



EUROPEAN AGENCY  
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

[www.european-agency.org](http://www.european-agency.org)

## WHO WE ARE

Our mission is to help our member countries improve their inclusive education policy and practice for all learners. All our work is in line with and directly supports international and European Union policy initiatives on education, equity, equal opportunities and rights for all learners.

We are an independent organisation acting as a platform for collaboration for our 31 member countries<sup>1</sup>. We work towards ensuring more inclusive education systems, as the only European body maintained by its member countries for this specific mission. Established in 1996, the Agency is co-funded by the ministries of education in our member countries and by the European Commission, and supported by the European Parliament.

<sup>1</sup> Austria, Belgium (Flemish and French speaking communities), 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).

## WHAT WE FOCUS ON

### EVIDENCE-BASED INFORMATION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and various EU directives and communications make it clear that countries should no longer debate *what* inclusive education is or *why* they should provide it. Now there is a need for guidance on *how* to implement inclusive education systems at the teacher, classroom, school, region, municipality and national policy levels. We provide countries with **evidence-based information** and recommendations on how to implement key policies into practice.

Our main focus is upon inclusive education in its widest interpretation – that is, dealing with learner difference and diversity in all educational settings as a **human rights and quality imperative**.



## A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

Through our country network and the participation of experts in projects, we combine the perspectives of **policy, practice and research**. This unique combination makes it possible to identify links between these three perspectives and then develop comprehensive recommendations for policy and practice that take all perspectives into consideration.

## A COLLECTIVE VOICE

Through co-operation with our member countries, we ensure that **knowledge and resources across individual countries** are focused into **coherent, agreed arguments**. These carry sufficient weight to be heard as a collective voice on key issues at the European and international levels.

The 31 member countries now have a common position on inclusive education systems that defines our vision. This is a major achievement which highlights how countries with very diverse approaches to inclusion all share a common vision for quality inclusive education for all learners.



Among all Agency member countries, the *ultimate vision* for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers.

## A PLATFORM FOR PEER LEARNING

The Agency presents a platform for **peer learning** for member countries and their country representatives and experts. Involvement in Agency activities – such as project country visits – fosters peer-to-peer learning. Both participants from the hosting countries and participants visiting the countries benefit, as peer-to-peer learning facilitates **self-review and experience exchange**. This supports longer-term policy development and implementation among the project participants.





# HOW WE OPERATE

Our work is essentially concerned with improving the achievement of all learners at all levels of inclusive lifelong learning. This must be done in a meaningful way that enhances learners' life chances and opportunities for actively participating in society.

We carry out a series of activities to promote this goal:

## PROJECTS

We collect data, analyse information and provide member countries with recommendations and guidelines for policy and practice, while sharing information about priority themes via project work.

All thematic projects focus on issues of common concern for policy-makers for special needs and inclusive education. Over the years, we have covered a wide variety of topics, including early childhood intervention, teacher education, financing policies, assessment, vocational education and training, ICT and information accessibility, and raising the achievement of all learners.

Future projects will focus on inclusive education policies on preventing school failure, policy to support school leaders to implement inclusive education, preparing teachers to effectively include all learners and examining the effects of inclusive education in supporting long-term social inclusion.

## COUNTRY POLICY REVIEWS

Our Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA) work is a new form of individualised country information. It provides countries with a reflection on their current policy frameworks for inclusive education. Furthermore, it offers each country specific recommendations regarding priorities to be addressed.

## EXTERNAL CONSULTANCY WORK

We work with individual countries within bilateral agreements to externally audit their inclusive education systems. The audit examines current priorities against a set of standards that the country in question identifies. The external audit approach helps to inform self-review at different levels of the system and to identify areas for future development work within the country's system.





We also provide consultancy to international organisations investigating inclusive education policy issues in which we share an interest.

### **INFORMATION DISSEMINATION**

The results and findings of our work are widely disseminated within the European network of member countries and beyond. All information is available on the Agency website, where project outcomes such as reports, literature reviews, informative flyers and policy briefs can be freely downloaded. Main project outcomes are available in all 25 official Agency languages.

Our website contains a wealth of information about each member country. This includes national overviews of the countries' legal systems, financing, special needs education, teacher training, data, quality indicators and country news.

### **CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND POLITICAL EVENTS**

We organise and participate in conferences, seminars, round table discussions, thematic sessions and other events. These provide an opportunity for a variety of stakeholders to raise awareness, learn from each other, share information about priority areas and facilitate networking for participants.

### **EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

Co-operation with the European institutions and international organisations, such as UNESCO and its institutes (International Bureau of Education, Institute for Information Technologies in Education), OECD, Eurostat, Eurydice, Cedefop and the World Bank, is an important aspect of our work.

Several organisations work towards common goals guided by shared values. We co-operate in project activities with a number of organisations to avoid overlaps and to enable societies to be more inclusive.

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# **CONTACT US**

If you wish to talk to someone about inclusive education in your country, please contact your country's Agency representatives. All their details can be found in the 'Country information' section of the Agency website:

**[www.european-agency.org/country-information](http://www.european-agency.org/country-information)**

For questions about the Agency and its work, contact:

the Agency Secretariat:

**[secretariat@european-agency.org](mailto:secretariat@european-agency.org)**

or the Brussels Office:

**[brussels.office@european-agency.org](mailto:brussels.office@european-agency.org)**