**SUPPORTING THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN POLAND**

**(PHASE II)**

**Peer Learning Activity 14th July 2021**

**MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, SERBIA**

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**CONTENTS**

[Introduction 3](#_Toc75761118)

[The development of a monitoring and accountability process 3](#_Toc75761119)

[Presentation of work in Serbia 4](#_Toc75761120)

[Background 4](#_Toc75761121)

[Policy vision, aims and objectives 4](#_Toc75761122)

[Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia 5](#_Toc75761123)

[Overview of implementation 6](#_Toc75761124)

[Challenges and developments 9](#_Toc75761125)

[References / more information 11](#_Toc75761126)

Introduction

The Phase II Action under the Structural Reform Support Programme in Poland aims to support the development of new legislation to improve the quality of education for all learners. The Polish legal process requires that prior to the preparation of new legislation, the underpinning assumptions are clearly identified and discussed with stakeholders. The assumptions form the conceptual framework for the new legislation, identifying the operational definitions and key concepts that will be the basis for the new law. They will inform the development of a clear rationale for the work and the vision, goals and objectives underpinning new legislation.

The development of a monitoring and accountability process

MEiN wishes to develop a system of quality standards and indicators to help all stakeholders to embed quality assurance in all policies and practices and to be accountable for their individual and collective efforts to develop an inclusive education system. Where possible, joint standards should be in place to encourage collaboration and coherence across Ministries, sectors, agencies and schools etc. At all levels, the quality assurance system should support reflection and focus on continuous improvement.

MEiN therefore want to explore examples of work from other countries relating to Assumption 8 that will underpin their new legislation.

***Standards and indicators agreed with stakeholders will underpin a system wide monitoring and accountability process that ensures high quality inclusive education for all learners. Standards will be consistent across Ministries and sectors and all stakeholders will take responsibility for all learners and be held accountable for their actions.***

***Quality assurance frameworks can highlight a widely agreed view of effective practice, provide guidance on how to implement inclusive practices at all system levels, and include indicators for evaluation in education and wider services. In developing such frameworks, discussion among stakeholders can challenge underlying assumptions, beliefs and values, identify priorities and evaluate progress (European Agency, 2014a) and also clarify roles, responsibilities and stakeholder accountability.***

*In an inclusive system, a comprehensive set of indicators will be needed to ensure that each learner is seen in a holistic way and that the wider outcomes of the education process count, as well as academic achievement.*

*In addition to measuring the skills and competencies needed for success in school and in learners’ future lives, accurate and reliable data on resources and on other inputs, structures and processes that ultimately impact on learning must also be included. Such data is particularly important in relation to the experiences of minority groups and those potentially vulnerable to underachievement.*

*Inputs and resources for schools could be linked to added-value outcomes (measurement that is corrected to allow for learners’ baseline achievement levels) so that schools are held accountable for their impact on learning, not for the effect of previous life experiences, school placements etc. Data analysis should include consideration of access to and participation in the full range of opportunities and progress and achievement in all areas of learning.*

Presentation of work in Serbia

This paper is provides background information for the Peer Learning Activity (PLA ) on 14th July. It presents recent legislation developments in Serbia, as well as the Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education as a specific example of quality assurance and monitoring work.

Background

Policy vision, aims and objectives

The Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia until 2020 (hereinafter: SDES) recognized significant areas: regional development and educational statistics and the information system for education. According to SROS, there were several shortcomings in this segment of the education system : "from problems with indicators, collection and quality control of data collected, through the choice of the methodology used and inadequate conclusions from the available data, to a lack of coordination between the various institutions collecting the country data and non-compliance with European ways of keeping educational statistics.”

In response to these shortcomings, SDES singled out eight priority measures:

1) establishing a functionally unified information system

2) enabling the process of generation of data on children/students through the educational system

3) keeping records and collecting data in a way that allows complete analyses for certain groups of children/students

4) engaging an appropriate number of qualified members who are engaged in keeping accounting statistics and necessary analyses in the Republic Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Education

5) defining the mutual relations of institutions that keep educational statistics and harmonizing the methodology of calculation and monitoring of selected indicators with international standards

6) defining the system of statistical indicators that are necessary to monitor the implementation of adopted strategic documents and educational policy in the country

7) developing a system of indicators in education in such a way as to enable international comparisons

8) harmonization of information systems in education and reference state bodies.

The Law on the Foundations of the Education System from 2009 defines the ministry's competence in charge of education to plan and monitor various aspects of the development of the education system based on relevant data, research, analysis and evaluation. However, how the inclusiveness of the system will be monitored, as well as in relation to which indicators, was still an insufficiently conceptually, institutionally and legally elaborated area. As a result, it has fragmented monitoring of activities and results in the field of inclusive education.

Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia

Given the abundance of policy actions instigated in 2009 the framework of the inclusive education reform, a wide space opened in the field for research and evaluation. The Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia (hereinafter: MFIES) emerged as one of the outputs within the project. The project was initiated with the aim to provide support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation for objective monitoring of the progress achieved in the area of inclusive education, with a view to further implementation and promotion of inclusive education in Serbia based on the collected data.

The development of MFIES and its structure was inspired by a comparative analysis[[1]](#footnote-1) of systems for monitoring the quality of inclusive education used in the Netherlands, UK – Wales and Scotland, Australia - Victoria State, New Zealand.

The Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia includes all management levels (national, municipal and school). The Framework features one significant innovation. It distinguishes between input, process and output indicators. The logic behind the said distinction is quite relevant, especially during the introduction of inclusive education: the effects of inclusive education (output indicators) result from a successfully delivered education process (process indicators), which, in turn, can only be the consequence of the effect of input variables/indicators. Therefore, in the first few years of inclusive education, it makes the most sense to focus monitoring efforts on input indicators, i.e. to determine whether all envisaged measures have consistently reached the beneficiaries (schools, teachers, children, parents) and then later to switch the focus to process indicators, to verify whether the measures are adequately implemented. Subsequently, after several years, it would make sense to focus on monitoring output indicators.

The Framework also contains the proposed values (comparison criteria) for a number of indicators for various time intervals, thus setting development expectations for the inclusive education system.

The Framework is developed taking into account the need for its multifunctionality and capability of enabling the production of information for the following purposes: a) annual or multiannual national level reporting on the state of affairs in inclusive education, based on selected input, process and output indicators, b) municipal-level reporting on the state of affairs in inclusive education, c) complementing the framework for external school evaluation with new indicators, d) supporting the development of school self-evaluation, and for e) various research purposes and meta-analysis of a larger number of studies.

In designing the Framework, the principal purpose has been to provide a possibility for enhancing inclusive practices and systematic educational policy planning at different levels. The Framework has been developed taking into account the need for its multifunctionality and capability to enable the production of information for the following purposes: a) development of annual or multiannual national reports on the status of inclusive education on the basis of selected input, process and outcome/output indicators; b) development of municipal reports on the status of inclusive education; c) complementing the external school evaluation framework by new indicators; d) support for the development of school self-evaluation and foundation for staff self-evaluation; e) various research purposes and meta-analysis of numerous research studies. It is worth stressing that the use of the same set of indicators and standardised instruments by different stakeholders and for different purposes, amongst other things, ensures conceptual coherence. A common language for various stakeholders who are professionally and/or personally involved in the development and implementation of inclusive education is essential for constructive dialogue.

It is important to underline that the use of the same framework by various stakeholders and for diverse purposes has another, somewhat less obvious yet equally important function (in addition to fine-tuning the Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in a pragmatic way), namely: to ensure conceptual coherence a common language for all levels and various education system stakeholders, because persons with different occupations acquired their qualifications at different times and in different circumstances, and their attention to certain aspects of inclusive education has so far been unequal. A common language is necessary for communication, which is, in turn, prerequisite to constructive discussion, and discussion is critical if any development is to be achieved.

For example, at the time of introduction of inclusive education the objectives were only defined in terms of achieving progress (e.g. “there will be more children in mainstream schools”), or as aspiration (e.g. “all Roma children will enrol in schools”) - in both cases missing an elaborated monitoring mechanism, formulated indicators, set benchmarks, specifications of the types of data to collect and without a prescribed reporting method. The current situation also stems from the fact that inclusive education was by and large introduced through projects, which only kept records of the information relevant for their work, in the way prescribed by the funding institution, which in most cases entailed the monitoring of inputs rather than processes or outputs.

Overview of implementation

The school occupies the central position in the Framework as the primary source of information from which data are aggregated to higher levels. 21 Indicators at the school level are grouped into three areas: characteristics of pedagogical work, school ethos and support for inclusive education. In order to examine the dimension of inclusiveness, a *Survey of the state of inclusive education in Serbia - Can we talk about the dimension of inclusive education in schools?* was conducted during 2014 and 2015, which included the assessment of indicators at the school level. Each indicator at the school level is operationalized as a brief instrument.

Instruments for various informants have been developed for most indicators (e.g. teachers, parents, students, pedagogical assistants). Thus, the Frame is operationalized into a battery consisting of 49 instruments, which can be used individually in different functionally connected sets.

The pilot study results confirmed that the developed instruments are reliable, and valid, with minor deviations; confirmed usefulness of the multi-perspectival approach - identified areas of bias of various informants; acquired complete picture; acquired basis for harmonized and organized action and improvement of inclusive education; methodologically valid instrument (sees a unique dimension of inclusiveness).The analysis of the main components indicates that it is possible to talk about one phenomenon or construct that could be called school inclusiveness. The main component of inclusiveness is most strongly associated with scores on instruments that measure perceived student well-being, perceived practices and teachers' willingness to encourage students to learn, as well as high teacher expectations regarding student achievement and obligations, pointing to the central position of noncognitive factors in assessing school inclusion. On the other hand, collaborative learning and practices to prevent violence and discrimination may exist in schools but may not be as much associated with strengthening school inclusion as is the case with other aspects.[[2]](#footnote-2)

With the support of the World Bank, experiences with the Framework have been translated into recommendations for improving the framework for school self-evaluation and external evaluation, independent monitoring and evaluation, and improving national education statistics. The Center for Educational Policies went a step further and, based on the analysis of the Framework for Monitoring Inclusive Education and the Standards of Quality of Work of Educational Institutions, prepared a proposal for improving the inclusiveness of the Standards.

Although different data on inclusive education were collected for different needs, with different methodologies, Ministry of Education didn’t have sufficient institutional capacities to enable the intersection of these data to conduct specific analyses.

A significant step towards the establishment of institutional capacities of the Ministry of Education Science and Technical Development (hereinafter: MoESTD) in this area was the establishment of the Analytical Unit in cooperation with UNICEF and the MoESTD, which is currently project-funded.

In the absence of a comprehensive and multifunctional national base, various individual bases are being developed. The bases that are especially important for us are:

- the database of professional development of teachers, educators and professional associates (Institute for the Improvement of Education, ZUOV);

- the database of final exam results (Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, ZVKOV);

- the database of results of external evaluation of educational and educational institutions (ZVKOV).

An important step towards improving monitoring and evaluating in inclusive education is establishing the Unified Education Information System (JISP). Establishing a JISP is a prerequisite for improving the planning and implementation process for measures in education and monitoring the achievement of the obligation to achieve strategic and international goals. Also, the strategic framework defines the need to establish a system monitoring and evaluation to monitor the involvement of the refugee population and internally displaced persons in the education system (National Strategy for Resolving the Issues of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons) and monitoring the inclusion of Roma students (Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025).

The most significant novelty in the information system of education is introducing a Unique Educational Number (JOB). It is a number that follows its bearer through all levels of formal education and upbringing and is the key to connecting all data about a child, student and adult in the information system. The introduction of JOB will enable the collection more reliable data on the education system, including the position of vulnerable groups. Various issues related to JOB will be prescribed in the relevant bylaw.

Wider databases on inclusive education exist within the Republic Statistical Office (hereinafter: RSO) regularly at the beginning of the school year (preschool institutions) or the beginning and end of the school year (primary and secondary education institutions) through a questionnaire collects data on the educational system in Serbia. The data thus collected (Education Statistics) are demographic; The breakdown into subpopulations is done by age and gender of students and types of education and institutions, but, as already mentioned, not by other variables necessary for monitoring the coverage, progress and completion of education, especially students from vulnerable groups. The data are organized in such a way as to enable separate monitoring of statistics in regular schools and schools/classes for students with disabilities. However, there is no possibility to analyse the data separately for departments for the education of students with disabilities in regular schools, which is a significant shortcoming.

From the school year 2012/2013, The RSO collects data on the number of students educated under IEP 1 and IEP 2, the number of students for whom an Inter-sectoral Commission ((hereinafter: ISC) opinion has been issued in primary education, and the number of students educated in the languages of national minorities. Inter-sectoral committees are established on municipal level to assess additional education, health and social support needs of learners at municipal level. The committees include representatives from the learner’s school, the centre for social work and the healthcare institution responsible for the learner. They propose various measures to support the learners from vulnerable group. The Commission establish and maintain the following databases:

1) a collection of data on children, students and adults for whom the procedure of assessing the need for assistance has been initiated;

2) a collection of data on the work of the Commission. The results are published in annual releases, bulletins, the Statistical Yearbook of Serbia, the publication "Regions and Municipalities in Serbia", and on the official website of the RSO.

In 2015, based on the Law on Official Statistics, the RSO, in cooperation with other responsible producers of official statistics, prepared the Program of Official Statistics from 2016 to 2020, which sets the harmonization of statistical surveys and indicators with international standards as the primary goal. An integral part of the Program is the Strategy for the Development of Official Statistics in the Republic of Serbia for five years, which should ensure faster development of official statistics in the direction of harmonization of methodologies, standards and good statistical practice, as well as the basis for obtaining the most important statistical indicators and increasing their comparability with statistical data of European and other countries.

One of the development goals in social statistics is to improve the content of data in education, among other things, by providing a more significant number of relevant indicators. A review of the questionnaire used by the RSO indicates that under data on inclusive education in regular primary education the number of students who are educated according to the IEP, as well as the number of students for whom the opinion of the ISC was requested are recorded. At the same time, the collection of this data is limited to regular primary school. The RSO included the largest number of data related to inclusive education in the questionnaire for preschool institutions. This questionnaire collects data on the number of developmental groups and groups for children in hospital treatment, as well as the number of children in them, the number of children for whom an IEP has been developed, the number of children for whom a pedagogical profile has been developed, and the number of re-attending children in a preschool preparatory programme.

Also, the RSO collects data on the number of children by mother tongue, including Romani mother tongue, and maintains detailed statistics on the educational and socio-economic structure of the families of children attending pre-school education.

It can be concluded that the RSO is the most comprehensive continuous database on education, which allows monitoring specific indicators relevant to inclusive education (e.g. the number of students educated according to IEP 1 and IEP 2).

Challenges and developments

Statistics in education and other systems still do not provide sufficient and comparable data related to the education of students from vulnerable groups and the need and provision of additional support. Data are collected for different purposes and through different methodologies over different periods. This often prevents the aggregation of data to create a more comprehensive view of the quality of inclusive education and the factors that affect it. There is no systematised data on the needs for additional measures and support services, the quality of existing measures and additional support services, available human resources and their competencies for working in an inclusive environment. In addition, monitoring the quality of inclusive education is further hampered by the inability to classify data by different students. Monitoring systematised data on physical and informational accessibility through the developed indicators within the JISP system, and their improvement in digital accessibility will ensure greater accessibility and fairness of the education system for all its participants. Furthermore, given the new legislation on personal data protection, there is a need to further harmonise legislation for data collection and exchange between different institutions and ministries to better plan and monitor the provision of additional support to children.

Different sectors and government departments that collect data on children and students from vulnerable groups (e.g. health, education, and social protection) use different classifications, making it difficult to cross-reference data. For example, the health sector uses the International Classification of Diseases 10 (ICD-10). At the same time, in the education system, the OECD scheme is most commonly used to define students in need of additional support, students with learning disabilities, students with disabilities and students who live in a socially unstimulating environment. Different classifications are justified and understandable concerning professional requirements and needs to provide support but necessarily leads to different ways of keeping data. The additional problem is that these data are often not classified according to relevant socio-economic characteristics, which would enable the formulation of more adequate measures to improve the position of certain groups of children and students. In response to this challenge, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Serbia need to "update and collect data and statistics on persons with disabilities disaggregated by age, sex, type of disability, nationality and geography, including the type of environment in terms of residence or institution, lawsuits filed for discrimination and/or violence against these persons, using a human rights-based approach."

The main goal in this area is to improve the quality and usability of data on the inclusiveness of the education system of the Republic of Serbia. To achieve this goal, we need:

- Define a functional way of keeping records of vulnerable groups in cooperation with other state sectors and departments;

- Define additional mechanisms for ensuring the quality of data on the education system:

- inform educational institutions on the manner of keeping records on the quality of inclusive practice, culture and policy at the school level,

- enable data collection, input and quality control to be recognized as the workload of employees in education;

- provide the possibility of combining different databases as a data quality control mechanism;

- strengthen capacities and ensure stable funding of the Analytical Unit in the Ministry in supporting the collection and aggregation of quality data from levels of the institution and analysis and reporting on inclusive education.

- Define roles and responsibilities in monitoring indicators of the inclusiveness of the education system at the national and local level.

- Develop a system for systematic collection of data on recommended and implemented child support measures at the local level as a precondition for improving the local planning system and promotion of inclusive education.

- Develop a system and define reporting channels on the recommended and actual measures and inclusiveness and efficiency of the assessment system in supporting and to involving parents.

The new Strategy for Education Development in the Republic of Serbia by the year 2030, that was adopted in June 2021 recognizes the importance of monitoring the state of inclusive education.

The proposed measures for monitoring of inclusive education are:

- Development and adoption of an action plan for the development of inclusive education that will define indicators for monitoring the inclusiveness of the education system at the national level.

- Defining roles and responsibilities in monitoring indicators of inclusiveness of the education system at the national and local level.

- Preparation of annual reports on the implementation of the inclusive education.

- Defining a functional method of keeping records of vulnerable groups in cooperation with other state sectors and line ministries.

- Integrating the registration of relevant data enabling the classification of data for particular vulnerable groups in the educational information system.

- Defining additional mechanisms for ensuring the quality of data on the education system (Informing educational institutions on how to keep records on the quality of inclusive practices, culture and policies at the institutional level; regulating such data collection, input and quality control as the workload of employees in education; combining different databases data as a mechanism for data quality control, etc.).

- Capacity building and ensuring stable funding of the analytical unit at the Ministry to support the collection and aggregation of quality data from the level of institutions and analysis and reporting on inclusive education.

- Establishing cooperation with institutions responsible for monitoring and exercising human and minority rights and protection against violence and discrimination.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia is committed to digitalizing the public administration and enhancing the quality of data collection, hence the Ministry of Education, science and Technological Development has elaborated a Unified Information System of the Education sector (UISE). This Data System will be connected to the data systems of health, social and public administration so no additional documentation will be requested from parents when enrolling their children in an education institution. Every child gets a Unified Educational Number the first time they get enrolled into the education system (Nursery, Preschool or Preprimary), and this number will follow them throughout the education system until finishing higher education. Since the UISE contains all information that might be relevant for the education of a child (including personal data, mother tongue, language of education, social aspects, health issues if applicable, and also data regarding special educational needs, this data will be available right from the start when transferring from one institution to another or one level of education to the next. This data will provide information that is relevant for further strategic planning, and give details on dropout or education of SEN children through and after education.

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