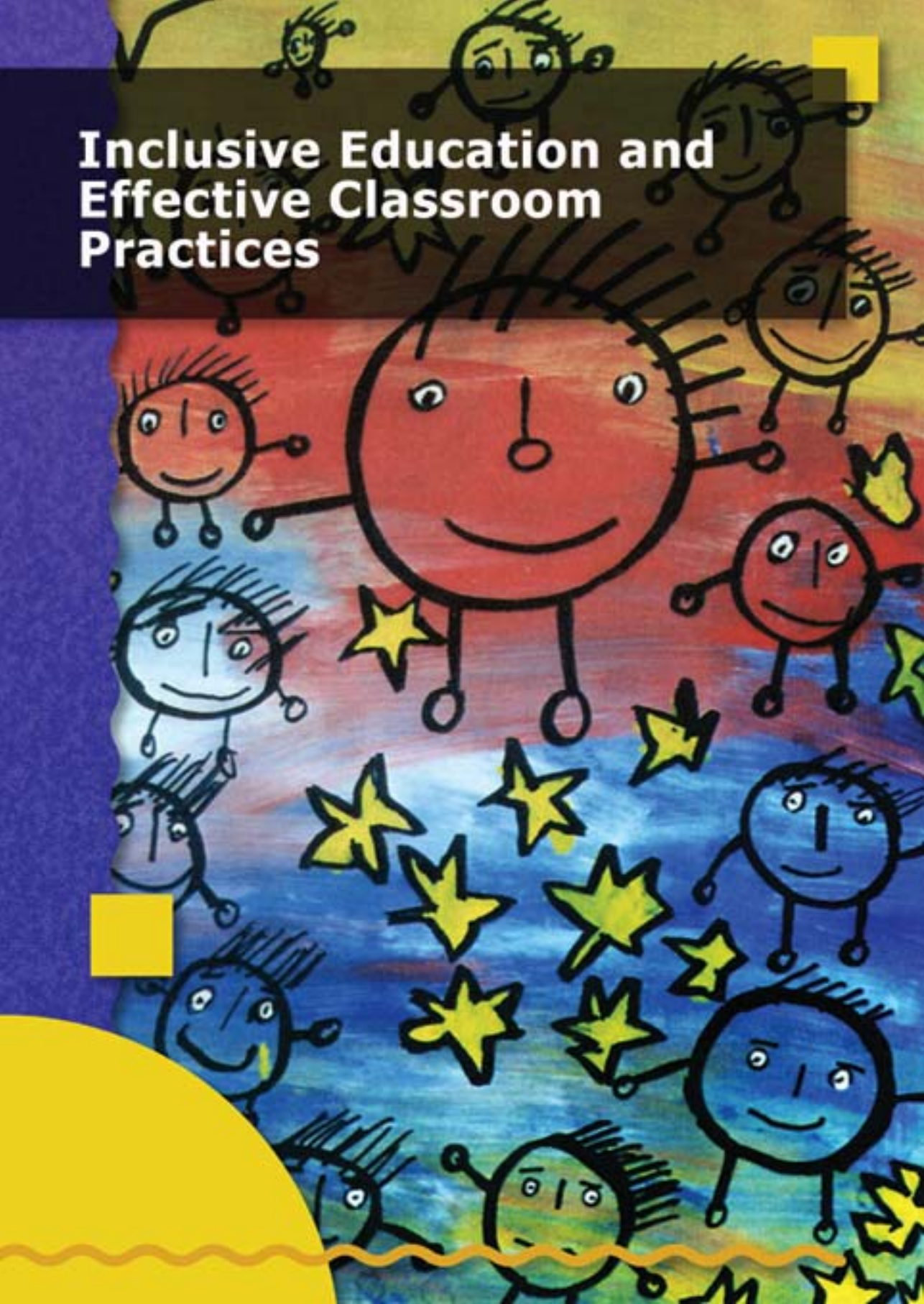# Inclusive Education and Effective Classroom Practices

Inclusive Education and Classroom Practice

Summary Report

March 2003

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

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All original reports from the 15 countries participating in the study, together with reports of all exchanges is available at www.european-agency.org

This report is available in fully manipulable electronic formats and in 12 other languages in order to better support access to the information.

Editor: Cor J.W. Meijer, Project Manager for the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

Editorial support:
Peter Walther-Müller, Working Partner of Switzerland

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European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

Secretariat:
Østre Stationsvej 33
DK-5000 Odense C
Denmark
Tel: +45 64 41 00 20
Fax: +45 64 41 23 03
secretariat@european-agency.org

Brussels Office:
3, Avenue Palmerston
BE-1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 280 33 59
Fax: +32 2 280 17 88
brussels.office@european-agency.org

Web: www.european-agency.org

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SUMMARY

Based on an international literature review, case studies in 15 European countries, expert visits in seven countries as well as various discussions involving experts and the agency working partners, a number of central ideas regarding the development of inclusive classrooms have been identified. It would be impossible and naïve to take these results as precise steps for policy-makers, professionals or practitioners. There are many ways to Rome and in this sense adaptations to local and regional circumstances are always necessary. At best, the findings could be regarded as possible strategies for improving inclusion within schools. In addition, the country case study reports and the reports of the exchange site visits provide elaborations upon some of these identified strategies.

A first conclusion of the study is that case studies and expert discussions reveal that **inclusive classrooms** do exist throughout European countries. The evidence also suggests that what is good for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good for all pupils.

A second main finding is that **behaviour, social and/or emotional problems** are the most challenging within the area of inclusion of pupils with SEN.

Thirdly: **dealing with differences or diversity** in the classroom forms one of the biggest problems within European classrooms.

On the basis of the single, selective case studies and the submitted country reviews, the following **conditions** seem to play a central role for inclusive classroom practices:

- Inclusion depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special needs, on their capacity to enhance social relations, on their view on differences in classrooms and their willingness to deal with those differences effectively.

- Teachers need a repertoire of skills, expertise, knowledge, pedagogical approaches, adequate teaching methods and materials and time if they are to address diversity effectively within their classrooms.

- Teachers need support from inside and outside the school. Leadership on the level of the head teacher, school districts, communities and governments is crucial. Regional co-operation between agencies and parents is a prerequisite for effective inclusion.

- Governments should express a clear view on inclusion and provide adequate conditions, which allows a flexible use of resources.

The findings regarding **classroom practices** reveal five groups of factors that are effective for inclusive education:

Co-operative teaching
Teachers need support from, and to be able to co-operate with, a range of colleagues within the school and professionals outside the school.

Co-operative learning
Peer tutoring or co-operative learning is effective in cognitive and affective (social-emotional) areas of pupils' learning and development. Pupils who help each other, especially within a system of flexible and well-considered pupil grouping, profit from learning together.

Collaborative problem-solving
Particularly for teachers who need help in including pupils with social/behavioural problems, a systematic way of approaching undesired behaviour in the classroom is an effective tool for decreasing the amount and intensity of disturbances during the lessons. Clear class rules and a set of borders, agreed with all the pupils (alongside appropriate incentives) have proven to be effective.

Heterogeneous grouping

Heterogeneous grouping and a more differentiated approach in education are necessary and effective when dealing with a diversity of pupils in the classroom. Targeted goals, alternative routes for learning, flexible instruction and the abundance of homogenous ways of grouping enhance inclusive education.

Effective teaching

Finally, the arrangements mentioned above should take place within an overall effective school/teaching approach where education is based on assessment and evaluation, high expectations, direct instruction and feedback. All pupils, and thus also pupils with SEN, improve with systematic monitoring, assessment, planning and evaluation of the work. The curriculum can be geared to individual needs and additional support can be introduced adequately through the Individual Educational Plan (IEP). This IEP should fit within the normal curriculum.

1   INTRODUCTION

This report contains an overview of the findings of the Classroom and School Practice project. The project is focused on revealing, analysing, describing and disseminating classroom practices in inclusive settings in such a way that European teachers can implement inclusive practices on a wider scale in their classrooms. Furthermore, it addresses decision-makers within the educational system by presenting the necessary conditions for teachers to become inclusive in their practice.

The project is mainly focused on primary education; however, an extension to the secondary phase is now being conducted.

The study consists of three phases. In the first phase a literature review has been conducted in the participating countries in order to reveal the current state of the art of effective inclusive practices. In addition, an international (mainly American) literature review was conducted in this phase. This part of the project addresses the question: which practices have proven to be effective in inclusive education?

In the second phase, an attempt has been made to select concrete examples of good practices and to describe them in a systematic way. In the final phase, exchanges between different countries have been organised in such a way that transfer of knowledge and practices are maximised.
This report is the synthesis of all three phases.

Readers interested in the documents that form the basis of this report are referred to the Inclusive Education and Classroom Practice section of the Agency website: www.european-agency.org/IECP/IECP_intro.htm where the following documents can be found:

1. The International Literature Review on classroom practices
2. The reports of the Exchanges in seven countries
3. The Country Reports from the participating 15 countries

2   FRAMEWORK, GOALS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL PRACTICE PROJECT

2.1   Framework

The focus of the study is effective classroom practices within inclusive education. Generally, it can be assumed that inclusive education mainly depends on what teachers do in classrooms. Of course, what teachers do in classrooms depends on their training, experiences, beliefs and attitudes as well as on the situation in class, school and factors outside the school (local and regional provision, policy, financing and so on). However, it is the teacher that has to implement inclusion into daily life practice and therefore (s)he is the decisive factor.

The way in which teachers realise inclusion within the classroom can take different forms. It is the goal of this study to describe these various approaches and to make them available for others. To identify various models of dealing with differences in classrooms (also known as 'differentiation', 'multi-level instruction' and other terms) thus forms the main task of the project. However, it should be clearly noted that the existence of different models of dealing with differences in classrooms depends not only on teacher factors but also on the way in which schools organise their educational provision and on other external factors.

The main question for this study is: How can differences in the classroom be dealt with? Additionally, it also attempts to provide an answer to the question: which conditions are necessary for dealing with differences in classrooms?

The **target group** for this study is defined in terms of all those who can influence practices in education. Educational practices depend heavily upon teachers and other professionals. They are the group who can implement changes that are stated by policy-makers and educational advisors. The centre of attention for this study is therefore upon the work of teachers. However, we try to reach them in an indirect way.

It can be assumed that they mostly learn from significant key people in their immediate environment: colleagues and professionals in or around the school. Thus, the target group is teachers but, for dissemination strategies, the emphasis should be placed upon the professionals in or around schools who are significant for teachers.

2.2   Goals

Consequently, the main task of this study is to provide key people with knowledge about possibilities for handling differences in the classroom and to inform them about the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of these. The project attempts to answer a few questions concerning inclusive education. In the first instance, it is argued that an understanding of *what* works within inclusive settings is necessary. Furthermore, it is felt that a deeper comprehension of *how* inclusive education is working is needed. Thirdly, it is important to know *why* it is working (the conditions).

The study was confined to the primary school level, i.e. the age group of 7–11 years old. A replication of the study will focus on the secondary school phase.

2.3   Methodology

Different types of activities have contributed to answering the questions. As a first step, the study has resulted in a report with a literature-based description of the different models and the conditions necessary for those models. Both the methodology and the results of the literature reviews are described extensively in the publication: *Inclusive Education and Effective Classroom Practice*, which was published as an electronic and free downloadable book (Middelfart, 2001). The goal of the literature phase was to reveal *what* was working in inclusive settings. The emphasis is here on how teachers manage to cope with a variety of pupils including pupils with SEN. This implies a strong focus on the classroom practice. However, as mentioned before, external conditions should not be overlooked when studying classroom practices.

For the second phase, the case studies, the focus is on *how it is working and what is needed to get it working.* It was agreed that countries select two examples of practice, one of which concerns approaches towards pupils with challenging behaviour. The member countries of the European Agency have analysed examples of good practices within their countries and have described these examples from 'inside out'. They have been asked to focus on the classroom practice itself and to point mainly at factors within the curriculum. However, it is necessary to describe not only the characteristics of the programme, but also the context of and conditions for the programme: especially those conditions and context-variables that are regarded as necessary for implementing and maintaining the programme. These conditions and context variables may lie at several levels: the teacher (the necessary teacher skills and knowledge, the necessary teacher attitudes and motivation), the classroom, the school, the school team, the support services, financial and policy issues and so on. The descriptions that were submitted did indeed take these into account. At this second stage of the project, examples of good practice in 15 countries have been selected, described and analysed.

Finally, through a programme of exchanges experts have visited, analysed and evaluated examples of practice in order to reveal the most important features of innovative classroom practices. Through visits to different locations where inclusive education is practised and discussions with the experts participating in these visits, a more qualitative and broader comprehension of what, how and why inclusion is working has been achieved.

The following countries have been selected as hosts for the exchanges: Ireland, Austria, Germany, Iceland, Finland, Greece, Belgium (French Community).

The exchanges were held in autumn 2001.

Different sources of information are used for the presentation of the findings. In the first place the findings of the literature reviews (both national and international), secondly, the description of all the sites in the 15 participating countries and thirdly the information regarding the exchange activities were used for this goal. In this way a holistic approach to the issue of classroom practice was achieved, relying on both research and daily practice.

3   SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

3.1   Conditions

As pointed out before, our focus is on the classroom. The goal of this study was to find approaches within the curriculum that work within inclusive classes. The goal was not to provide a detailed overview of all the conditions that should be met in order to implement inclusive education, nor to draft the steps that should be taken in order to 'build' an inclusive school. Our interest was to focus on the features of an inclusive curriculum and to demonstrate these for a wider audience. But, having said this, inclusive education does not take place in a vacuum and the study has gathered information concerning the prerequisites for inclusive education. Not only the (research) literature that has been studied, but also – and mainly – examples of good practices and discussions between experts, revealed that a number of clear conditions needed to be met. Below an indicative overview of the necessary conditions is presented.

3.1.1 Teachers

Of course, inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special needs, on their view on differences in classrooms and their willingness to deal with those differences effectively. Generally, the attitude of teachers has been put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive. If class teachers do not accept the education of all pupils as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that someone else (often the specialist teacher) takes responsibility for pupils with SEN and will organise covert segregation in the school (e.g. the special class).

Iceland:

> *'In order to guarantee a minimum of positive teacher attitude, the teacher has to accept having a severely handicapped pupil in his class.'*

> *'Another requirement which the school head regarded as necessary was that a teacher should be prepared to have a pupil in her class who was severely mentally retarded and to be prepared to work with another professional present in all classes.'*

The case studies suggest that teachers who are committed to inclusion often refer to pupils with severe educational needs as positive assets to the classroom rather than 'problems to overcome'.

However, positive attitudes are not enough for dealing with differences in classrooms. Teachers also need adequate methods and materials but also the time available for instruction and knowledge and skills acquired through training (ITT and IST) and experience. All these are relevant when handling differences in classrooms.

Teaching pupils with special needs in the mainstream classroom no doubt implies adaptation of the standard curriculum. Teachers are confronted with the question of how to instruct these pupils. Pupils with special needs may require more instruction time or other learning methods and professional knowledge. In that case, teachers will feel the need for more time, materials and knowledge. Generally, this can be achieved in two ways: by an increase in resources (more time allocated to teachers) or by re-arranging available resources (alternative use of available time).

Increasing available time (e.g. through the use of educational assistants) or enhancing teachers' professional knowledge (e.g. by IST, colleagues or consultation teams) are ways of increasing the necessary resources for inclusive education, but teachers may also need to rearrange available resources across the pupils in the classroom. Teachers can, for example, encourage above-average pupils to work more independently, to work with computers and to help each other (peer tutoring), so that more teaching time is left for pupils with special needs.

A final important issue at the teacher and classroom level is a teacher's sensitivity and skills in order to enhance significant

social relations between pupils. Particularly for pupils with SEN (and their parents), meaningful interactions with non-disabled peers are of the utmost importance. The teacher should have the right attitude, but also needs a good understanding of how to develop these interactions and relationships.

Greece:

> *The case of A (behavioural and developmental disorder – autism; 14 years; boy; 4th grade primary school). The case study describes the following output of the inclusion, pointing to he crucial importance of social inclusion into the mainstream class and the essential contribution of teachers (and other staff) to achieve this inclusion.*

> *'A. shows a full response to the programme. His school social life has improved amazingly within the last six years. It has been well accepted by everyone involved that this is due to the long duration of the programme, where he always had his support teacher: on the one hand to encourage him in a wide range of activities, and on the other hand to inspire him with confidence. Apart from the total acceptance by the peer group, A. has made friends and participates in school activities such as games and theatre plays.'*

> *'None of the pupils has expressed negative feelings about A's presence in the class. On the contrary, they seem to have thrived on the challenge of activities and teaching strategies implemented to help A. and to have become more sensitive to other people's difficulties.'*

3.1.2 School

It is clear that caring for pupils with SEN is not only a question of the necessary resources at classroom level. It should be recognised that the organisational structure at the school level also determines the amount and type of resources teachers can use in teaching pupils with special needs. Flexible support from

inside the school, for example through colleagues, the head teacher, and/or a specialist teacher is needed.

Support can also be made available through other support services such as school advisory centres or special visiting support staff. In some countries co-operation between (mainstream) schools means additional resources can be provided for the care for pupils with special needs. It is clear that the creative strengths, knowledge and expertise, as well as the facilities of a group of schools, exceed those of a single school. The ability of co-operating schools to find ways to handle special needs may be essential for integrating pupils with special needs into mainstream settings.
Some of the projects that have been described and analysed for this study pointed at the fact that co-operation between schools is crucial.

Too great a degree of autonomy may threaten development towards inclusive schools. The support for pupils with special needs should be co-ordinated between schools, especially when the size of schools is generally small.

Austrian exchange report*:*
> *'In general terms we doubt whether school-based autonomy can respond to the needs of the weaker members of society, if there are no clear-cut directives set by the law or the school inspectorate.'*

> *'Although the autonomy of schools is generally viewed as a highly positive factor (encouraging staff at schools and teacher training institutions to become more self-reliant), the definition of quality standards and thus a mandatory approach for the inclusion of pupils and adolescents with SEN is considered a necessity. Too many diverging interests are an obstacle to the success of inclusion, if schools are allowed excessive leeway.'*

Special attention should be given to the role of the head teacher or senior managers. Not only is the head teacher important for the provision of all kinds of support to teachers, but also his or

her leadership is a decisive factor in inclusive education. He or she is often the key person that can implement changes in schools and initiate new developments and processes. The main responsibility here is to organise a team approach and to maintain focus on key issues.

The use of resources within schools should be organised in a flexible way. Our examples of good practice demonstrated that schools should have many degrees of freedom in using financial resources according to their own wishes and views. Bureaucracy should be avoided to the largest extent and also pupils with no or minor special needs should be able to profit from resources within classes or schools if needed or wished by the teacher.

Sometimes it is necessary to pay attention to small groups of individuals with special needs. The evidence suggest that some withdrawal session may, in fact, enable a pupil to be maintained in the mainstream classroom and teachers do sometimes make use of arrangements outside the classroom. It is Important that these arrangements have a natural and flexible character and are not only used for certain pupils with special needs but also, occasionally, for all pupils in the classroom.

The criteria that should be used when offering part-time special provision to pupils are that they should be: (1) as early as possible; (2) as flexible as possible (if one approach is not working, choose another); (3) as 'light' as possible (without negative side effects); (4) as close as possible (therefore preferable within the mainstream class and within the mainstream school); and (5) as short as possible.

The involvement of parents in inclusive schools should not be underestimated. They should not only be seen as 'clients' of education but also as 'participants'. It is crucial that their needs can be addressed as well and they often need a person upon whom they can rely. They should have a significant role and voice and be informed concerning all details of the planning,

implementation, evaluation and the structure and content of the co-operation, especially regarding co-operation between the school, outside agencies and other professionals.

Furthermore, parents play an active role in the development, implementation and evaluation of IEPs. On some occasions they can serve as 'a pair of extra hands' in or outside the classroom.

3.1.3 External conditions
<u>Policy and funding</u>
Inclusion in schools is greatly supported where there is a clear national policy on inclusion. For the process of implementation of inclusive education, the government should firmly support inclusion and make clear what the goals are for the educational community.

Furthermore, governments should create the conditions for inclusion in education. More specifically, funding arrangements should facilitate inclusive education and not hinder them. Necessary provisions should be made available in a flexible and co-ordinated way. Funding arrangements and the incentives that are included in these arrangements play a decisive role as was demonstrated in the Agency study *Financing of Special Needs Education* (1999).

The case study of the **UK** refers to 'perverse incentives':

> *'that is, the situation whereby schools that are using the full capacity of existing resources in terms of teacher expertise, strategies and time, and thereby containing pupils' SEN and assisting their learning are indirectly "punished" for this by being ineligible for additional resourcing on account of the lack of evidence that the pupil's needs are sufficiently severe. This appeared to be the case to a certain extent at this school. Through the rigorous application, monitoring and review of programmes, pupils were maintained in mainstream classes when, in other situations, they might not have been.'*

The exchange report of **Belgium (French Community***)* also points to the problem of the differences of funding between special and mainstream schools as an obstacle for inclusive education:

> *'The difficulty which one faces is that integrated pupils are likely to lose the benefit of the means compared to placement in special schools.'*

A so-called throughput-model at the regional (municipality) level seems to be the most successful funding option. In such a model, budgets for special needs are delegated from central level to regional institutions (municipalities, districts, school clusters). At regional level, decisions are taken as to how the money is spent and which pupils should benefit from special services. It appears to be advisable that the institution, which decides upon the allocation of special needs budgets, first can make use of independent expertise in the area of special needs and secondly has the tools to implement and maintain specialist strategies and services.

It is apparent that inclusion can be more easily achieved within a decentralised funding model as compared to a centralised approach. From a centrally prescribed plan, too much emphasis may be put on the organisational characteristics of that specific model without inclusive practices being realised. Local organisations with some autonomy may be far better equipped to change the system. Therefore, a decentralised model is likely to be more cost-effective and provide fewer opportunities for undesirable forms of strategic behaviour. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the central government concerned has to specify clearly which goals must be achieved. Decisions concerning the way in which such goals are to be achieved may than be left to local organisations.

Leadership
Leadership is of the utmost importance. Policy-makers, not only at a national level, but at the level of communities, school

districts or school clusters, have an essential role in translating governmental policy into practice and implementing it. Also within school leadership there is a prerequisite for effective inclusive education.

Our study shows that promotional activities may be required to enhance the motivation and enthusiasm of all parties involved. Inclusion needs support from outside the school and, especially in early phases of development, the promotion and demonstration of good practices may allay fears and remove scepticism.

Regional co-ordination and co-operation
Our findings show that co-ordination and co-operation between all involved agencies (health, social, educational, psychological) outside the school and between the school and parents is to the benefit of pupils with SEN. Additional help should be provided in a planned and orchestrated way.

3.2   Effective practices

The countries that participated in the classroom practice project have, albeit in very diverse ways, reported about their best practices in inclusive education. In this chapter the synthesis of findings will be presented alongside three topics. In the first place it is important to reflect systematically upon the type of special needs that bring the most challenges to the daily practice of teachers and other professionals. Here the focus is on the characteristics of pupils who are being included (or excluded). In other words: which groups of pupils cause the most problems within mainstream settings?

Secondly, it is intended to provide an overview of the challenges within education processes itself: what are the main (educational) problems in countries concerning the issue of classroom practice within mainstream classrooms that include pupils with SEN? Countries have reported an extensive

overview of the current challenges within education when attempts are made to achieve inclusive education.

Thirdly, and this refers to the main task of the current study, countries have provided an answer to the question related to the educational practices and factors that were found to be effective for inclusive education. The findings regarding the examples of good practice contributed to a more detailed focus on how these interventions and factors are being shaped and dealt with in daily practice.

3.2.1 The most challenging types of special needs
In answering the question concerning the most challenging types of special needs, countries have reported in a not surprisingly unanimous way. Behaviour, social and/or emotional problems are mentioned by almost all countries as being the biggest challenge within the area of inclusion of pupils with SEN. This includes problems relating to unmotivated pupils and to disaffection.

Of course quite a number of countries report difficulties in answering the question that is put in terms of pupil characteristics. Within most special education policies such an approach is rejected in favour of a more environment-interactive approach to SEN. It is within the educational context where challenges are being met and where the need for interventions is centred, instead of putting child characteristics at the centre of the debate. Although this position is in accordance with other current views on special needs, a view that is shared widely within member states of the European Agency, the Working Partners reported the fact that the biggest challenges relate to pupils with behavioural problems.

Some countries referred to other – and sometimes very specific – types of special needs that were considered to be challenging within the area of inclusive education. Examples of these were ADHD, dyslexia, autism, specific learning and writing difficulties, mental and intellectual disabilities, severe hearing impairments

and multiple disabilities. However, only a few countries mentioned these, whereas the position of pupils with all sorts of behavioural and emotional difficulties was generally reported as being challenging.

3.2.2 Educational challenges within the context of inclusion
Handling or dealing with differences or diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest challenges within European classrooms. Inclusion can be organised in several ways and on different levels, but in the end, the teacher has to deal with a larger diversity within his or her class and has to adapt or prepare the curriculum in such a way that the needs of all pupils, those with special educational needs (SEN), gifted pupils and their peers, are sufficiently met. In other words, handling diversity is the key issue at the classroom level. When dealing with differences in the class, teachers need an extra pair of hands or extra support from either colleagues (or special education teachers) or other professionals. At times a pupil with SEN needs specific help or instruction that cannot be given by the teacher during the daily classroom routine. Here other teachers and support personnel come on to the scene and the issue of flexibility, good planning, co-operation and team teaching forms a challenge. This is not only relevant at the level of the classroom in the case of co-operative teaching, but also on the school level. In some cases professionals from regional support services are needed and this amplifies the need for flexibility, good planning, co-operation and co-ordination. Inclusive education implies more than just dealing with diversity in classrooms. It leads to the challenges of co-teaching (classroom level), team teaching and the need for good co-operation between teachers on the school level and co-ordination with professionals from other support services.

3.2.3 Effective practices within the context of inclusive education
The study points to at least five groups of factors that seem to be effective for inclusive education. Both the literature study and information regarding examples of good practice demonstrated the importance of these factors. Generally, findings in literature and opinions of experts show that pupils

(with and without special needs) and teachers do profit from the approaches elaborated below.

<u>Co-operative teaching</u>
The study reveals that inclusive education is enhanced by several factors than can be grouped under the heading of co-operative teaching. Teachers need to co-operate with and may need practical and flexible support from a range of colleagues. Both for the development of academic and social skills of pupils with SEN this seems to be an effective way of working. Clearly, additional help and support needs to be flexible, well co-ordinated and planned.

The **Norwegian** description reveals that the teams dealing with a class are a very important element. The work with a class is highly co-ordinated.

> *'The teachers are distributed with one team at each form level so that the pupils don't have too many adults to relate to. The team covers all subject areas at each form level. This is one of the measures designed to create a secure framework around the pupils. Teachers with supplementary training in special education are also placed in these teams, and do not form a segregated special education team.*

> *'After two and a half years, one of the teachers described day-to-day life as follows: "One must always think very consciously about what one is doing. Instruction is structured with fixed routines. The teachers must be very aware of where the different pupils have their place in the classroom. Instruction is teacher-controlled; there are few free activities in the course of one teaching period. There must always be an adult present. If the group is divided into two groups, one adult must be present in both groups."'*

Switzerland:

'The resource teacher prepares materials, which the class teacher can use if necessary. In addition there are discussions/meetings with parents, the principal of the special education school, the class teacher and the resource teacher. Good personal relationships among all concerned are a prerequisite for the success of this integrative project.'

Luxembourg:

'Because of other children with problems integrated in this class (children with mental deficiency, learning disabilities and behavioural problems), this class is a very difficult one and the social pedagogue of the SREA supports it for 10 hours per week, working with all the children who have special needs. During the short phases of introduction of a new subject by the teacher, the support teacher takes care that children listen to the teacher, pay attention and understand what the teacher wants them to do. After this phase, the children have to work individually.'

'The support teacher thinks that it is very important, that two persons are working in this classroom: there is more time to work with each child individually and if one of the two teachers has a problem with a child, it is possible for him/her to solve this conflict.'

Co-operative learning

The study shows that peer tutoring or co-operative learning is effective in both cognitive and affective (social-emotional) areas of pupils' learning and development. Pupils that help each other, especially within a system of flexible and well-considered pupil grouping, profit from learning together. Moreover, there are no indications that the more able pupil suffers from this situation, in terms of missing new challenges or opportunities. The findings point to progress within both the academic and social areas.

Netherlands:

'Co-operative learning is even possible with the SEN pupil being in the position of the "tutor". The pupil with serious behaviour problems (named 'A') also acts as a tutor for younger pupils. Contrary to first expectations A is extremely popular with his younger pupils. It is the tutor's role to select a task and make sure that the group starts working and that eventual difficulties are taken care of. Since groups of pupils are working everywhere in the school, it looks a bit chaotic and certainly in the beginning A did not do anything. However, with some guidance A does a good job being a tutor.'

Portugal:

'Both class teacher and support teacher work collaboratively full time in the class. They also create individual curriculum activity planning for every child, including N. In case of need, all educational staff participate in finding the best way to solve a problem; at times other actors can be involved. N receives great support from his colleagues. Some of the work done with N is collaborative, and progress can already be seen.'

Belgium (Flemish Community):

> *'This support teacher helps all the schoolteachers in dealing with pupils with socio-emotional problems and behavioural problems in general and especially with the inclusion of J (the boy with behavioural problems).'*

> *'The way the classroom is divided into eight sections, gives children the possibility of working in small, heterogeneous groups. The pupils help each other. During playtime all the children play together and learn to take each other into account. Especially for J, the other children need to be more tolerant. On the other hand, the other children are in some ways a good example for J.'*

Collaborative problem-solving

Particularly for teachers who need help in including pupils with social/behavioural problems, findings in our countries and in the international literature review show that a systematic way of approaching undesirable behaviour in the classroom is an effective tool for decreasing the amount and intensity of disturbances during the lessons. Clear class rules and a set of borders, agreed with all the pupils (alongside appropriate incentives and disincentives) have proven to be effective.

Iceland:

> *A behaviour modification system is introduced and consequently applied. Although the system was introduced on the initiative of one teacher, it illustrates the importance of a well-co-ordinated implementation of methods, because behaviour modification won't work otherwise.*

> *'Here we focus on an eight-year-old boy (P) who is completing his third year at school. He has been diagnosed with ADHD, by medical diagnosis, and is on some medication for hyperactivity. He lacks concentration and has a short attention span in lessons. The teacher has to devote considerable time to keeping his attention on his work, so that he will not fall behind in*

his studies. He remains with the class throughout, and is not removed from the classroom for special lessons.'
As P has a very disruptive influence on other pupils, she tried a behavioural modification system, which has proved very effective.

'If he loses two stars in one week, he is not allowed to participate in the last period on Friday, a free period when the class does various enjoyable things.'

The **UK** literature report:
'Circle time is widely practised in UK primary schools. It involves regular timetabled slots in the curriculum when teaching groups are given the opportunity to reflect on and share experiences, concerns, strengths and weaknesses and to discuss, and arrive at solutions to, issues of concern to the group. It is used to enhance group interaction and empathy, and to combat bullying (by encouraging children to respect their peers). Emphasis is put on strict adherence to rules (e.g. no contribution must be derided, contributions should be made in turn), with the group formulating the rules.'

France:
'F systematically did the opposite of what the teacher asked him to do. This behaviour, characterised by cutting oneself off from others, gradually extended to his relations with the other children. In the classroom he became increasingly disruptive, he spoke loudly, provoked the other pupils, opposed everything, constantly moved around, and threatened to take revenge on anyone who attempted to stop his transgressions. He reached a stage at which he opposes everything in the school, whatever the activities or teacher concerned.
The interventions were intended, among things, to ensure that:

- *F would begin to be able to deal with rules without feeling that he is danger;*
- *F would begin to be able to accept a minimum amount of rules; and*
- *to help him to be able to work while respecting the rules that have been fixed.*

These mediations were carried out in a re-educational framework, which presupposes precise organisation and rules.

Organisation: regular sessions of a fixed duration, each session including a time for choice of mediation, a time for carrying it out, and a time to speak about what has been felt.

Rules: to do no harm to himself, to do no harm to anyone else, not to damage equipment, to put everything in order when the session is over.

The class teacher reported progress in learning, and especially less conflictual communication with peers. F even took the liberty of 'moralising' with other pupils. On the whole, he drew less attention to himself, accepted penalties when he was aware of having broken an important rule, and no longer spoke of revenge.

Heterogeneous grouping

Heterogeneous grouping and a more differentiated approach in education are necessary and effective when dealing with a diversity of pupils in the classroom. Targeted goals, alternative routes for learning, flexible instruction and the abundance of homogenous ways of grouping enhance inclusive education. This finding is of high importance given the expressed needs of countries within the area of handling diversity within classrooms. Of course, heterogeneous grouping is also a prerequisite for co-operative learning.

Sweden:

'To mix different pupils has meant a lot for one pupil with a severe learning disability – he loves it when the teacher reads to the group, he loves drawing, he is happy and sometimes he interacts in the group. He has grown in social, emotional, behavioural and academic terms.'

Ireland (exchange-report):

'The class setting, as well as the non-teacher-centred approaches, promotes co-operation among the pupils not only within the same sub-group but also within the whole class. SEN pupils, according to teachers' comments, were placed in heterogeneous groups with pupils able to support and willing to teacher role-play. The pupils in general seemed familiar with differentiated teaching and were well prepared to accept the difference, cognitive or physical, even in cases where SEN pupils were given a dominant role in class activities (e.g. the Down's syndrome girl was the protagonist in a play where her classmates happily participated). It is worth while to mention that in cases where special resources were allocated to SEN pupils (e.g. computer), there was not any obvious reaction. The interpretation that might be given is that pupils have been "educated" to be part of inclusion procedures, while they appear to benefit from contact with the SEN pupils and are accepting and tolerant of them. Teachers detect a very positive attitude among other pupils and their parents towards SEN pupils and a healthier attitude towards disability and a better understanding of its implications for persons with disabilities.'

Finland:

'The pupils have been divided into four heterogeneous groups (named after colours). When necessary, any two groups can be combined to make up a larger teaching group. The size of teaching groups depends on the school subject concerned. For instance, in music,

science and arts learning takes place in larger groups, whereas mathematics and mother tongue are taught in smaller groups. Flexible timetables allow for arrangements where not all pupils are in the school at the same time.'

'In mathematics and mother tongue, pupils' different skill levels have been taken into account, and smaller groups have been formed accordingly. The purpose of streaming is to offer the pupils more individual instruction and keep up or improve their study motivation. For example, in mother tongue the pupils have been organised in teaching groups according to their reading skills so that one group addresses the grapheme–phoneme correspondence, while another group reads short texts at the syllable level and the third group explores children's literature.'

Austria:
'The basis of the concept of a mixed-age class is the joint education of children with heterogeneous abilities from pre-school to the fourth grade in primary in one class. The goal is to avoid selection and to respect diverse prerequisites and different learning speeds during the whole time in primary school. Advantages of this organisational concept are obvious at the cognitive and especially emotional and social levels.'

'The pressure on parents, children and teachers is minimised. Every child can take five years if necessary to cope with the demands of the curriculum. The class teacher stays as a close contact person. Also the group does not change dramatically, therefore social relationship can develop stable, especially for children who tend to be "trouble" kids. Less skilled pupils don't remain the weakest part of the group during four years, younger and automatically weaker children join the group. This fosters social learning processes, common support and thus taking care of each other is part of the daily routine. Gifted children get earlier access to satisfy

their interest because older students act as models and provide support. Last but not least, the heterogeneous group supports challenging children, because there are more options to retreat or to make friends with colleagues who fit their individual development age.'

Belgium (French Community), exchange report:

One of the strongest aspects of the visited project is, according to the experts: 'The choice of teaching differentiation as a model of operation in the classes, the strong interaction of work (always in the classes) between specialised and non-specialised personnel.'

Effective teaching

Finally, the focus on effective education should be emphasised here: the findings of the effective schools and effective instruction literature can be adapted to inclusive education: setting goals, education based on assessment and evaluation, high expectations, direct instruction and feedback. The case studies further stress the importance of the use of the standard curriculum framework. However, accommodation of the curriculum is needed, not only for those with SEN at the lower end of the continuum, but for all pupils, included the gifted. With regard to pupils with SEN in most countries this approach is defined in terms of the Individual Educational Plan. An important consideration out of our examples of good practice is that the IEP should fit within the normal curriculum framework.

Germany:

An IEP has been developed in all Länder and is also used to ensure individual support for each SEN pupil. It provides information about the education starting point and conditions, the individual special needs and diagnosis, the provision and possible placements, the co-operation and collaboration as well as the qualification of the staff.

Luxembourg:

'Children receiving support are required to have an Individual Educational Plan. On a national level a structure of this plan is defined with the following psycho-pedagogical paradigms: personal independence, verbal and non-verbal communication, basic school learning, cultural apprenticeship, psychomotor education, social health and hygiene, affective and social development, personal responsibility, transition to professional life, free time activities.'

Finally, our experts involved in the project also suggested that there could be the risk of there being too strong a focus on individualisation within inclusive schools. Heterogeneous grouping does imply forms of differentiation, where pupils are allowed to achieve different goals through alternative ways of learning. But it should be stressed that this could be arranged within an effective and targeted approach.

UK:

> *The education of all pupils, also the ones with 'Designated Special Provision DSP' is oriented by a national curriculum: 'All pupils follow the National Curriculum. Long-term, medium-term and short-term planning is done in year group teams of teachers from the mainstream classes and the special class. Both the mainstream classes and the special class have a co-ordinator responsible for each subject of the National Curriculum: these work together. (While all English primary schools would have subject co-ordinators, the significant factor here is the pairs of teachers working together.) The work is then further differentiated according to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Pupils from the special classes might do only one unit of a module, for example. The way in which the school has been planning the curriculum to accommodate different needs within one curriculum 'map' is, in fact, the way which the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (the government agency responsible for the National Curriculum in England and all associated assessment) has recently advocated in*

guidance materials – for example, there can be common objectives with different activities, those activities for pupils with severe learning difficulties at a lower level than those for other pupils. Day-to-day work is discussed on a weekly basis and opportunities for integration for individuals and groups are identified. When the pupils move between classrooms, as appropriate, they are thus familiar with the work taking place.'

4.   CONCLUSIONS

Through an international literature review, case studies in 15 European countries, expert visits in seven countries as well as various discussions involving experts and the Agency Working Partners, inclusive classrooms have been studied. The project attempts to reveal, analyse, describe and disseminate effective classroom practices in inclusive settings. The following questions were studied. In the first instance, an understanding of *what* works within inclusive settings is necessary. Furthermore, a deeper comprehension of *how* inclusive education is working is needed. Thirdly, it is important to know *why* it is working.

A main finding is that behaviour, social and/or emotional problems are the most challenging within the area of inclusion of pupils with SEN. Secondly: dealing with diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest problems within classrooms. Thirdly, our case studies and expert discussions suggest that what is good for pupils with SEN is good for all pupils.

Finally, approaches referred to as co-operative teaching, co-operative learning, collaborative problem-solving, heterogeneous grouping and effective teaching seem to be contributing to the realisation of inclusive classrooms.

EUROPEAN AGENCY WORKING PARTNERS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE NATIONAL EXPERTS

Austria
Ms. Irene Moser   irene.moser@pi.salzburg.at
(Working Partner)
Mr. Dieter Zenker   diether.zenker@aon.at
Ms. Claudia Otratowitz   diether.zenker@aon.at
Ms. Elisabeth Fritsch   direktion.spzgoe@vol.at

Belgium (Flemish Community)
Mr. Theo Mardulier   theo.mardulier@ond.vlaanderen.be
(Working Partner)
Mr. Jean Paul Verhaegen   jean-paul.verhaegen@vsko.be
Ms. Dora Nys   dora.nys@skynet.be

Belgium (French Community)
Ms. Thérèse Simon   therese.simon@skynet.be
(Working Partner)
Ms. Danielle Pécriaux   danielle.pecriaux@restode.cfwb.be

Denmark
Mr. Poul Erik Pagaard   poul.erik.pagaard@uvm.dk
(Working Partner)
Ms. Grethe Persson   grethe.persson@skolekom.dk

Finland
Ms. Minna Saulio   minna.saulio@oph.fi
(Working Partner)
Mr. Eero Nurminen   eero.nurminen@minedu.fi
Mr. Ole Gustafsson   ole.gustafsson@espoo.fi
Mr. Heikki Happonen   heikki.happonen@jnor.joensuu.fi

France
Mr. Pierre Henri Vinay   nefei-diradj@education.gouv.fr
(Working Partner)
Ms. Nel Saumont   brex@cnefei.fr
(Working Partner)

Mr. José Seknadjé-Askénazi   optione@cnefei.fr
Ms. Marie-Madelaine Cluzeau

Germany
Ms. Anette Hausotter   a.hausotter@t-online.de
(Working Partner)
Mr. Ulf Preuss-Lausitz
Mr. Hans-Jürgen Freitag   freitag@skf-wue.de
Ms. Ellen Herzberg   e.herzberg@web.de

Greece
Ms. Venetta Lampropoulou   v.lampropoulou@upatras.gr
(Working Partner)
Ms. Antigoni Faragoulitaki   eurydice@ypepth.gr
Mr. Emmanuel Markakis   emar@pi-schools.gr
Ms. Georgia Fantaki   gfantaki@hotmail.com
Mr. Ioannis Spetsiotis

Iceland
Ms. Bryndis Sigurjónsdottír   brysi@ismennt.is
(Working Partner)
Mr. Gudni Olgeirsson   gudni.olgeirsson@mrn.stjr.is
Mr. Hafdís Gudjónsdóttir   hafdgud@khi.is
Ms. Soffia Björnsdóttir   sub@ismennt.is

Ireland
Mr. Peadar McCann   maccannap@educ.irlgov.ie
(Working Partner)
Ms. Marie Murphy   murphymw@eircom.net
Mr. Michael Cremin   littleislandns.ias@eircom.net

Luxembourg
Ms. Jeanne Zettinger (Working Partner)   srea@ediff.lu
Ms. Pia Englaro   srea@ediff.lu
Mr. Michel Dostert   srea@ediff.lu
Ms. Jöelle Schmit   srea@ediff.lu

The Netherlands
Mr. Sip Jan Pijl (Working Partner)   s.j.pijl@ppsw.rug.nl
Mr. C.J.F van Wijk

Ms. Ina van der Vlugt   skans@cybercomm.nl
Ms. Piet Douwsma   wiebehoekstra@hotmail.com

Norway
Ms. Gry Hammer Neander   Gry.Hammer.Neander@ls.no
(Working Partner)
Mr. Lars A. Myhr

Portugal
Mr. Vitor Morgado   vitor.morgado@deb.min-edu.pt
(Working Partner)
Ms. Maria Da Graca Barreto Leal Franco
                           graca.franco@deb.min-edu.pt
Ms. Ana Montez Cadima   ana_cadima@hotmail.com

Sweden
Ms. Lena Thorsson   lena.thorsson@sit.se
(Working Partner)
Ms. Inger Tinglev   inger.tinglev@educ.umu.se
Mr. Raoul Elebring   maria.raoul@telia.com

Switzerland
Mr. Peter-Walther Müller   peter.walther@szh.ch
Mr. Albin Niederman   albin.niedermann@unifr.ch
Ms. Sonja Rosenberg   sonja.rosenberg@szh.ch

United Kingdom
Ms. Felicity Fletcher-Campbell f.f-campbell@nfer.ac.uk
(Working Partner)