



TEACHER EDUCATION FOR INCLUSION

KEY POLICY MESSAGES

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the conclusions and recommendations of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (the Agency) Teacher Education for Inclusion (TE4I) project and highlight how the project recommendations may also contribute to other EU and international policy priorities.

The issue of teacher education is high on the policy agenda across Europe and globally, and the role of teachers and therefore of teacher education in moving towards a more inclusive education system is being recognised. The *World Report on Disability* (WHO, 2011) stressed that: 'The appropriate training of mainstream teachers is crucial if they are to be confident and competent in teaching children with diverse needs.' They also emphasise the need for this to be about attitudes and values, not just knowledge and skills (p. 222).

Teacher Education Trends at European and International Level

The Agency TE4I project takes account of recent developments in teacher education and in inclusive education at European and international level. The *Council Conclusions on the Social Dimension of Education and Training* (2010) note that education and training systems across Europe need to ensure both equity and excellence and recognise that improving educational attainment and key competences for all are crucial, not only to economic growth and competitiveness but also to reducing poverty and fostering social inclusion.

Teacher Education for Inclusion – equipping all teachers to meet the increasingly diverse needs of learners – has the potential to contribute towards the following policy issues:

Addressing educational disadvantage: In moving towards ET 2020 Objective 3 'Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship', the *Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on the Strategic Framework for EU co-operation in education and training* (2009a) highlight the need to address educational disadvantage by providing high quality early childhood education and targeted support, and by promoting inclusive education. The importance of early intervention is increasingly recognised as a way to prevent many of the persistent social problems that are passed from one generation to the next, and to make long-term savings in public spending.

Addressing issues of poverty: The *Council Conclusions on the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion* (2011a) in particular requires greater efforts to provide support and opportunities for non-traditional and disadvantaged learners and notes that people with disabilities are particularly exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Tackling early school leaving: Tackling early school leaving calls for measures such as 'second chance' education and stronger co-operation with families and the local community, as well as close co-ordination between education and training sectors and other related policy areas, including early childhood education, curricula, teacher education and individualised support, in particular for disadvantaged groups.



