different forms of support available to mainstream schools to meet the needs of individual learners. As indicated through the analysis of evidence and preparation of the recommendations, there is a clear need for a standard that deals with support system issues, potentially linked to a mid-level governance and support structure for inclusive education. It is therefore proposed to add a new standard: *support systems for inclusive education*.

In addition to these specific proposals, an overall new order for the standards is also proposed.

Attitudes and perception towards inclusive education

1st Standard: 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.

(Recommendation 1 supports work around this standard).



Communication and collaboration between stakeholders

2nd Standard: There is effective communication and collaboration across and between all system stakeholders.

(Recommendations 2 and 3 support work around this standard).

Learning and teaching environments

3rd Standard: Inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners are ensured.

(Recommendations 12 and 15 support work around this standard).

Support systems for inclusive education.

4th Standard: This system of support for inclusive education focuses on making mainstream schools more accessible and capable of meeting the requirements of all learners.

(Recommendations 13 and 14 support work around this standard).

Professional development for inclusive education

5th Standard: Professional development issues at all system levels are effectively addressed.

(Recommendations 9 and 10 support work around this standard).

System capacity building

6th Standard: All learners in all schools are provided opportunities and effective support to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

(Recommendations 4 and 11 support work around this standard).

Inclusive financing systems

7th Standard: Allocation of funds and resources is equitable, efficient, cost-effective, flexible and co-ordinated.

(Recommendations 5 and 6 support work around this standard).

Governance for inclusive education systems

8th Standard: The roles and responsibilities of decision-makers and educators at all system levels are clear and ensure that everyone takes responsibility and is accountable for the achievement of all learners.

(Recommendation 7 supports work around this standard).

Monitoring, quality assurance and accountability

9th Standard: Stakeholders collect and effectively use reliable and relevant information for monitoring, quality assurance and accountability purposes.

(Recommendation 8 supports work around this standard).

In line with the proposed priority action, it is suggested that the revised standards presented here can be used as a 'tool' for stimulating the proposed structured stakeholder dialogue. A wider discussion around the standards can be used as a means to examine and deconstruct the main questions relating to inclusive education Czech



stakeholders are currently faced with: why is it important within different contexts, what is being done to implement it, and how well is it currently being implemented?



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Work throughout the Action in the Czech Republic has stressed that an understanding of inclusive education cannot be limited to including children with disabilities and/or specific needs, or those from Roma communities into mainstream education. Inclusive education must be understood as having a positive impact on **all** learners, all schools and all local communities. As argued by [UNESCO, 2020](#), all really must mean all learners - without exclusions. However, this broad conceptualisation of inclusive education is entirely compatible with, at the same time, paying specific attention to those who have traditionally found themselves in situations of greater risk to educational exclusion.

The recommendations and priority action are underpinned by this conceptualisation and demonstrate that inclusive classroom practice cannot be developed in isolation from developments within and across other system levels. Promoting developments in practice based on a shared understanding of the rights of all learners to educational and social inclusion requires developments in the national and regional policy contexts, professional development opportunities and on-going support both from colleagues within the school and from local community services. The systemic change required in the Czech Republic takes time and requires long-term political commitment at national and regional levels.

The recommendations are considered as those which will - in the longer term - make the Czech education system a more resilient system that is able to respond flexibly to increased learner diversity and demands of change. As has been shown from the current Covid pandemic, this is a clear priority for consideration. These recommendations are considered specifically relevant to wider work around equity, cohesion, resilience and values issues to be conducted as part of the [European Union Recovery and Resilience](#) plan for Czech Republic.

All dialogue on and considerations of the recommendations should be conducted in alignment with other on-going initiatives in the Czech Republic. Most notably those linked to the Strategic Action Plan 2030, but also those linked to other European Union SRSP/ new Technical Support Instrument Action work being undertaken in the Czech Republic. Potentially, Czech examples of practice could be mapped to the recommendations as an activity both stimulating and supporting the continuing stakeholder dialogue.

It is hoped that this report along with the materials and videos in [Czech](#) and [English](#) from the July 15th [Dissemination Event](#) can be used to effectively support stakeholder dialogue going forward. Also dialogue around implementation of the recommendations will be supported by the final output from this Action: Deliverable 8 *Preparing pilot projects with effective evaluation components*. Deliverable 8 focusses upon preparing possible pilot projects with effective evaluation components that support evidence based policy-making and can be linked to the recommendations and priority action.

Any future dialogue in the Czech Republic needs to be framed by narratives that are less on addressing disparities and more on supporting developments. Czech stakeholders cannot lose sight of the need to remove disparities between different regions, groups and individuals. However, work on this Action has indicated that there are potential negative



effects of labelling regions in a comparative way that might work against the benefits of providing support.

The work on the Action itself has potentially contributed to a negatively perceived narrative around addressing disparities. Therefore, a final reflection– with hindsight – upon the overall work conducted with the Czech stakeholders is that a more appropriate title for the Action would be:

**PROMOTING MORE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR ALL
LEARNERS IN THE CZECH EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**Identifying measures to support of the development of inclusive
provision in the Karlovarský and Ústecký regions**

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