
Work Programme 2021



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



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WORK PROGRAMME 2021



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Secretariat: Østre Stationsvej 33, DK-5000, Odense C, Denmark
Tel: +45 64 41 00 20, secretariat@european-agency.org

Brussels Office: Rue Montoyer 21, BE-1000, Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2 213 62 80, brussels.office@european-agency.org

www.european-agency.org



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Introduction

The Agency has developed the Work Programme 2021 and the Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAWP) 2021–2027 Parameters on the basis of on-going discussions during 2018–2020 with its Representative Board (RB) members on the Agency’s future role and work, as well as a staff analysis exercise mapping all Agency activities since 2011.

The Work Programme 2021 represents a transition from the previous to the new MAWP 2021–2027. It will consist of some of the ‘usual’ activities, completing on-going thematic activities, new initiatives, and scoping activities. The scoping activities will aim to prepare the new, more interconnected MAWP activities and develop the ideas for an overarching framework for the MAWP.

During 2021, based on the scoping activities, the overall framework for the remainder of the MAWP until 2027 will be prepared. New activities in line with agreed parameters will be identified and agreed upon with the RB members.

The first year of a new MAWP has always been a time of re-adjustment. It involves finalising some activities and preparing for others. However, 2021 will present additional challenges in work planning and implementation.

Firstly, in 2021, there will be a need to fully align the new MAWP with:

- the new European Union Erasmus+ education programme (2021–2027) goals;
- the stated dimensions (inclusion is one) of the European Commission’s new [Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#);
- the European Commission’s [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#).

Secondly, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to implement all the activities planned for 2020. Therefore, 2021 will need to ‘compensate’ for that and deliver some planned activities in different ways.

Furthermore, continuing travel restrictions will impede the usual planning preparations. For at least the first quarter of 2021, activity planning will solely focus on virtual meetings. For the rest of the year, both in-person and virtual meetings will be considered as possibilities, depending on the COVID-19 situation.

Therefore, at this stage, the 2021 activities are presented as a more global work programme outline. However, how some of these activities will be implemented – i.e. involving in-person or virtual meetings – will be decided later.

For more information about the Agency, its work and work programmes, please visit its website: www.european-agency.org

Organisation and finances

Member countries

The Agency currently has 31 member countries: Austria, Belgium (Flemish community and French community), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg,



Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

The Agency holds bi-annual meetings with its member country representatives. They review on-going activities and discuss and approve plans for future work, including project plans, work programmes and budgets.

The bi-annual meetings for 2021 will be:

- Spring bi-annual meeting, Serbia (or a virtual meeting, depending on the situation)
- Autumn bi-annual meeting, venue to be confirmed (or a virtual meeting).

Finances

Membership fees from the member countries and an operating grant under the European Union Erasmus+ education programme (2021–2027) fund the work programme. Together, these contributions make up the Agency's operating budget.

In 2021, individual country membership fees will increase by 10% compared to 2020. This is to enable the implementation of the priorities set out in the MAWP 2021–2027. The last fee increase, also of 10%, was in 2016.

On top of their membership fees, member countries contribute to the Agency's functioning by meeting the costs of their nominated Representative Board members' and National Co-ordinators' tasks. These include establishing and maintaining national networks, information dissemination and awareness-raising activities at national level, and their participation in Agency meetings and activities. Furthermore, member countries cover the costs (person hours) of their nominated experts participating in content-related project work.

As well as the activities financed by the main operating budget, the Agency will conduct some additionally funded activities. These will include completing four Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) activities in Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece and Poland and taking forward the SRSP activity in Portugal. These will be non-profit-based and fully funded by the European Commission. They will complement the activities within, but be independent from, the operating budget. For further information, please refer to the section on [SRSP activities](#).

Co-operative relationships

The Agency will maintain its co-operative relationships with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, as well as with key international bodies and organisations. These include [Cedefop](#), [Eurostat](#), [Eurydice](#), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)).

Co-operation with these organisations adds important facets to the Agency's work. It ensures that activities are mutually supportive and beneficial for member countries. This is also economically sound for countries which, for the most part, financially support all these organisations in one way or another. The co-operative relationships provide



opportunities for sharing information about work in Agency member countries with a wider audience, and for gaining relevant information that can be shared in member countries.

As part of the Agency's co-operation with the European Commission, the Agency has been actively involved in one of the Education and Training [ET 2020 Working Groups](#) (Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education). The Agency expects to continue this involvement in 2021 if the working groups persist.

The collaborative work on the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Regional Report on inclusion and education in Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia is scheduled for completion and formal launch in early 2021. There will be on-going dissemination and publicity events associated with the report. The Agency will join and contribute to these in spring 2021.

The Agency will also continue its co-operative work with UNESCO to develop and promote the [Inclusive Education in Action website](#).

Preparations for Multi-Annual Work Programme 2021–2027

The Agency will use 2021 to systematically prepare the overall MAWP that will run until the end of 2027. Throughout the year, a number of targeted information-gathering exercises will take place.

MAWP scoping activities with Representative Board members

The Agency will work on two areas of scoping activity with RBs and/or their representatives:

1. The Agency work mapping analysis conducted by staff has identified recurring messages and potential gaps in current Agency work.

The Agency has used the recurring messages as the basis for the latest edition of its Key Principles publication. This will be published in early 2021.

The Agency will present the potential gaps to RBs for consideration. It will then conduct a focused survey on RBs' perceived priorities in early 2021. The survey findings will serve as the basis for proposing new thematic activities for 2022 onwards.

2. Building on the survey findings, the Agency will hold an online scoping meeting with RBs. This will have the goal of looking forward to 2022 onwards and how to implement activities. The virtual meeting will explore the forms of policy implementation support that are most useful for countries. It will also examine how to facilitate formal and informal learning between country representatives. The exchanges will also be used to discuss the ideas for the overarching framework for MAWP activities.



Self-review activities

As a transition year into the new MAWP, 2021 presents an opportunity for all Agency staff to consider critical quality assurance issues and identify ways to establish new operational processes before beginning to implement new activities.

During 2021, the staff will implement a series of self-review and assessment processes with a view to developing new quality assurance tools.

From Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA) to Country Policy Development Support (CPDS)

All MAWP work will be organised around an overarching activity that focuses on supporting countries' policy development work. All areas of Agency work will lead out of this overarching activity and all work and findings will feed into it.

The basis for this overarching activity will be the current CPRA activities. The new activity will focus on examining policy frameworks for inclusive education systems and how to effectively implement them. The goal will be to provide Country Policy Development Support (CPDS) in line with the Agency's role as an agent for change in inclusive education.

Building on input from countries, in 2021 the Agency will review the CPRA processes and outcomes. Any countries that have not yet been involved in CPRA activities will have the chance to do so in 2021. Work undertaken in 2021 will be the foundation for developing and establishing a comprehensive framework and mechanisms for examining and monitoring developments in inclusive education policy implementation in all countries. This policy review and development framework will be based on past and current findings from all Agency activities. It will also incorporate on-going, new findings as they emerge during the course of the MAWP.

The findings of the online scoping meeting with RBs will be specifically used to inform the development of the new CPDS activities.

European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE)

The Agency's data collection activity, [EASIE](#), aims to provide clearly focused data that informs country policy priorities, the European Commission's strategic objectives on inclusive education and the implementation of Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). During 2021, the EASIE outcomes will be specifically considered to inform the preparations for the Country Policy Development Support (CPDS) activities.

In line with the RBs' earlier decision about making the data collection an annual activity from 2020, an automated online data collection tool has been developed with revised data tables. The first round of annual data collection began in autumn 2020. This will be finalised and all outputs produced in 2021.

The second round of annual data collection is scheduled for autumn 2021.



If the COVID-19 pandemic situation permits, a regular face-to-face meeting with data experts will be organised. The meeting will serve to evaluate the new data collection tools generally, and methods for collecting data on children/learners out of any form of recognised education specifically.

Secondary analysis of the CPRA and EASIE datasets

To further inform the development of the CPDS work, the Agency will undertake a desk research activity. This will examine the CPRA outcomes – specifically the Cross-Country Analysis findings – alongside the EASIE datasets and, potentially, findings from other areas of Agency work. The Prevention-Intervention-Compensation (PIC) policy approaches model will frame this analysis.

Thematic activities

During the 2021 transition year, the work programme will include on-going activities – such as EASIE and the SRSP activities – and the completion of current thematic projects, outlined below.

In addition to the scoping activities with RBs to prepare the new, more interconnected MAWP activities, a small number of new, highly focused thematic activities that will also inform the new MAWP from 2022 onwards will be implemented.

On-going thematic projects

Changing Role of Specialist Provision in Supporting Inclusive Education (CROSP)

The [CROSP project](#) focuses on the re-organisation of specialist provision to support the right to inclusive education for all learners.

Phase 1 covered a detailed mapping exercise on past and current trends and situations in countries in relation to specialist provision, as well as on perceived future trends. It identified four main issues related to funding policies, governance, capacity-building and quality assurance mechanisms, that are considered vital to improve specialist provision's role as a resource for supporting mainstream education.

Phase 2 started in 2019. It focuses on these four issues and on identifying critical factors and key drivers, using a peer-learning approach. The aim is to enable member countries to develop more effective strategies for improving the role of specialist provision for inclusive education.

The peer-learning approach includes thematic workshops with policy-makers from Agency member countries. Four country clusters have been organised, considering different countries' stages of policy developments on specialist provision to support inclusive education. This approach will facilitate self-review and experience exchange. The aim is to support longer-term policy development and implementation among the participating countries. The second round of thematic workshops have been transferred from 2020 to 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Communication activities in 2021 will include disseminating a project video and infographics developed in 2020. The purpose is to clearly communicate key concepts



related to specialist provision and its changing role towards supporting inclusive education.

Supporting Inclusive School Leadership (SISL)

The [SISL project](#) investigates how to effectively develop and promote inclusive school-level leadership through national-, regional- and local-level policy frameworks and support mechanisms. The main target group for the project outcomes is policy-makers responsible for implementing inclusive education in schools.

Phase 1 of the project included reviews of international and European policy and recent research and a country survey drawing on the two reviews. This work led to the publication of the [SISL synthesis report](#).

Phase 2 work began in early 2020. It involves a cluster of four Agency member countries. Activities in 2021 will build on the policy guidance framework for inclusive school leadership developed in 2020 and include the piloting of a self-review tool of inclusive leadership for school leaders and policy-makers. This phase will end with a peer-learning exchange for each of the countries in the cluster. Some of the piloting phase and peer-learning activities have been transferred from 2020 to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion (TPL4I)

The first phase of the [TPL4I](#) project activities ran from 2018 to 2020. The main outcomes point to gaps in a vision for teacher professional learning (TPL) and to challenges for continuity and professional collaboration for inclusive learning. As a result, continuation activities for the TPL4I project will focus on TPL requirements across the professional continuum.

The TPL4I project findings suggest that the use of the Agency's [Profile of Inclusive Teachers](#) (2012) can be expanded to:

- enhance the continuum of TPL opportunities;
- inform policy development on competences for all teachers;
- improve policies on the implementation of TPL for all education professionals.

Activities in 2021 will examine how relevant the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* is for different professional development opportunities, professionals and sectors. Initially, all countries will be asked about their experiences of working with the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* in different contexts. Then, working with a small group of countries, activities will aim to:

- investigate the validity of the *Profile's* core values and areas of competence for all stages of TPL and for all professionals involved in collaborative work in inclusive settings;
- refine, adjust and update the *Profile* to extend its use across the professional continuum of TPL and all professionals involved.



New initiatives

In addition to the secondary analysis of CPRA and EASIE outcomes, the Agency will implement and complete the following new initiatives in 2021. These activities will focus on specific topics and questions and involve mainly staff-led, desk-based tasks.

The impact of COVID-19

During 2020, there will be a scoping activity to identify key issues for inclusive education from work already being undertaken about country educational responses to the COVID-19 situation.

In 2021, this scoping activity will be developed. The Agency will conduct an activity exploring specific issues around support for learners vulnerable to exclusion. It will potentially involve some countries working in clusters at a distance. This activity will aim to identify the current pandemic's implications for inclusive education and what lessons can be learned for education systems' longer-term flexibility, responsiveness and resilience.

The period of educational disruption due to COVID-19 has created a sense of urgency about digital education and the need to deploy technology effectively to enable inclusive education. Therefore, preparations for this activity will take into account the strategic priorities stated in the European Commission's [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#).

The voices of learners and their families

During their exchanges on the Agency's future role and work, RBs raised the critical issue of accounting for the voices of learners and their families in policy development and implementation. The Agency mapping analysis has also identified this as an area that requires further attention in Agency work. It is essential that all aspects of Agency work effectively reflect the voices of learners and their parents and families.

In 2021, the Agency will undertake a desk research project on possibilities for involving and making sure the voices of learners, parents and families are covered in Agency work. The findings from this desk research will be taken into account in preparing and implementing all future MAWP activities.

Country exchange activities

The bi-annual meetings experience exchange sessions have proven to be useful for country representatives. However, there is a need to more directly align their focus with agreed priorities for the MAWP. During 2021, the Agency will specifically examine opportunities to use experience exchange sessions and develop country exchanges that directly link to shared policy issues. This will include considering how it can be accomplished via in-person and/or virtual meetings.

Celebrating 25 years of Agency work

2021 will be a special year for the Agency as it will celebrate its 25th anniversary. The Agency will mark it with an event linked to the autumn bi-annual meeting involving all Representative Board members, National Co-ordinators and staff.



Furthermore, an anniversary book will be prepared. It will focus on developments in special needs and inclusive education during the past 25 years and on trends for future developments.

Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) activities

The Agency currently provides technical support for five activities funded under the European Commission's [Structural Reform Support Programme](#). The Ministries of Education in Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and Portugal have requested these activities. They are fully funded by the European Commission and concern legislative educational changes or implementation of policies regarding inclusive education.

The Agency's role is to help the respective Ministries of Education to design reforms that make their education policy and provision more equitable and inclusive, in line with European and international priorities.

The work with Cyprus and Poland started in 2018 as a first phase of these activities. It will run into 2021, when the second phase will be finalised.

In Cyprus, the main task is to contribute to the completion of the Special Education Reform by assisting the Ministry of Education to prepare regulations accompanying the new bill on inclusive education. The bill was drafted with the Agency's support during the first phase of the action.

In Poland, the main objective is to work with the Ministry of Education and its stakeholders to develop the conceptual framework for a new legislative framework for inclusive education.

The work with the Czech Republic and Greece started in 2019 and will also run into 2021.

In the Czech Republic, the focus is on regional disparities in the education system. The Agency will support the implementation of measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in two regions of the Czech Republic. These regions have high disparities in education compared to the rest of the country.

In Greece, the main objective is to help develop and implement a new law introduced in 2018. The activity centres on the role of the support structures and their co-operation with mainstream schools.

In spring 2020, a new action was approved to design a system to monitor the implementation of the law on inclusive education in Portugal. The work began in summer 2020. It will continue in 2021 and into 2022.

Information dissemination and production activities

The Agency's information dissemination work includes producing, publishing and disseminating Agency outputs. Using offline and digital tools, the Agency ensures all information and materials are up-to-date, comply with international guidelines on accessibility and are available on relevant platforms. The main target audience of this work is education policy-makers. However, it also aims to reach other stakeholders, such as researchers, school leaders, teachers, parents and learners.



In 2021, information dissemination efforts will continue to align with the four main aims of the Agency's Digital Media Strategy. These are to:

- generate awareness of and promote Agency publications and resources;
- broaden the reach and impact of Agency messages;
- facilitate collaboration through digital platforms;
- strengthen Agency leadership and influence in the field.

The Agency will continue to be a resource for member countries and actively support them as they disseminate Agency information in their national networks. This includes raising awareness about new Agency materials and how to use them, translating agreed publications into member country languages, sharing country news and seeking impact feedback from country contacts.

Open-access resources

In late 2020, the Agency adopted a new open-access licence for its publications. **Open access** refers to content that is universally and freely accessible online, at no cost to the reader. This change aims to increase the distribution and use of Agency materials. The Agency will draft an overarching Open Access Policy to clearly establish how its materials can be used.

Updating the glossary of key terms

The Agency's [online glossary](#) has the potential to be a valuable resource in the inclusive education field. In 2021, the Agency plans a complete revision of the glossary and consequently aims to increase its visibility.

Websites and accessibility

The [website](#) is the hub for all Agency information. In 2021, the Agency will maintain the highest possible levels of website accessibility and usability. Search engine optimisation will continue to be a focus to ensure inclusive education content is easily discoverable.

The [Inclusive Education in Action website](#) – developed in 2018 in collaboration with UNESCO – will be updated throughout 2021 with free, open-access resources and case studies from Europe and around the world.

Country information updates

The Agency regularly updates the [Country Information](#) pages on the website, based on information received from country contacts. Moving forward, the Agency aims to develop a more structured format to collect information from country contacts. This will ensure greater consistency across the Country Information pages.

MyAgency – the Agency's intranet

In 2019, the Agency developed and launched [MyAgency](#), a web-based platform for internal communication and activity management. The Agency will prioritise and dedicate resources to developing the capacity to effectively organise and implement virtual meetings – assessing their accessibility and potentially involving interpretation.



News and digital media

In 2021, news items will continue to be published regularly in the [News section](#) and in the Agency's quarterly [eBulletin](#).

The Agency will continue to amplify its content and drive traffic to the website through digital media extensions. This includes updating the [Agency Wikipedia article](#) to ensure it reflects the latest information and links to relevant areas of the website. It also encompasses Agency presence on [SlideShare](#) and [Google Scholar](#). New videos reflecting key Agency messages and activities will be created and added to the [Agency YouTube channel](#) and website.

Information dissemination statistics

An annual report summarising the dissemination of printed and electronic materials, as well as website performance statistics for 2020, will be drafted in early 2021. The report will include qualitative and quantitative findings, trend analyses and strategic recommendations to inform future dissemination.

Monitoring impact of Agency work

Collecting and analysing impact examples is crucial in the Agency's efforts to continuously improve overall working procedures. This will be a key focus of the self-review of quality assurance processes that the Agency will develop in 2021.

