



Inclusive Education: facts and trends

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today and to be allowed to share with you some of the key developments and facts regarding inclusive education in Europe. I thank the Spanish Ministry for inviting me to address this expert audience in this beautiful environment.

I have been asked to summarize the facts and trends on inclusive education in Europe and I will indeed focus on some key issues that I think are very relevant to share with you. But before doing so I would also like to go into some basic questions that form the basis of this conference and perhaps develop together with you the beginning of some possible directions of answering these questions.

Also I would like to inform you about our organisation and the work we have done so far and what we are currently doing as well as our ideas of future work with regard to the topic we discuss during this conference. So my speech will contain 3 separate parts:

1. An introduction to the Agency;
2. Some issues related to the theme of the conference 'Inclusive Education: a way to promote social cohesion', and finally
3. Some information regarding facts and trends in Europe in the field of inclusive education.

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Member countries of the Agency

- Presently, the Agency has 27 full member countries: Austria, Belgium (French), Belgium (Flemish), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales).

Funding: member countries' contribution plus Commission (LLP, Jean Monnet)

Mission: Collaboration in the field of SNE, ultimately resulting in educational policy and practice for learners with SEN.

Activities: collection, analysis and dissemination of information (projects) and organization of conferences and political events.

Working parameters: No one has all the answers, countries have clear examples of good practice and are moving ahead. Countries have different starting points and different histories. We need to take those differences into account and see it as a strength.

Policy context: UNESCO Salamanca Statement, Council Resolutions in the field of inclusion and disabilities, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Some (past) Agency projects:

- Early Childhood Intervention
- Transition
- Financing
- Classroom Practice
- Assessment
- Multicultural Diversity and Special Educational Needs
- Indicators for Inclusive Education



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Agency Work 2009 – 2013

- New Priority themes
 - Teacher Education for Inclusion
 - Organisation of Provision for SNE
 - Vocational Education – policy and practice in the field of SNE
 - Inclusive Education in Action (with UNESCO)

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Inclusive Education in Action

- A project supported under EC funding and conducted jointly by the Agency and UNESCO
- Starting point for the project is the UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, which considers in detail how the 'policy cycle' for inclusive education can be supported
- The goal of the IEA project is to provide examples through the development of an easily accessible resource base that presents examples of policy and practice for inclusive education



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Teacher Education for Inclusion

Key questions:

- What kind of teachers do we need for an inclusive society in a 21st century school?
- What are the essential teacher competences for inclusive education?

Essential Focus

- The training of mainstream, general teachers and how they are prepared to work in inclusive settings
- The initial training phase as a priority

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On-going information dissemination activities

- SNE data collection
- Key Principles – recommendations for policy makers and practitioners
- Higher Education Accessibility Guide
- Special events

Special Events

- European Parliament Hearing in Brussels 2003
- Portuguese Parliament Hearing in Lisbon 2007
- European Parliament Hearing in Brussels 2011

European Hearing in Portugal



European Hearing of Young People with Special Educational Needs organised by the Portuguese Ministry of Education and the Agency.

The event took place in Lisbon within the framework of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union and the European Year of Equal Opportunities.

All our work is accessible through our website (www.european-agency.org); free downloadable information is available in 21 languages.



1. The theme of this conference is Inclusive Education: A way to promote Social Cohesion

Inclusive education, social cohesion and the relationship between inclusive education and social cohesion is advocated in many recent policy documents. See for instance UNESCO: The Salamanca Statement, the work of the European Commission (2002) for instance Education and training in Europe: diverse systems, shared goals for 2010, and UNESCO-IBE (2008): Defining an Inclusive Education Agenda.

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EU and other international policy documents state the importance of education to:

Sustain democratic societies with equal access for vulnerable groups & individuals

Change discriminatory attitudes & create welcoming communities

Develop a fair & inclusive system and a more equitable society

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UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Inclusive Education provides the best educational environment for all learners

IE breaks down barriers and challenges stereotypes

IE creates a society that accepts and embraces disability



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UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education 2008

Education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society.

So it is clear that these important policy documents seem to be very clear regarding the importance of Inclusive Education as a prerequisite of social cohesion!

Allow me to reflect a bit on this:

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Social Cohesion and Inclusive Education

- . Key Questions
- . Normative position?
- . Role of research?

I would like to go with you through some basic questions regarding this important issue and share with you my views in order to start developing possible ways ahead for further development of our policies and practices.



The first set of questions consists of fundamental issues, almost political matters.

Do we want social cohesion? Is social cohesion good for the society? What is good in this context? What do we expect to be the outcome of social cohesion? Also: do we need (scientific/evidence based) proof for this? Or is it a normative discussion only?

The second set of questions relate to the connection between inclusive education and social cohesion. Does inclusive education lead to social cohesion? Do we need proof for this? If yes, what kind of proof? To what extent?

I am raising this type of fundamental questions because for some people the evidence based thinking is predominant, also in this sensitive area. People expect clear evidence that inclusion is effective also for children without SEN; also the issue of the costs of inclusive education vs. segregation stays on the agenda in some debates. Furthermore, we know that some teachers, parents, policymakers and experts are critical towards the idea of inclusive education. Some parents think that inclusive education might threaten the quality of the education of their child. If there is no clear position towards these issues and fundamental questions, uncertainty about where to go and to what extent, will remain.

The third set of questions is the role of stakeholders: who are the stakeholders in this debate? Do they have an equal say? Or are some stakeholders more important than others? If yes, why? And what do we do with this? What do we think of empowering people with disabilities?

I do not pretend to have final answers, but I want to outline some considerations that might help us further. I will use some of the work of the Agency to demonstrate my position. Let me start by saying that I think that most of the issues raised before are in principle of the normative nature and not necessarily subject to scientific proof.

Let me give you a clear example of a parallel discussion related to gender-issues. There was a period not so long ago when women wanted to enter jobs that were historically only held by men. Take for instance jobs in the army, police and fire brigades. Here women were not in the picture for a long time. But now we are very much used to female participation in these labour areas. Of course at the start of this, voices were heard pointing at women having less physical power, strength, and endurance. But nowadays nobody claims that it is a bad thing that women are involved in these jobs, on the contrary, it is generally taken for granted.

Society and social cohesion is about caring for each other, about living and working together and about belonging! Belonging is an essential condition for well-being and also for learning, it gives reason to existence as we all know and as we all experience every day.

We are all happy that we belong; it makes us feel good and we know that this in itself acts as a facilitator for learning, work and general well-being! We all know this! Isn't it then strange that we, those who belong, discuss the issue about who else should belong? Why should we have that power? Why would it be up to us to decide about the criteria for who may also belong and who may not? About who we should include and who we should exclude? Isn't that a bit arrogant? A bit too much 'us' and 'them' thinking? A bit too much power we ascribe to ourselves?

So: inclusive education is a human rights issue

At the core of inclusive education is the human right to education, pronounced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1949. Equally important is the right of children not to be discriminated, as stated in the Convention on the Right of the Child (UN, 1989). A logical consequence of this right is that all children have the right to receive the kind of



education that does not discriminate on grounds of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, capabilities, and so on. While there are also very important human, economic and social reasons for inclusive education, it is also a means for building relationships among individuals, groups and even nations.

A discussion characterized by debating research outcomes in this area is not very fruitful. For various reasons. Firstly, it distracts us from the normative discussion and arguments. Secondly, and I can tell this by having been a researcher in this area myself for many years: research, especially in the social sciences, is never unambiguous! Thirdly, the type of research that is needed to come to clear answers in this field is the experimental design, and not the correlational design. It is the correlational design that has been used to a large extent to 'prove' the outcome and benefits of inclusion vs. segregation. And correlational designs are weak, if not very weak.

The outcomes of the correlational research work regarding inclusive education vs. exclusive education is not unambiguous: overview studies and meta-analysis studies conclude that there is **generally more support for inclusion** than exclusion, BUT there are (and there always will be) studies that point in the opposite direction.

Experiments are stronger designs, but as we all know, hardly feasible, especially in this area! Actually, the only experimental design (and thus the only strong design) was used many years ago by Michael Guralnick of the Univ. of Washington (UW) in Seattle. He conducted in the '80s and '90s several interesting experiments. He placed children with SEN in classrooms that were randomly composed. He constructed control and experimental groups of children and assigned learners with SEN in the experimental group (a condition was that the groups were perfectly equal, and that the children did not know each other, nor the parents!) and studied learning outcomes, competences and social/relational developments. He clearly demonstrated that in the groups that contained learners with SEN, attitudes were more tolerant, friendships between SEN and non-SEN (if we can distinguish that) were developed, lasted longer and that achievements were not lower compared with segregated solutions, and that no harm was done for brighter students! In one sentence: he (and maybe only he) showed clearly that inclusion leads to social cohesion (and to other positive outcomes!).

You see, I fell in my own trap and I am showing research findings to underline, emphasize my position. But let me be clear, I don't think we need these types of arguments, from my point of view it all comes back to principal normative statements.

For me, the discussion about the relevance and necessity of social cohesion as well as inclusive education and the influence of inclusive education on social cohesion are purely normative issues. And we should keep them there!

Social cohesion is indeed desirable and good. Inclusive education is good and necessary and we should empower people with disabilities and fulfil their choices and wishes as far as we possibly can!



2. Inclusive education: Facts and trends in Europe

Trends and developments in Europe in the area of inclusive education

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UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities (2006) – Article 24 – Education

- States parties are requested to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels
- 144 signatories to the Convention
- 88 signatories to the Optional Protocol
- 80 ratifications of the Convention
- 51 ratifications of the Optional Protocol

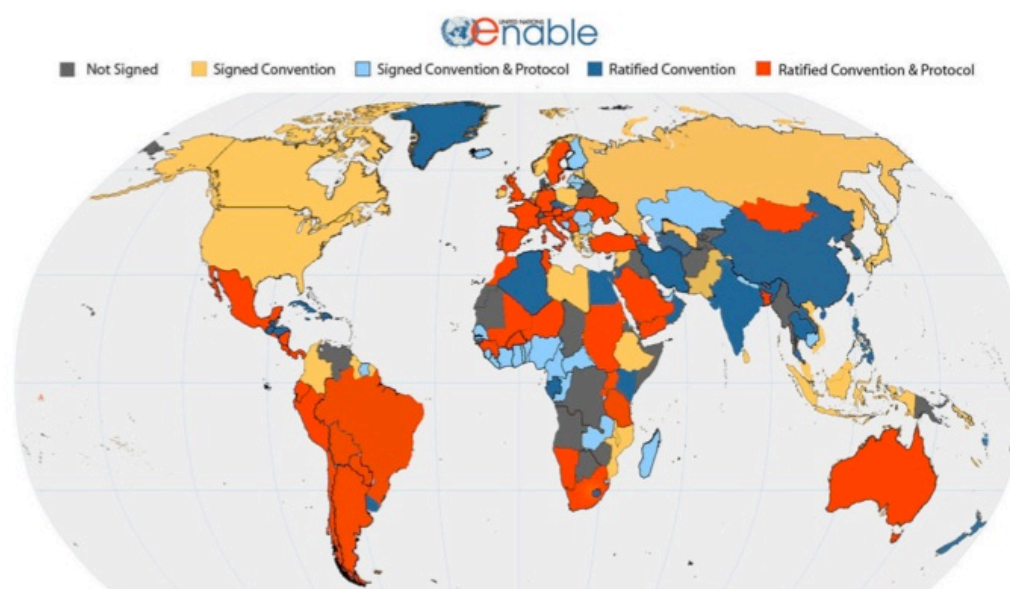
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Ratification of the optional protocol by European Agency member countries

- Austria – 26 September 2008
- Belgium – 2 July 2009
- France – 18 February 2010
- Germany – 24 February 2009
- Hungary – 20 July 2007
- Italy – 15 May 2009
- Portugal – 23 September 2009
- Slovenia – 24 April 2008
- Spain – 3 December 2007
- Sweden – 15 December 2008
- United Kingdom – 7 August 2009

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Map of signatures and ratifications, 05.03.2010



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Percentage of pupils with SEN in segregated settings

Up to 1.0%	1.01 %- 2.0%	2.01%- 4.0%	4.01% and above
Cyprus Greece Ireland Italy Malta Norway Portugal Slovenia Spain	Austria Bulgaria France Iceland Lithuania Luxembourg Poland Sweden UK (England) UK (Scotland) UK (Wales)	Denmark Finland Hungary Latvia Netherlands	Belgium (Fl) Belgium (Fr) Czech Rep. Estonia Germany Switzerland



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Developments in Europe

Developments

- A wider range and more flexible provision
- Developing funding models
- The development of resource centres

Challenges

- Academic achievements (output) versus SEN
- Secondary and higher education
- 2% of pupils in separate settings across Europe
- Preparing all teachers for inclusive education

Now I would like to address the information we have and the activities we currently undertake regarding the situation of inclusion in secondary education, vocational education and higher education.

Secondary Education

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Inclusive Education in Secondary Education

Classroom practice studies

What works within inclusive settings?

How inclusive education works?

Why is it working?



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Some general conclusions

- What is good for pupils with special educational needs is good for all pupils
- Behaviour, social and/or emotional problems are the most challenging
- Dealing with differences in the classroom forms one of the biggest problems

Classroom Practice

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Effective practices within the context of inclusive education

Co-operative teaching

- Teachers need support from colleagues
- Students get their support in the classroom
- Teachers learn from each others' approaches and feedback. Thus, it also meets the needs of teachers

Effective practices within the context of inclusive education

Co-operative learning

- Peer tutoring is effective in both cognitive and affective areas
- Moreover, there are no indications that the more able pupil suffers from this situation

Effective practices within the context of inclusive education

Heterogeneous grouping

- Students of the same age stay together in mixed ability classrooms, to respect natural variability in characteristics of students.
- Heterogeneous grouping is effective when dealing with a diversity of pupils in the classroom



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Effective practices within the context of inclusive education

Home area system

- Change curriculum/organisation
- Team teaching
- Shared responsibilities

Vocational Education and Training

We have recently started work in the area of VET and the position of learners with SEN in this respect. In the VET project we will gather and disseminate examples of **successful VET practice** and results with a clear link to further working opportunities for students with SEN (aged 14-25) from 26 European countries. In the European context there is a variety of settings where students with SEN follow VET: special centres for students with SEN; inclusive options through mainstreaming VET education, and flexible paths consisting of a combination of VET and general education.

A first analysis from literature shows that the following factors seem to be relevant for the success of VET:

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Inclusion in Vocational Education and Training

- Effective classroom and training practices and a student centered approach
- A flexible and diversified curriculum
- Co-operation between all actors involved



Effective class and training practice and a student centred approach. Self-regulation strategies to enhance motivation to learn, giving the opportunity to choose, with active student participation influences students' VET choices and future career.

A flexible and diversified curriculum results in low drop-out rates and higher student satisfaction. This is supported by giving students priority to participate in the programs they choose, making the courses accessible through flexibility in curricula.

Co-operation between all actors involved (family, VET staff, students, community services and agencies' representatives) to provide specific solutions. This collaboration takes place during the entire process: training, placement, job seeking and follow-up in order to get a validated diploma. **More data and conclusions will be available after having finished our VET project (2012).**

Inclusion In Higher Education (HE)

Across Europe, policy initiatives aimed at increasing the numbers of students entering and completing HE are being implemented. These can be seen within the Council of Education Ministers' statements regarding participation within HE as part of the 2010 Objectives for Education in Europe. At national level different countries have different foci for their initiatives to increase participation rates, one common area however being the increased participation of students with SEN.

In relation to the promotion of social cohesion via HE, the position of the European **Council of Ministers as expressed in the London Communiqué (2007)** is:

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Inclusion in Higher Education

London Communiqué (2007)

Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion....the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations....We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education....

Inclusion in Higher Education

The numbers of students with different forms of special needs in HE are increasing but participation rates of students with disabilities in HE is still – by any measure – well below what should be expected.

Although most countries report growing numbers of students with SEN in HE (OECD, 2003), students with disabilities do not appear to be equally represented in HE and this raises a number of issues in relation to continuing barriers within higher education study programs.

The OECD 2003 study on Disability underlines the work of HELIOS (1996) and is clearly supported by the Agency's own work: inclusion within compulsory education has been developing in most European countries in the past decades and far greater numbers of pupils with SEN attend mainstream provision. Inclusion in mainstream education in the primary and secondary sector leads to an expectation – held by students, their families and the educational professionals who have worked with them – that access to HE should be a natural progression for some students.

Whilst expectations regarding access to HE have risen, opportunities for young people with SEN who have been in inclusive settings in secondary education to progress to HE have not always kept pace.

A number of Agency activities aim to examine aspects of policy and practice in HE – one of which is the activities that support the HEAG guide (see our website: www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/heag).

The information gathering conducted by the Agency regarding students with disabilities has focused upon two aspects of access, namely: **access to HE** or opportunities to gain initial entry into HE; and **access within HE** or support for full participation in all aspects of studying within HE.

The issues identified via Agency work (and OECD and Helios data) in relation to barriers to HE are grouped around five key factors: Physical barriers, Access to information, Access to support, Attitudes and Entitlements.

In our **Hearing of 2007** the proposals agreed upon by young people with SEN from 29 European countries, attending secondary, vocational and higher education have resulted in the 'Lisbon Declaration'. This Declaration expresses clear views on the main improvements they have experienced, the challenges they still face and their views on



inclusive education. **Inclusive higher education needs to be seen as a natural progression of inclusive compulsory education.** Students with SEN can only reach their full educational potential if there are real opportunities for inclusive education in HE. In the Lisbon Declaration, the delegates from secondary, vocational and higher education conclude that: 'Inclusive education is mutually beneficial to us and to the others.'

Also, and now I would like to finish my intervention, one of the key messages in the Lisbon declaration is that inclusive education is the best option and needs to be implemented as soon as possible, since THERE we learn the skills, competences and attitudes we need later on in further education, labour and social life! Thank you for your attention!